

M A D E I R A, 13.–20.9.2001

Kari T. Haataja

We spent with my female company a pleasant Funchal-based package holiday week in Madeira, mainly relaxing ourselves and hiking, but also doing some birdwatching. I flew from England and my company in a package tour from Finland. We rented a car for the week, and visited some of the key birding areas plus hiking routes: Ponta da Cruz, Ponta de Sao Laurence, Ribeiro Frio, Porto Moniz, Desertas sail trip, Rabacal & “25 Fontes”, Pico de Arieiro & Pico Ruivo.

Itinerary:

13.9. Fri, Funchal

PT arrived in the afternoon from Helsinki by Finnair charter flight and KH from London late in the evening with TAP flight.

14.9. Sat, Funchal – Ponta da Gruz – Ponta de Sao Laurence – Sao Vicente - Funchal

Morning visit Ponta da Gruz (7.35-8.35). Bird movements at the sea were quiet but *Plain Swift* was a new species as well as *Canary*. After breakfast drive to Ponta de Sao Laurence and walking there the trail 5km and return (10.50-13.45). Key target was to find *Berthelot's Pipits* which was numerous (at least 25). Afternoon drive: Canical – Machicon – San Vicente – Funchal. Drive 153km.

15.9. Sun, Funchal - Ponta da Gruz - Ribeiro Frio – Funchal – Capo Girao - Funchal

Morning seawatching at Ponta da Gruz (8.05-8.55) and after breakfast drive to Ribeiro Frio (11.00-12.45) to find *Trocaz Pigeon*. We saw 4 Pigeons around the Balcoes watching point. Three were flying around far below the watching point and one was sitting by the way of a levada trail. *Madeiran Firecrest* was numerous. Thick spray rain chased us away and we returned Funchal, made a reservation of a sailing tour to Desertas for Tuesday. Then I looked the harbour area birds. In the afternoon we still visited Camara da Lobos fishing village and Capo Girao, place of 580m direct drop to the sea on the southern coast. In the evening dinner at Funchal center and we (music lovers) were lucky to hear splendid fado concert in front of the cathedral among hundreds of local people. Drive 90km.

16.9. Mon, Funchal - São Vicente – Porto Moniz-Funchal

The day was devoted to seawatching in Porto Moniz at a terrace down near the shore, using telescope (10.15-12.15, 16.00-20.10). Good number of Manx Shearwaters (total 590) and Cory's Shearwaters (total 158) were flying to southwest. The best was a passing *Bulwer's Petrel* at 18.20. We mainly did sunbathing and had a lunch between the active watching as movement was quiet in early afternoon. Drive 101km

17.9. Tue, Funchal – Desertas - Funchal

We went by buss to Funchal center and to harbour. The boat (Ventura do Mar) left 10.00 towards Desertas with 5 other tourists on top of us. I did seawatching all the time on the way. Due to high waves we could not land in Desertas, so we continued north following the islands. As few other passengers wanted to swim, we sailed near the town Canical on the eastern side of Madeira where the waves were smaller due to strong west wind. Seabirds were mainly near the Desertas but better

petrels (Zino's, Fea's or Madeiran) were not seen. However, one *Bulwer's Petrel* was near the Desertas. Return 18.00 to Funchal. Drive 5km.

18.9. Wed, Funchal – Rabacal – “25 Fontes”- Ponta da Pago – Porta Moniz – Funchal.

We drove to Rabacal and did a 3 hrs walk in “25 Fontes” levada trail (11.00-14.00). I saw there at least 2 *Tocaz Pigeons* and *Madeiran Firecrest* were numerous. Then we drove via Ponta da Pago mountain plateau to Ponta Moniz to make seawatching (16.45-19.45). Return via Sao Vicente to Funchal. Drive 125km.

19.9. Thu, Funchal – Ponta da Gruz – Pico de Arieiro – Pico Ruivo – Pico de Arieiro - Funchal

Again I did morning seawatching at Ponta da Gruz (8.25 – 10.00). Now Cory's Shearwaters were numerous (181) and three *Bulwer's Petrels* passed west (9.18, 9.27 and 9.47). Large Dolphin groups (over 20) moved west followed by Cory's. Then we decided to drive to Pico de Arieiro and when the weather was excellent, we decided to take a walk to Pico Ruivo and return (16km, 12.20-17.20). Sceneries were fantastic on a way. On the top of Pico Ruivo I felt that we are in the haven as the clouds were below us and blue sky above us. The walk was very demanding and legs were rather tired after the walk. Later I learned that Zino's Petrels nesting holes are near the trail. The walk did not provide anything new in birdwise to me but the trail was absolutely worth to walk. The last evening with soaring legs was devoted to a farewell dinner and plan new trips. Drive 49km.

20.9. Fri, Funchal

We just had a relaxing morning and did packing. KH returned airport already before noon and flew to England. KH continued the weekend trip in Cornwall and Scilly (twitching Baird's Sandpiper and Lesser Yellowlegs). PT returned the car and flew later in the afternoon towards Finland.

List of bird species:

1. *Calonectris diomedea* **Cory's Shearwater**: Quite numerous in all seawatching days: 14.9. 50, 16.9. 136, 17.9. 60, 18.9. 171, 19.9. 181. Best places were Ponta Moniz at northwestern corner and Ponta da Cruz at southern coast western part of Funchal.
2. *Puffinus puffinus* **Manx Shearwater**: Very numerous also in Ponta Moniz and only there: 16.9. 590 and 18.9. 94
3. *Bulweria bulwerii* **Bulwer's Petrel**: 16.9. 1 E in Ponta Moniz, 17.9. one near Desertas and 19.9. 3 singles W at Ponta da Gruz.
4. *Egretta garzetta* **Little Egret**: 14.9. 1 W at Ponta da Gruz and 18.9. 1 W at Ponta Moniz
5. *Buteo buteo* **Common Buzzard**: quite common in mountain part, 6 and 8 in two last mountain days
6. *Falco tinnunculus* **Common Kestrel**: few birds in four days
7. *Arenaria interpres* **Ruddy Turnstone**: 14.9. 2 at Canical, 15.9. 1W at Ponta da Gruz and 8 at Funchal harbour, 16.9. 1ad 2 juv at Ponta Moniz, 18.9 2 at Ponta Moniz.
8. *Calidris alba* **Sanderling**: 15.9. 1 at Funchal Harbour
9. *Larus michahellis* **Yellow-legged Gull**: quite common in all days
10. *Sterna hirundo* **Common Tern**: several in all seaside days
11. *Stercorarius parasiticus* **Arctic Skua**: 16.9. 1 E (19.07) at Ponta Moniz
12. *Columba livia* **Feral Pigeon/Rock Pigeon**: common
13. *Columba trocaz* **Trocaz Pigeon**: 15.9. 4 at Ribeiro Frio, 18.9. 2 at Risco (on a way to 25 Fontes)
14. *Apus unicolor* **Plain Swift**: common

15. *Anthus berthelotii* **Berthelot's Pipit:** 14.9. 25 at Ponta de Sao Laurence, 18.9. 4 at Encumeada-Rabacal, 19.9. 2 between Pico de Arieiro – Pico Ruivo
16. *Motacilla cinerea* **Grey Wagtail:** few birds in several days
17. *Erithacus rubecula* **European Robin:** 16.9. several calling on a way to Sao Vicente, 19.9. one at Pico Ruivo
18. *Turdus merula* **Blackbird:** 18.9. 1 male near Ponta da Pago
19. *Sylvia atricapilla* **Blackcap:** 19.9. one singing at Ponta da Gruz
20. *Regulus madeirensis* **Madeira Firecrest:** 15-20 on mountain and forest days
21. *Fringilla coelebs* **Chaffinch:** tens on mountain days
22. *Petronia petronia* **Rock Sparrow:** 14.9. one at Ponta de Sao Laurence
23. *Carduelis carduelis* **Goldfinch:** 14.9. 15 at Ponta de Sao Laurence
24. *Serinus canarius* **Canary:** very common especially in the eastern part of the island

05.09.2006 Kari T Haataja, e-mail <kari.t.haataja(at)luukku.com>