



Madeiran Firecrest, Fajã da Nogueira
(25/3).



Berthelot's Pipit, Ponta de São Lourenço
(28/3).

Madeira, 23 to 30 March 2009

Nick Littlewood & Rose Toney

We travelled from Edinburgh with FlyGlobeSpan on a cheap package deal for a week of general holidaying which included some exploring and birding. Our accommodation was in Funchal and we hired a car for 5 days.

Most birding sites visited are amply described on the excellent Birding Madeira website (<http://madeira.seawatching.net/>). The only point to add is the location of gull areas at Funchal. The largest number of Yellow-legged Gulls (along with the Iceland Gull) were towards the end of the main harbour wall on the seaward side. The small flock of Black-headed Gulls, meanwhile, which included the Laughing Gull and several Mediterranean Gulls, were on the stony beach on the main seafront east from the Marina at the river mouth by the roundabout-like junction.

Itinerary

23 March: Arrived Funchal airport late morning. Transfer to hotel then explored on foot around Funchal. Took an afternoon boat ride that went about 3 miles east from Funchal.

24 March: More exploring Funchal.

25 March: Walked the levada (irrigation channel) from Ribeiro Frio to Balcões. Then drove north and walked the valley at Fajã da Nogueira.

26 March: Drove west to Lugar de Baixo, Porto Moniz and Ponta do Pargo. Endured a torrential storm that forced us to park up for a while then drove right along the north coast with the occasional stop and back to Funchal.

27 March: Funchal again including the cable car to the Botanical Gardens and 2 hours of watching the sea distantly from the roof of the hotel.

28 March: Explored eastwards. Machico, Caniçal, Ponta de São Lourenço and back to Machico.

29 March: Lugar de Baixo, Ribeira Brava and back to Funchal. Returned hire car.

30 March: Flight back to Edinburgh

Systematic List

Mute Swan: One on a Funchal park lake.

Mallard: A pure-looking male at Lugar de Baixo on 26/3 among Muscovys, etc.

Green-winged Teal: Drake at Lugar de Baixo on 26/3 and 29/3.

Manx Shearwater: 5 off Porto Moniz (in c.30 mins) on 26/3 and c.100 off Funchal in about 2 hours on 27/3.

Cory's Shearwater: Common off Funchal including close views from a boat on 23/3 and c.100 in two hours on evening of 27/3. Also seen off Porto Moniz on 26/3 (c.30 in half hour) and Lugar du Baixo.

Little Egret: 1 Funchal, 23/3; 2 Lugar de Baixo 26/3 and 1 there 29/3; 2 Machico, 28/3.

Grey Heron: Singles at Fajã da Nogueira and flying east at Lugar de Baixo.

Buzzard: Singles at Fajã da Nogueira and one at Ponta do Pargo.

Kestrel: Seen regularly in Funchal. Also common at Ponto do Pargo, 3+ at Ponta de São Lourenço and several along roads.

Quail: 2 heard but not seen singing very close to path at Ponta de São Lourenço, 28/3.

Red-legged Partridge: 1 Ponto do Pargo, 26/3.

Moorhen: c.6 at Lugar de Baixo on 26/3 and 29/3.

Coot: 1 Lugar de Baixo, 26/3.

Grey Plover: 1 Lugar de Baixo, 26/3.

Dunlin: 1 Lugar de Baixo, 26/3.

Common Sandpiper: 1 Machico, 28/3; 1 Lugar de Baixo 29/3.

Turnstone: single figures at Funchal; 1 Machico, 28/3; 6 Lugar de Baixo, 29/3.

Mediterranean Gull: At Funchal, 3 on 25th and 2 on 27th, 28th and 29th. All 1st-winters.

Laughing Gull: A 1st-winter with Black-headed Gulls at Funchal on 28/3.

Black-headed Gull: c.20 seen regularly at Funchal.

Ring-billed Gull: A 1st-winter was the only gull of any species at Machico on 28/3.

Yellow-legged (Atlantic) Gull: c.300 along back of harbour wall at Funchal on 24/3. Single figures at other coastal sites.

Iceland Gull: One along harbour wall at Funchal on 24/3.

Roseate Tern: 2 in Funchal Harbour, 27/3

Common Tern: 2 Porto Moniz, 26/3; 3 Funchal, 27/3; 4 Funchal, 29/3.

Feral Pigeon: common in Funchal

Trocaz Pigeon: Two seen in flight with one watched perched at Fajã da Nogueira on 25/3.

Plain Swift: c.30 at Santana, 26/3. c.100 swift sp. over Funchal on evening of 27/3 and c.60 there on 28/3 included at least some Plain Swifts with smaller numbers on 29/3. c.60 swifts at Machico on 28/3 likewise included at least some Plain Swifts; c.20 Ribeiro Brava, 29/3.

Common Swift: At least some, perhaps the majority, of swifts seen appeared to be this species.

Berthelot's Pipit: c.10 seen well at Ponta de São Lourenço, 28/3.

Grey Wagtail: Seen on rivers at Funchal,

Swallow: c.5 at Ponto do Pargo on 26/3; c.30 over Funchal on evening of 27/3; c.20 Machico 28/3; c.5 Ribeiro Brava, 29/3.

House Martin: c.5 at Santana, 26/3; c.10 over Funchal on evening of 27/3; c.15 Machico, 28/3; c.30 Ribeiro Brava, 29/3.

Sand Martin: 2+ Machico, 28/3.

Red-rumped Swallow: 2+ Machico, 28/3; c.5 Ribeiro Bravo, 29/3.

Robin: Small numbers in wooded areas.

Blackbird: Common in Funchal

Blackcap: Seen and heard regularly at Funchal and small numbers elsewhere.

Madeiran Firecrest: Several at Ribeiro Frio and good views especially at Fajã da Nogueira on 25/3.

Common Waxbill: c.80 in small paddocks at west end of lagoon at Lugar de Baixo on 29/3.

Spanish Sparrow: Several (c.20) in a colony in the crown of a palm tree at Caniçal.

Chaffinch: Common in woodlands with some very tame birds at the viewpoint at Balcões (Ribeiro Frio).

Linnet: At least 1 at Ponto do Pargo, 26/3.

Goldfinch: 6 at Funchal, 27/3; 4 Machico, 28/3

Canary: Common in Funchal and small numbers seen elsewhere



Common Waxbill, Lugar de Baixo (29/3).



Green-winged Teal, Lugar de Baixo (29/3).



Cory's Shearwater, Funchal Bay (23/3).



Plain Swift and Common Swift, Funchal (27/3).



Mediterranean Gull, Funchal (25/3).



Yellow-legged (Atlantic) Gull, Funchal (28/3).



Ring-billed Gull, Machico (28/3).



Laughing Gull, Funchal (28/3).



Iceland Gull, Funchal (23/3).