

# Madeira bird observations

11-18 march 2008 Aimon Niklasson

Base: Tivoli Ocean Park and the Marine Biological Station (**Estação de Biologia Marinha do Funchal**) just below in Funchal ( Lido area). Fifteen minutes walk (to the west along the shoreline) to Ponta da Cruz the most southern part of the Island. Social holiday but tube with simple tripod in the luggage beside binocular. \*Appending bird photos Nikon D70 Sigma 300 macrotele or sound recording Edirol09. marked with asterisk.

## **European Serin (*Serinus canaria canaria*; *Linnaeus 1758*)**

[Kanariefågel (Swed.)], [**Canario de terra** (Port.)]\*,

was the first bird singing when we arrived to the Hotel and several was singing on Estrada Monumental (the main street). During the rest of the week this species was everywhere at least in connection with human living and absolutely the most often heard.

## **Atlantic Yellow-legged Gull (*Larus cachinnans atlantis*; *Clements 1991*)**

[Gulfotad trut], [**Gaviota-de-patas-amarelas**]\*

was the first bird seen over the sea. There were several hundreds of this species especially in the Funchal Harbour standing on the plate where they could be checked closely for those interested in gulls. Usually a long tail of this species was following fishing boats out in the morning and home in the evening. They were otherwise usually spread over the sea and were good size references for comparison with other birds. The 2k birds were much darker than I suspected from discussions from Swedish bird sites.

## **Kestrel (*Falco tinnunculus canariensis*; *Koenig 1889*)**

[Tornfalk],[**Francelho**]\*

was a sudden surprise over the pool but was later found spread around and in the wall against the sea close to the Marine Biological station 2 or even 3 kestrels were sitting in the morning and evening every day and probably they were breeding in the vicinity. Got a picture with a lizard tail hanging down indicating why this falcon seems to be so abundant. Several could be seen along the cost walk to the west, sometimes between the building cranes. Also seen at Ponta de Sao de Lourenco 15 march.

## **Grey Wagtail (*Motacilla cinerea schmitzi*; *Tschusi 1900*)**

[Forsärsla],[**Lavandeira**]\*

I was not many minutes on the balcony until this bird was taking a bath at the pool edge spreading his tail feathers. The call was heard everywhere as soon as there was moving water, even artificially in Funchal and along the small creeks, coast walk to Lido and along levadas. I often heard this call in heavy traffic at Avenida da Mar waiting for the bus mostly in time.

## **Blackbird (*Turdus merula cabreræ*; *Hartert 1901*)**

[Koltrast], [**Melro preto**]

Heard singing every day close to the hotel, in most botanical gardens and along levadas.

## **Blackcap (*Sylvia atricapilla heineken*; *Jardine 1830*)**

[Svarthätta], [**Toutinegra**]\*

Heard every day at the hotel, in all botanical gardens and along the levadas.

## **Robin (*Erithacus rubecula*;)**

[Rödhake],[ **Pisco-de-peito-ruivo**]\*

Mostly in botanical gardens and among levadas.

**Cory's Shearwater (*Calonectris diomedea {borealis?}* Cory 1881 )**

[Gulnåbbað lira], [Cagarra]

Already at first glance from the balcony before dusk I could spot one of these birds (11/3) in its typical flight not far outside the Marine biological station in the tube. Stated to start to come back in march I was a little bit puzzled but the next day at noon I had 4 far out at Praia Formosa in good light. In the morning (13/3) I used the jetty at the Marine biological station and had 3 at 8:00 going west very close and some in the evening going east.

14/3 evening wind from SW and 400 passing within 45 min before dusk! What I remember they were going west but I forgot to record (the direction) in my notebook so I decided to make a better count (16:00-19:30) which was done Sunday evening 16/3 when 190 Cory's shearwaters were going east and 70 west the east ones with a maximum from 18:15 to 19:15 top 44 between 18:45 to 19:00.

Those going west without any maximum and possibly birds also therefore included in those going east ( back to Ponto do Garajau?). Monday morning 17/3 it was somewhat foggy and no wind when I went down to the jetty at the Marine Biological station. From 07:35 to 07:53 some few shearwaters were moving without any direction and I saw more dolphins than birds until suddenly from 07:53 to 08:12 I counted 200 Cory' Shearwaters all going west but 1! Until 08:30 another 25 were going west but nearly none during the last part of the period. I used a tube 40X and tripod in a fixed position and sometimes there was 4-5 shearwaters and sometimes even dolphins at the same time! I had the feeling that some of the birds came in from the direction from the Desertas Island and some along the coast. In the evening 17/3 between 16:30 to 18:15 106 were going east and 46 west. Due to social responsibility I had to leave...

**Manx Shearwater (*Puffinis puffinis puffinis*; Brünnich 1764)**

[Mindre lira], [Patagarro]

I didn't consider from the literature to see many of this species during my visit to Madeira.

However after some experience it was very clear that there was a movement of this species maybe as a part of migration. The last hour before dusk 13/3 approximately 150 Manx shearwaters were seen going west. There was little wind coming from south direction. The 14/3 no Manx but instead Cory's (see above). Sunday 16/3 16:00-19:30 I saw 159 Manx shearwaters going west and 13 going west most between 18:15 to 19:15 with approximately 2/min during this hour. All of these birds were totally black on upper side and totally white below. When they met Cory's shearwaters in the same tube picture I considered them unmistakable. Their wing movements were typical as well and most of them were flying and gliding close to the sea surface.

The next day evening (17/3 but none in the morning!), I saw 224 Manx shearwaters going west and 1 going east between 16:30 to 18:15. From 17:45 to 18:00, 68 passed. Some came very close to the jetty and probably the Ponta da Cruz which may be good in the morning and evening. Only visited this place once at noon and saw very few birds.

Maybe this movement of Manx shearwaters is part of the normal spring migration back to breeding places more north when they move back from the Brazil coast and south of the Atlantic Ocean?? Why not study this?? Why not a fixed web camera in a tube at the Marine Biological station (!?), although it's nicer to be there!

**Turnstone (*Arenaria interpres*; )**

[Roskarl], [Rola-do-mar]\*

Was seen every day on the jetty at the Marine Biological station feeding on the bread (?) the local fishermen use when fishing from the jetty. They were also seen in Funchal along the shore. The highest number seen was 7 together 14/3.

**Common Tern (*Sterna hirundo*;) )**

[Fisktärna],[ Andorinha-do-mar-comum]

Was seen twice in the evenings but far out so it might be considered somewhat uncertain.

**Sandwich Tern (*Sterna sandvicensis*;**)

[Kentsk tärna],[ **Garajau-comum**]

Was sitting on a bouy in the Funchal harbour. It had typical winter colour with typical head profile. It was also seen fishing in the shadow of one of the huge cruiser in the harbour.

**Berthelot's Pipit (*Anthus berthelotii madeirensis*; Erlanger 1899 {A.b.b Bolle 1862 See Ahlström,Mild 2003})**[Kanariepiplärka],[**Corre-caminhos**]\*

Ponto de Sao Laurengo busstop. Several birds calling and even singing. One ringed with yellow plastic band came so close I have to use the macro on my 300 mm lens.

**Chaffinch (*Fringilla coelebs maderensis*; Sharpe 1888)**

[Bofink],[**Tentilhão**]\*

Several along the levada Paradise Valley to Camacha. A levada without vertigo!

**Buzzard (*Buteo buteo harterti*; Swan 1919)**

[Ormvråk],[**Manta**]\*

At least 3 in the air between bus stop at Ponta de Sao Laurengo and Camacha.

3 along the Paradise levada

Not seen in Funchal area.

**Quail (*Coturnix coturnix confisa*; Hartert 1917)**

[Vaktel],[**Codorniz**]\* (sound recording)

Heard frequently 15/3 at least two from the small first brigde on the walking trail from the bus stop to the Ponto de Sao Laurengo. Another two at least were heard walking from the bus stop to Canical the same day. Recorded with Ediro1 09.

**Plain Swift (*Apus unicolor*; Jardine 1830)**

[Enfärgad seglare],[**Andorinha da serra**]

Probably the two groups of swifts seen at the Orchid garden south of the Botanical Garden was this species. Did not see any swifts close to the shore during the other days.

**Goldfinch (*Carduelis carduelis parva*; Tschusi 1901)**

[Steglits],[**Pintassilgo**]

Sometimes difficult to hear due to all the European serin but found at Ponta da Cruz, in Funchal for example along Avenida da Mar waiting for the bus. Also heard in Camacha and along the road walking from Baía d' Dabra to Canical.

**Grey Heron (*Ardea cinerea*; )**

[Gråhäger],[ **Garça-real**]

2 were seen along the road walking from the bus stop at Ponto de Sao Laurengo to Canical.

**Barn Swallow (*Hirundo rustica*;**)

[Ladusvala],[ **Andorinha-das-chaminés**]

One was seen on the trail close to the bus stop at Ponto de Sao Laurengo.

The week before strong African winds had been influencing the weather.

**Common Sandpiper (*Actitis hypoleucos*;**)

[Drillsnäppa],[ **Maçarico-das-rochas**]

One was heard at the jetty at the Marin Biological station 13 march.

**Rock (Feral) Dove (*Columba livia s.l. domestica* incl.)**

[Klippduva (Tamduva)], [**Pomba-da-rocha**]\*

Common along the coast and in Funchal.

**Little Egrett (*Egretta garzetta*;)**

[Silkeshäger],[ **Garça-branca-pequena**]\*

Seven seen in the morning 14/3 flying west from the jetty of the Marine Biological station.  
In the evening 2 were seen flying back and one was seen in Funchal harbour during the week.

**Bulwer's petrel (*Bulweria bulwerii*;)**

[Spetsstjärtad petrell],[**Alma-negra**]

Sitting on the shore at Baia Formosa west of Lido area at noon (12:15) 12/3 with the tube I saw one bird flying east. It was totally dark and if any lighter area it was on the inner part of the wing and in contrast to the Yellow legged gulls and Cory's Shearwaters that it met it was darker and had long hanging wings. No wind. It was flying more than gliding. Compared to the gulls it was too small to be a Puffin griseus. I got a "bat" feeling but it was a bird! Since I had now experience of this bird and the time of the year is not the best for seeing this species I hesitate to publish it but it might stimulate others to look for this bird even at this time of the year. And I can't understand which other bird it could have been?

**Introduced species seen:**

**Mute swan (*Cygnus olor*;) [Knölsvan],[ **Cisne-vulgar**]**

Only seen in one of the parks and there is probably not many places where to go wild for a Swan

**Mandarin and (*Aix galericulata*;) [Mandarinand],[ **Pato-mandarim**]**

One pair "wild" or at least free in one of the "creeks" in central Funchal. Couldn't see if they had normal wings.

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