

Trip to MADEIRA

29th August to 5th September 2005

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We booked a Bed & Breakfast package holiday for a week through Atlantic Holidays (<http://www.atlanticolidays.net>), staying at the Pestana Bay Hotel at Praia Formosa, about 6 km. west of Funchal. Most, if not all, of their rooms have balconies with a sea view, and there is a handy terrace from which you can seawatch while having breakfast. There is also a small patch of scrub with reeds where we saw Common Waxbills, and beyond that a foot tunnel leading to a well lit restaurant from where we could see and hear Cory's Shearwaters coming in at night. Before we left we booked a trip out to the Desertas on the "Ventura do Mar" by e-mailing the very helpful Filipe Alves at venturadomar@iol.pt

29th August

Arrived in afternoon in time to get the hotel's free bus into Funchal, find the Ventura do Mar kiosk in the harbour to confirm our booking and to get to grips with Plain Swift.

30th August

Cable car up to Monte and a walk round the ecological park (cheaper and possibly more interesting than the Monte Palace Tropical Gardens by the top cable car station).

31st August

Took a hire car for two days and drove to Ribiero Frio, a very popular spot. On the walk to the Balcões we heard one Trocaz Pigeon, and saw two Madeira Firecrests, with a few more heard. Our average age is about 60, and it transpired that one of our party could only hear the Firecrests with difficulty, and another one not at all! It took nearly an hour at the Balcões lookout before two pigeons flew into a tree way below us and immediately took off again. In the meantime we were entertained by the distinctive local race of Chaffinch which are common and tame here. Another Firecrest was seen on the way back to the car. Later we drove along the road to Fajã da Nogueira and had brief flyover views of a further five pigeons. Would advise taking a good map as the road signs seem to be few and far between and rarely include road numbers.



Male Madeiran Chaffinch

1st September

Drove up to Machico, where we missed parking by the Hotel Dom Pedro as the new tunnel took us beyond it. No problem though, and we soon found the river mouth and a flock of at least 30 Common Waxbills. (We later found them in the scrub next to our hotel). Stopped for a beer at Caniçal where we failed to find Spanish Sparrow and headed for the Ponta de São Laurenço peninsula. Here we had our only rain of the trip, which didn't amount to anything, and soon picked up on Berthelot's Pipits.



Colin West searches in vain for Berthelot's Pipit

2nd September

A great day out on the Ventura do Mar. Set off at 9.0 a.m. after a Ring-billed Gull in the harbour with a fairly quiet start. As well as several Cory's Shearwaters there were a few Bulwer's Petrels and a couple of Fea's / Zino's Petrels. The latter looked good for Fea's, however with no experience of Zino's most of us decided to leave the species undetermined. Nearing Deserta Grande we came across large rafts of Cory's, schools of Atlantic Spotted Dolphins, flying fish, Great and Manx Shearwaters and a couple of (probably Sei) Whales. Dropped anchor off Deserta Grande for an excellent lunch, while some passengers took the chance to go snorkelling (one was quickly back on board after a Trigger Fish tried to take a nibble)

The 18 of us plus the crew took it in relays on the inflatable to land on the island where we were shown a Bulwer's nest and chick. On the way back there were many more Bulwer's than on the outward journey plus some more Fea's / Zino's and several Bottlenose Dolphins. After more beers and a late snack we got back about 8.45 p.m.

3rd September

Having seen our main target species, settled for a quiet walk on the pretty Levada da Torrios (more Firecrests) and the Botanic Gardens, getting a taxi out and bus back. We found the buses here to be cheap and reliable.

4th September

Another levada walk, on the Levada da Serra Choupana, and a last chance (in vain) for Roseate Tern at Funchal Harbour, before an early departure the next morning.

Systematic List

NAME	TRINOMIAL (m) = monotypic	DETAILS
FEA'S/ZINO'S PETREL	<i>Pterodroma feae/madeira</i>	5 seen from the Ventura do Mar 2/9.
BULWER'S PETREL	<i>Bulweria bulwerii (m)</i>	48 seen from the Ventura do Mar 2/9, one chick shown to us on Deserta Grande.
CORY'S SHEARWATER	<i>Calonectris diomedea borealis</i>	6 seen from Hotel Balcony 31/8, 50+ same place 1/9, probably 500+ seen from the Ventura do Mar 2/9. Several seen and heard coming in around 10.00 - 10.30 p.m. from other end of foot tunnel from hotel various nights.



Cory's Shearwaters from the Ventura do Mar

GREAT SHEARWATER	<i>Puffinus gravis (m)</i>	2 seen from the Ventura do Mar 2/9.
MANX SHEARWATER	<i>Puffinus puffinus (m)</i>	3 seen from the Ventura do Mar 2/9.
LITTLE EGRET	<i>Egretta garzetta garzetta</i>	1 seen Machico 1/9.
EURASIAN SPARROWHAWK	<i>Accipiter nisus granti</i>	1 seen Funchal 29/8, 2 Botanic Gardens 3/9.
COMMON BUZZARD	<i>Buteo buteo buteo</i>	7 to 9 birds seen during the week.
COMMON KESTREL	<i>Falco tinnunculus canariensis</i>	Seen small numbers most days.
RINGED PLOVER	<i>Charadrius hiaticula hiaticula</i>	1 Funchal Harbour 30/8.
SANDERLING	<i>Calidris alba (m)</i>	1 seen Machico 1/9.
LITTLE STINT	<i>Calidris minuta (m)</i>	1 seen Funchal Harbour 29/8.
(RUDDY) TURNSTONE	<i>Arenaria interpres interpres</i>	Several seen each visit to Funchal Harbour (max. 11 on 4/9), at least 4 at Machico 1/9.
RING-BILLED GULL	<i>Larus delawarensis (m)</i>	1 seen Funchal Harbour 2/9.
LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL	<i>Larus fuscus graellsii</i>	2 seen Funchal Harbour 2/9.
YELLOW-LEGGED GULL	<i>Larus cacchinans atlantis</i>	Commonly seen every day.
SANDWICH TERN	<i>Sterna sandvicensis sandvicensis</i>	1 seen Funchal Harbour 2/9, 2 same place 3/9.
COMMON TERN	<i>Sterna hirundo hirundo</i>	Few seen every day at Funchal Harbour or Hotel Balcony (max. 10+ on 1/9).
FERAL ROCK DOVE	<i>Columba livia</i>	Plenty seen every day. Genuine wild birds suspected at Ponta de São Laurenço.

LONG-TOED/TROCAZ PIGEON	<i>Columba trocaz (m)</i>	1 heard along levada from Ribiero Frio to the Balcões, 2 seen at the Balcões and a further 5 flyovers from the road to Fajã da Nogueira (all 31/8).
PLAIN SWIFT	<i>Apus unicolor (m)</i>	Widespread; seen every day in decent numbers (max. 30+ Funchal 4/9).
BERTHELOT'S PIPIT	<i>Anthus berthelotii madeirensis</i>	30+ seen at Ponta de São Lourenço 1/9, 1 Deserta Grande 2/9.
GREY WAGTAIL	<i>Motacilla cinerea schmitzi</i>	Seen every day in small numbers (max. 10+ Machico 1/9) anywhere where there is fresh water.
(EUROPEAN) ROBIN	<i>Erithacus rubecula rubecula</i>	Singles only seen at Monte (30/8), Levada da Torrios (3/9) and Levada da Serra Choupena (4/9).
CANARIAN BLACKBIRD	<i>Turdus merula cabrarae</i>	Seen most days in wooded habitats and in Funchal (17 recorded during the week).
SPECTACLED WARBLER BLACKCAP	<i>Sylvia conspicillata orbitalis</i> <i>Sylvia atricapilla heineken</i>	2 seen in scrub by side of Hotel 1/9. Seen and heard occasionally (11 recorded during the week).
MADEIRA FIRECREST	<i>Regulus (ignicapilla) madeirensis</i>	3 seen and several heard Ribiero Frio - Balcões 31/8, 6 seen and several heard Levada da Torrios 3/9, 2 seen and more heard Levada da Serra Choupena 4/9.
COMMON WAXBILL	<i>Estrilda astrild kempii</i>	30+ seen at Machico 1/9; also at least 4 in the reedy scrub at the side of the Hotel on 3/9 and another the following day.
MADEIRAN CHAFFINCH	<i>Fringilla coelebs madeirensis</i>	30+ seen Ribiero Frio - Balcões 31/8, 5 Levada da Torrios and Botanic Gardens (3/9), 4 Levada da Serra Choupena (4/9).
(ATLANTIC) CANARY GOLDFINCH	<i>Serinus canaria (m)</i> <i>Carduelis carduelis parva</i>	Commonly seen everywhere. Few seen at Funchal, Monte and Machico.

Reptiles

Madeira Wall Lizard - *Teira dugesii*

Marine Life

Dorado - Luis, the skipper of the Ventura do Mar caught one.

Unidentified Flying Fish

Unidentified (probably Fin or Sei) Whales

Trigger Fish

Atlantic Spotted Dolphin - *Stenella frontalis*

Bottlenose Dolphin - *Tursiops truncatus*

Plants

Difficult to tell what's wild and what's not (most are introduced) but the following put on a decent show :-

Nile Lily - *Agapanthus umbellatus (A. campanulatus?)*

Ginger Lily - *Hedychium conorarium (H. gardnerianum?)*

Pride of Madeira - *Echium candicans*

Mexican Fleabane - *Erigeron karvinskianus*

Dragon Tree - *Dracaena draco*

Madeiran Storksbill - *Geranium maderense*

Madeira Bindweed - *Convolvulus massonii*

Century Plant - *Agave americana*

Maguey Plant - *Agave attenuata*

Love Lies Bleeding - *Amaranthus spp.*

Bougainvillea - *Bougainvillea spectabilis*

Hibiscus - *Hibiscus spp.*

Castor Oil Plant - *Ricinus communis*

Swiss Cheese Plant - *Monstera deliciosa*

Oleander - *Nerium oleander*

Bird of Paradise Flower - *Strelitzia reginae*



The Century Plant or Agave in flower.
(it only flowers every twenty or so years)

Brown Lady's Slipper - *Cypripedium spp.*
Angel's Trumpet - *Datura mollis*



Long-tailed Blue

Butterflies

Small White – *Artogeia rapae*

Clouded Yellow – *Colias crocea*

Long-tailed Blue - *Lampides boeticus*

Monarch – *Danaus plexippus*

Madeiran Brimstone (Cleopatra) - *Gonepteryx maderensis*

European Red Admiral - *Vanessa atalanta*

Madeiran Speckled Wood - *Patarge xiphia*

European (Southern) Speckled Wood - *Patarge aegeria aegeria*