

BIRDING TRIP REPORT

MADEIRA

1 August – 8 August 2005

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Introduction

Our trip was booked on line at www.thomson.co.uk and cost just over £400 pp, for a week at the Hotel Raga in Funchal on a Bed & Breakfast basis. The hotel was set back from the Lido area and we were able to sea watch from our hotel rooms.

Prior to departure we had booked an overnight trip to the Desertas Islands (125 euros pp) on the sailing boat 'Ventura do Mar' and whilst in Madeira we booked a further 3 hour evening trip (35 euros pp). As we had great views of all the expected seabirds during these trips we didn't bother with the ferry to Porto Santo.

We would definitely recommend the 'Ventura do Mar' and advance bookings can be made by emailing Venturadomar@iol.pt. They also arranged our night trip to look for **Zino's Petrel** which cost 40 euros pp plus an extra 20 euros each for the park entrance fee.

Once we returned from the Desertas we hired a car for 4 days (60 euros per day for a Ford Fiesta), although we did experience some difficulty finding an available car, so it may be worth booking in advance if travelling to Madeira during peak holiday periods.

Sites

All the main bird sites are well documented on the Birding Madeira website madeira.seawatching.net and this was our main source of pre trip information. We found the track to Faja da Nogueira by far the easiest place to get good views of **Trocaz Pigeon** and the trip to the Desertas produced our best views of **Fea's/Zino's Petrels**, with the views from land being some what distant.

Daily Itinerary

Monday 1 August

We caught a 13.05 flight from Bristol to Funchal arriving some 3+ hours later. After collecting our baggage we transferred by coach to the Hotel Raga in Funchal and an evening seawatch from our hotel rooms produced large numbers of **Cory's Shearwaters** heading east along with **60+ Bulwer's Petrels**, a single **Roseate Tern** and some very distant unidentified **Dolphins**.

Tuesday 2 August

After breakfast, we caught two taxis down to Funchal Marina and at 10.30 we boarded the 'Ventura do Mar' for an overnight sailing trip to the Desertas Islands. Also on board were fellow British birders Chris & Helena Craig and family, along with two non birding Portuguese passengers. It took around 4 hours to get to Deserta Grande and the middle part of the crossing was quite choppy as we cut across a force 4/5 NE wind. Between Funchal and Deserta Grande we encountered **1 Fea's Petrel** (photographed) and **7 Fea's/Zino's Petrels**. We also obtained good views of **Mako Shark** and **Loggerhead Turtle**. Once in the lea of Deserta Grande the sea conditions improved some what, and after mooring offshore, a few of the more intrepid amongst us took the plunge and entered the rather cold Atlantic waters !!!

Late afternoon we transferred by dingy to Deserta Grande, and during a brief visit ashore we had excellent views of **Canary** and **Berthelot's Pipit**, both coming to the drinking pool next to the warden's house. We returned to the boat for tea, before setting off on a two hour evening cruise down towards Bugio and back, during which we saw large numbers of **Cory's Shearwaters**, had great views of **Bulwer's Petrel** and HH managed to obtain a superb series of photos of a **Fea's Petrel** that swept past the boat at very close range. Additionally, we saw a further **3 Fea's/Zino's Petrels**.

We arrived back at Deserta Grande around 21.30 and after mooring up, we spent the night on the boat.

Wednesday 3 August

After breakfast, we set sail for Funchal around 09.00 and encountered even worse sea conditions than the day before, with the wind gusting up to 45 knots at one point !! Luis, the skipper said it was the roughest crossing of the year and we spent most of the time hanging onto the boat, with a few of us getting rather wet. Even so we managed a few **Bulwer's Petrels**, another **Fea's/Zino's Petrel**, quite a few **Loggerhead Turtles** and excellent views of a group of around **20 Spotted Dolphins**. Once safely ashore, we caught a taxi back to the Hotel Raga, and after sorting out a hire car for the following morning, we spent the rest of the day chilling out.

Thursday 4 August

Collected hire car at 09.00 and headed straight to the mountains eventually ending up at Faja da Nogueira. The drivable track that leads into the valley proved to be excellent for **Trocaz Pigeons**, although it was much easier to see them in flight than perched up. We also saw quite a few juvenile **Madeira Firecrests** and eventually retired for lunch at a small bar/restaurant in Ribeiro Frio.

First stop after lunch was the high point on the road between Poiso and Santo da Serra where we quickly located a pair of **Spectacled Warblers**. Heading away from Poiso, after about 2km, you'll see a parking area on the left hand side of the road with a few picnic tables set back from the road. Park here – the birds could be heard singing from the car.

We continued heading east, ending up at Ponta de Sao Lourenco, where we couldn't find any **Rock Sparrows**, but did see a few **Berthelot's Pipits** around the car park. From here we stopped at the harbour front in Canical for our only **Spanish Sparrows** of the trip and then moved onto Machico where we quickly located a group of **50+ Common Waxbills**.

Final stop of the day was Funchal Harbour where we managed to locate the **1st summer Ring-billed Gull**, that had been frequenting the harbour since July.

Friday 5 August

A quick visit to Funchal Harbour after breakfast failed to produce the **Ring-billed Gull** again, and we headed off west along the coast to the small pool at Lugar de Baixo, where we added a few birds to the trip list. After a brief stop for drinks at a nearby café we drove to Porto Moniz via Serra de Agua, Sao Vicente and Ribeira da Janela. A brief detour inland from Ribeira da Janela failed to produce any **Trocaz Pigeons**, and we seawatched at Porto Moniz for just over an hour, seeing several hundred **Cory's Shearwaters** and **20+ Bulwer's Petrels**.

We eventually retired for a late lunch at a restaurant in Porto Moniz, before returning to Funchal, where a further seawatch from our hotel rooms produced plenty of **Cory's Shearwaters** and **100+ Bulwer's Petrels**.

At 21.30 four of the group (MW opted to stay behind) were collected from the hotel by Catarina Fagundes from Madeira Wind Birds for a night trip to Pico do Arieiro to look for **Zino's Petrels**. Fortunately conditions were ideal, with little wind (it had been quite windy earlier in the week) and immediately upon arrival at our final viewing point we heard our first haunting call. Within several minutes all four of us had obtained silhouette flight views against the lights of the valley below and over the next hour or so we had several more brief glimpses. However, the closest views were saved for last and as we prepared to set off on the 20 minute walk back to the van, a bird shot over the ridge and whizzed past our heads at less than 10 feet, ensuring the trip ended on a real high ! Back in bed by just after 1am.

Saturday 6 August

A late start this morning and as yesterday, we headed off along the coast to Lugar de Baixo. This time we continued right along the coast stopping first at Calheta, where we had a **Roseate Tern** fishing in the harbour and then at the most westerly point, Ponta do Pargo where we added **Rock Sparrow**, before finally moving onto Porto Moniz, where we undertook a sea watch between 4 and 8pm.

Highlight of the seavatch were **2 Little Shearwaters**, amongst the large number of **Cory's Shearwaters**. We also had distant views of at least **6 Fea's/Zino's Petrels**, **12+ Bulwer's Petrels** and several **Manx Shearwaters**, along with a distant unidentified large whale.

Sunday 7 August

Another late breakfast and we started off with a visit to Pico do Arieiro, to take a look at the **Zino's Petrel** site in daylight ! Unfortunately, the viewing point was rammed with people so we quickly moved onto the **Spectacled Warbler** site east of Poiso where we had a male bird in song flight.

Our second visit to Faja da Nogueira produced more excellent views of **Trocaz Pigeon** and **Madeira Firecrest** and after another lunch in Ribeiro Frio, we returned to our hotel in Funchal to prepare for our evening trip on the 'Ventura do Mar'.

We left Funchal Harbour at 18.30, and our trip lasted around 3 hours. We had some great views of **Bulwer's Petrels** and **1 distant Fea's/Zino's Petrel**, along with the obligatory **Cory's Shearwaters**. The main highlight though were the superb views we obtained of a pod of **Bottle-nosed Dolphins** bow riding the boat, although disappointingly we failed to catch up with the **Sei Whale** that had been seen on an another trip, earlier in the day.

Monday 8 August

Whilst waiting to vacate our rooms on the final morning, PB spotted a large whale blowing from the hotel balcony. As it transpired there were two individuals and eventually we managed to obtain reasonable views of both animals through our telescopes. A pair of **Sei Whales**, feeding in exactly the same area we had been the previous night on the 'Ventura do Mar'. Would have been great to have seen them from a boat, but it wasn't meant to be !

We finally vacated our rooms at midday and after a coach transfer to the Airport, we caught a 17.30 flight back to Bristol arriving just before 21.00.

SYSTEMATIC LIST

In total we saw 40 species.

Zino's Petrel *Pterodroma madeira*

Minimum of 2 birds at Pico do Arieiro 5/8.

Fea's Petrel *Pterodroma feae*

Two birds photographed from the 'Ventura do Mar' on 2/8 between Madeira and Desertas showed a range of features consistent with Fea's Petrel. 1 bird photographed half way between Funchal and Desertas and another bird photographed as we sailed past Bugio during the evening.

Fea's/Zino's Petrel *Pterodroma feae/madeira*

Up to 10 birds on 2/8 between Madeira and Desertas from Ventura do Mar, followed by 1 on the return journey on 3/8. At least 6 distant birds at Porto Moniz on 6/8 and another distant bird from the 'Ventura do Mar' during an evening trip off Funchal on 7/8.

Bulwer's Petrel *Bulweria bulwerii*

80+ Funchal (Lido) on 1/8, 30+ from 'Ventura do Mar' between Madeira and Desertas on 2-3/8, 20+ Porto Moniz 5/8, 100+ Funchal (Lido) 5/8, 12+ Porto Moniz 6/8 and 30+ off Funchal on 7/8 during evening trip on 'Ventura do Mar'.

Cory's Shearwater *Calonectris diomedea borealis*

Common offshore - particularly numerous in evenings.

Manx Shearwater *Puffinus puffinus*

3 Funchal (Lido) 5/8 and 4+ Porto Moniz 6/8.

Little Shearwater *Puffinus assimilis baroli*

2 birds watched distantly sat amongst Cory's Shearwaters off Porto Moniz on 6/8 eventually took off and flew close inshore past Ilheu Mole giving superb flight views.

Little Egret *Egretta garzetta*

1 Machico 4/8.

Sparrowhawk *Accipiter nisus*

1 Faja da Nogueira 4/8, 1 Funchal Harbour 4/8, 1 enroute from Ponta do Pargo to Porto Moniz on 6/8 and 1 Pico do Arieiro 7/8.

Buzzard *Buteo buteo*

Seen regularly - maximum of 7 birds on 4/8.

Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus canariensis*

Seen daily.

Common Moorhen *Gallinula chloropus*

2 Lugar de Baixo on 5/8 & 6/8.

Eurasian Coot *Fulica atra*

2 Lugar de Baixo 5/8 and 5 there on 6/8.

Sanderling *Calidris alba*

1 Machico 4/8.

Whimbrel *Numenius phaeopus*

1 Sao Vicente 5/8 and 100+ past Porto Moniz 6/8.

Common Sandpiper *Actitis hypoleucos*

1 Lugar de Baixo 5/8.

Turnstone *Arenaria interpres*

1 Deserta Grande 3/8, 1 Funchal Harbour 4/8, 1 Lugar de Baixo 5/8 and 5 Porto Moniz 6/8.

Yellow-legged Gull *Larus michahellis atlantis*

Seen commonly throughout trip.

Lesser Black-backed Gull *Larus fuscus*

2 Funchal 2/8, 1 Funchal 4/8 and 1 Lugar de Baixo 6/8.

Ring-billed Gull *Larus delawarensis*

A first summer bird at Funchal Harbour 4/8.

Black-headed Gull *Larus ridibundus*

1 adult Porto Moniz 6/8.

Common Tern *Sterna hirundo*

Seen commonly along all coastal areas.

Roseate Tern *Sterna dougallii*

1 Funchal (Lido) 1/8 and 1 Calheta 6/8.

Feral Pigeon *Columba livia*

Seen daily.

Trocaz Pigeon *Columba trocaz*

20+ Faja da Nogueira 4/8, 12+ Faja da Nogueira 7/8 and 2 Ribeiro Frio 7/8.

Pallid Swift *Apus pallidus*

2 Faja da Nogueira 4/8.

Plain Swift *Apus unicolor*

Common.

Grey Wagtail *Motacilla cinerea*

Fairly common.

Berthelot's Pipit *Anthus berthelotii madeirensis*

3 Deserta Grande 3/8, 4 Ponta de Sao Lourenco 4/8, 2 Ponta do Pargo 6/8 and 1 Pico do Arieiro 7/8.

Robin *Erithacus rubecula*

1 Faja da Nogueira 4/8 and several heard Ribeira da Janela on 5/8.

Blackbird *Turdus merula*

Seen daily.

Spectacled Warbler *Sylvia conspicillata orbitalis*

2 birds just east of Poiso on the road to Santo da Serra on 4/8 and 1 bird there on 7/8.

Blackcap *Sylvia atricapilla*
Heard and seen almost daily.

Madeira Firecrest *Regulus madeirensis*
5+ Faja da Nogueira 4/8, 1 Ribeiro Frio 4/8, 5 enroute from Ponta do Pargo to Porto Moniz on 6/8 and 2+ Faja da Nogueira 7/8.

Spanish Sparrow *Passer hispaniolensis*
4 Canical 4/8.

Rock Sparrow *Petronia petronia*
9 Ponta do Pargo 6/8.

Chaffinch *Fringilla coelebs madeirensis*
Seen commonly in mountain areas.

Linnet *Carduelis cannabina*
3 east of Poiso on 7/8.

Canary *Serinus canaria*
Common – also seen on Deserta Grande.

Goldfinch *Carduelis carduelis*
1 Funchal 2/8, 2 Funchal 4/8 and 1 Pico de Arieiro 7/8.

Common Waxbill *Estrilda astrild*
50+ Machico 4/8.

Cetaceans

Bottle-nosed Dolphin *Tursiops truncatus*
Superb views of up to 10 individuals from the ‘Ventura do Mar’ on 7/8.

Atlantic Spotted Dolphin *Stenella frontalis*
20+ from ‘Ventura do Mar’ on 3/8, between Desertas and Funchal.

Sei Whale *Balaenoptera borealis*
2 individuals spotted from hotel balcony on 8/8, whilst waiting to vacate room !

Unidentified Whales
1 very distant large whale blowing offshore from Porto Moniz on 6/8.

Unidentified Dolphins
Group of very distant animals seen from hotel room on 1/8.

Others

Mako Shark *Isurus oxyrinchus*
1 between Funchal and Desertas on 2/8.

Shark sp
1 off Desertas on 2/8.

Loggerhead Turtle *Caretta caretta*

10+ from 'Ventura do Mar' during Desertas trip on 2-3/8.

Acknowledgements

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