

Introduction

It all started with a chance remark by my brother Robin over Christmas dinner in the UK. Robin is a fishing guide and last year led groups to fish the east coast of Fuerteventura, and was going to do the same this year. “I’ve got some beds available for the first week in February if you’re interested” was his comment. Great idea, but not practical for various reasons were my first thoughts, but when I actually started looking into it, it DID seem possible, and by the end of Christmas Day, I’d booked four flights (Murcia – Stansted, Stansted – Fuerteventura plus their returns) and a hire car for a week.



I’d never been to the Canary Islands, and so obviously there were going to be some new birds there for me, so I had now to do a little background study as to what I might and might not see, and where to go. My only reference guides were an updated 1994 GosTours guide ‘Finding Birds in The Canary Islands’ by Dave Gosney and the Spanish Lynx guide ‘Dónde ver aves en España’, plus any more recent trip reports I could come up with. In the end, the most recent and best trip report more or less covering the period I would be there was one by Ferran López who had been there 4th to 11th January 2011 (www.reservoirbirds.com, Trip Reports, Region=Palearctic, Country=Canary Islands).

As to the birds, there were four definite new ones for me, being year-round residents and one being endemic to the island. These were **Berthelot’s Pipit**, **Fuerteventura Chat**, **African Blue Tit** and **Houbara Bustard**. Apart from these, there was a further summer visitor, **Plain Swift**, which was in theory a possibility, but judging from reports I had read, they tended to come in later unless an early bird could be found.

Also to be seen on the island are a number of endemic sub-species, including **Common Buzzard**, **Egyptian Vulture**, **Raven**, **Kestrel** and **Desert Grey Shrike**, so there should be plenty to look for!

On my visit, many places that would normally be bone dry were actually quite wet, due to there having been the heaviest rains for over 30 years the previous November.

Logistics and Costing

As I mentioned before, I actually went first to London Stansted from Murcia, there being a daily direct flight arriving at 22:00 hrs on the Friday night, and then from Stansted to Fuerteventura at 06:20 on the Saturday morning, landing on Fuerteventura at approx. 10:20 hrs. Collecting the hire car took about an hour, and I then waited to pick up my brother and his friend and went off to Caleta de Fuste, which was to be my home for the next week. My reason for doing the trip like that was one of cost (total of £130 approx for the 4 flights - much cheaper than flying to Madrid and catching a plane from there!) and also that I wanted to call in on my Mother in Essex for a few days on my way back.

My hire car was arranged through 'www.doyouspain.com' and the cost was 55.36€ for the week, plus an additional 34.93€ for a top-up insurance policy to make sure there was total cover on the car (including the underneath, tyres, mirrors etc.). However, and this is something to watch out for, if you take out this insurance, you need to have a credit card in your name when you pick the car up as they put an 800€ block on it. They can only do this on a credit card, so if, like me, you only have debit cards, you will be forced to take out additional insurance the hire company supplies. Luckily I found out about this before the hire period started, and was able to cancel the insurance supplied by 'doyouspain'. The downside is that the extra insurance from the hire company came to around 20€ per DAY, so that by the time I'd paid for that and a full tank of petrol, they'd taken an extra 173.10€ off me at the airport.

During the week I did a total of exactly 1,000 kilometres (not bad considering the island is only 100 km. long), and I had to top up the petrol tank once from almost on the red, but as the petrol only cost 88 cents per litre, the refill only cost me a further 30€.

All the roads on the island seemed to be in excellent condition, but very busy! This may have been due to it being cloudy for most of my visit (hence tourists instead of being on the beaches, were in their hire-cars exploring the island), and in general impossible to stop on the main roads. Once on the cinder tracks however, you had the place to yourself and could stop as much as you wanted. As I say, it was cloudy for most of the week with sunny breaks, apart from the Thursday when I went to the south of the island (Morro Jable) where there was more blue sky than cloud, and that day it was actually short sleeves and shorts weather (uncomfortable in jeans).

Food and lodging

As mentioned before, I was staying in a townhouse in Caleta de Fuste, rented by my brother Robin, and so at no cost to me. All meals were had out, and I can honestly say that I didn't have a bad one, and can especially recommend for meat eaters the Fado Rock Restaurant (www.fadorock.com) for its 5 steaks cooked at the table on hot volcanic stone for 15€ (steaks include Ostrich, Kangaroo, Beef)! Full English breakfast at the Trafalgar Restaurant at 4.50€ including a mug of tea was also good value, as was the half chicken cooked on a barbeque together with potatoes at the Tirol Restaurant washed down with DRAUGHT Pilsner Urquell! And on the occasions I was out of town at lunchtime, getting a 'bocadillo' (large roll) of ham, cheese and tomato, bottle of still water plus coffee plus snickers bar for around 5€ seemed to be the norm, or a one plate meal for around 7€ at a bar. Evenings during the early part of the week were spent at the Dog and Duck Pub, as they had good WiFi, something we didn't have in the house until the latter part of the week (they also had cheap beer and pool and snooker tables and were literally on the other side of the street to our 'home base', all additional reasons to call in there). All in all, food prices (and indeed drink prices) seemed cheap compared to Murcia.



The 'Fado Rock' Steakhouse for good food



The 'Dog and Duck' Pub for internet, beer and pool!

My birding was not what I'd call 'harcore' (dawn to dusk) – I was on holiday after all! I would get to my first port of call around an hour after dawn, and carry on until my stomach told me it was time to stop (normally around 2pm). Then after eating I would continue for a few hours more, getting back to Caleta de Fuste around 6-30pm.

So without further ado, where I went, what I saw and when! At the end of the underlined headings for each location visited, you will see in parentheses two numbers separated by a comma – if you copy and paste these into the Google Earth search function, they will take you to the location.

Day 1 - Sunday 1st February 2015

Today getting used to the terrain and starting my search for the four endemics to the Canary Islands.

Embalse (Reservoir) de los Molinos – 08:45 to 11:30 – (28.512754, -14.031278)

After catching up on missed sleep and I must admit more than one beer on Saturday afternoon, early Sunday morning I was up and willing and keen to get out into the field. I decided that as a first stop I should try the 'Embalse de Los Molinos' as this could produce all three of the species I was particularly looking for. It was also only about 45 minutes away, and would give me an idea of the type of terrain I would be traversing for the next week. My route was Caleta de Fuste to Antigua (FV-413), La Ampuyente (FV-20), crossing the Llanos de la Concepción and the FV-207 towards Tefía, and taking the left turn signposted Los Molinos (FV-221). Here I had sight of my first **Berthelot's Pipit** and **Lesser Short-toed Larks** at the side of the road. Following this into the village of 'Las Parcelas', just before the sign that indicates the end of 'Las Parcelas' on a right bend in the road, there is a track that appears to lead into a farm but actually follows the east bank of the 'Barranco de Los Molinos'. I actually missed this turning the first time

and ended up crossing the 'barranco' (river course) and so decided to carry on to see where it would lead me. At the end of the road is the 'Puertito de Los Molinos' and a ford which I didn't cross, but in the water in the ford was a flock of **Muscovy Ducks** and a **Common Sandpiper**. Making a three point turn, I backtracked and found the track I was looking for. As with the majority of tracks on the island (presumably due to the easily available clinker on this volcanic island), tracks off the main roads tend to be in good condition and easily traversed with my hire car (a Fiat Punto). I followed the track along the top of the 'barranco' for approx. 1.5 km, parking finally at the end by the dam. Here there are a couple of broken down buildings and I had my first birds of note – **Spanish Sparrow** (all the sparrows on the island are Spanish), and **Trumpeter Finches**. The **Spanish Sparrows** were obviously nesting in one of the buildings, and the **Trumpeter Finches** somewhere nearby and the male was 'singing' and the female collecting nesting materials.



The building where the Spanish Sparrows nest



The dam and reservoir behind it – Trumpeter Finches were grubbing around the start of the dam

Leaving the car by the dam, I went through a gate and walked along a track of sorts parallel to the reservoir until reaching the end of the reservoir. On this walk I had **Ravens** and **Common Buzzards** flying on the other side of the reservoir, and a few **Yellow-legged Gulls**, and in the reservoir itself I counted 93 **Ruddy Shelduck** and a few (5) **Coots** but nothing else. **Lesser Short-toed Larks** were singing from the fields to my left, and more **Trumpeter Finches** on the rocks down to the reservoir, and a couple of times I heard **Black-bellied Sandgrouse** to my left, finally seeing a couple in flight. Reaching the end of the reservoir, a **Kestrel** flew up from its lookout in the cliff and a **Grey Heron** from the marsh area at the end of the reservoir. All the time I could hear **Berthelot's Pipits**, but no sign of either **Houbara Bustards** or **Fuerteventura Chat**.

La Oliva to Lajares – 12:40 to 14:00 - (Track begins 28.623278, -13.942319; goat farm 28.633671, -13.951787)

After a brief stop in the centre of the pretty village of La Oliva (and I can recommend the cheap ‘bocadillos’ purchased to take away at the kiosk in the square by the church), I made my way to the famous goat farm where according to the Gosney guide, **Houbara Bustards** walk down the slopes to the farm at dusk. The track itself is easily overlooked – on the FV-10 north out of La Oliva, just before the ‘end of La Oliva’ sign just after the last houses, there is a track to the left that slopes up. Take this and follow the track until reaching some buildings on the right. These are the famous ‘goat farm’. Before reaching them, in a small green area on both sides of the track I had my first **Spectacled Warblers**. Follow the track until you reach a ‘T’ junction with a fence. Here I turned right, and then followed this track along the fence (the fenced area is a reserve for the Houbaras) all the way until it rejoined the FV-10 at Lajares. Along this track I had more **Berthelot’s Pipits**, **Ravens**, **Lesser Short-toed Larks** and a couple of **Ruddy Shelducks** over, but despite stopping and checking every few hundred metres, I saw no sign of the **Houbaras**.



La Oliva centre, where there is a kiosk where ‘food to go’ can be bought



Leaving La Oliva to the north, after the last houses and before the ‘end of La Oliva’ sign there is a track to the left that leads to the ‘goat farm’ area



Uphill from the 'goat farm' there is a vast plains area, fenced off for the Houbaras

Llanura de el Cotillo – 14:30 to 15:00 – (El Tostón Tower 28.679967, -14.010579)

Reaching the town of El Cotillo, the plains to the south, parallel to the coast are worth a look (plenty of driveable tracks), and here I had 5 **Black-bellied Sandgrouse**, **Kestrel** and **Lesser Short-toed Larks**. In the fishing harbour was a couple of **Turnstones** and plenty of **Yellow-legged Gulls**.



The picturesque harbour of El Cotillo, viewed from the southern cliffs

La Oliva goat farm – 16:00 to 18:20 (dusk) – (28.633671, -13.951787)

Returning to the goat farm to see if any **Houbaras** would show, I had 3 **Black-bellied Sandgrouse**, **Kestrel**, **Ravens** and a **Spectacled Warbler**, but no sign of **Houbaras**.

Day 2 - Monday 2nd February 2015

Today I decided to have a look at the 'Salinas del Carmen' south of Caleta de Fuste, the 'Barranco de La Torre' and then gradually work my way inland.

Salinas del Carmen – 10:30 to 11:30 – (carpark 28.367760, -13.871193)

A leisurely look around the Salinas, which are currently being repaired for use, produced a **Kestrel**, a couple of **Yellow-legged Gulls** and 5 **Audouin's Gulls**. The Salinas are approx. 3 km south of Caleta de Fuste on the FV-2 south of the two golf courses. They are signposted from the main road as Las Salinas and 'Museo de la Sal'.



Just south of Caleta de Fuste, La Salinas (Salinas del Carmen)

Barranco de la Antigua – 12:00 to 13:30 – (exit from main FV-2, 28.372311, -13.928917; pond 28.377595, -13.928049)

Searching for a way into the ‘Barranco de la Torre’, I couldn’t find the exit off the main FV-2 mentioned in the trip reports I’d seen – possibly due to the age of the reports and road re-surfacing. However I came across an access to another ‘barranco’ by accident – on the main FV-2 heading south taking a right turn signposted ‘Circuito de los Alares’. Then when this road splits, taking the right track, I came across a small pond with **Little Ringed Plovers**, **Black Winged Stilts**, a single **Black-tailed Godwit**, 4 **Moorhen**, a pair of **Ruddy Shelducks**, and walking along the barranco from there, I had **Ravens**, plenty of **Trumpeter Finches**, **Spectacled** and **Sardinian Warblers** and **Spanish Sparrows**, and my first **Barbary Ground Squirrels**. However walking into the barranco about half a kilometre, I came across a sign to say the barranco was closed to walkers from 1st February due to nesting birds, so I didn’t continue any further.



The pond I found in the ‘barranco de la Antigua’ with Stilts and a Black-tailed Godwit

Tuineje – 14:30 to 14:40 – (28.324913, -14.049642)

My idea had been to have a look at the lagoon at Catalina Garcia mentioned by Ferran López in his trip report, off the FV-20 (at **28.295381, -14.019232**), but using the ‘Google Maps’ loaded on my phone, I couldn’t find it, and wonder if it hadn’t dried up, as theoretically I was in the right place.

So I carried on to the village of Tuineje, parking in the carpark opposite the courthouse. Here I had **Blackcaps** singing, and a single unexpected **Monarch** butterfly flying around the bushes around the main road. I stayed for about half an hour, searching for a place to have lunch, but the village was very quiet and the only bar I found open closed before I could get in it, so I carried on to Pájara.

Pájara – 15:00 to 16:00 – (28.351202, -14.106009)

By now very hungry and thirsty, I stopped at the first eating place I could find entering Pájara, the Cafeteria Los Deportes. Here I had a late lunch outside, and while eating I could hear various birds in the trees opposite, including **Spanish Sparrows**, a **Kestrel** calling, the metallic chiff-chaff song of a **Chiffchaff** and **African Blue Tits**. As I particularly wanted to see the **African Blue Tit** to see the difference between it and normal **Blue Tit**, I decided to have a walk through the area. At the back of the trees there is a dry riverbed lined with bushes, and here I had **Blackcaps** and **Chiffchaffs** singing, several **African Blue Tits**, and heard the call of a bird I had been searching for without success back in Murcia during the late autumn, **Yellow-browed Warbler**. I had only the briefest of views of it. Also calling noisily was a **Ring-necked Parakeet** from the treetops. This was definitely a place I would come back to before I left the island, but couldn't stay too long this visit.



The tree-lined dry river bed where many small birds were to be seen

Mirador (Viewpoint) Pájara – Betancuria – (28.379545, -14.05271)

At the highest point on the FV-30 between Pájara and Betancuria, there is a viewpoint worth stopping at. Here, apart from very tame **Barbary Ground Squirrels**, I had **Ravens** on the wooden railings and **Berthelot's Pipit** walking around virtually at my feet, plus a noisy group of **Spanish Sparrows**. All were very confiding, obviously used to people stopping and leaving crumbs from their sandwiches. Dropping back down to Betancuria, I had a quick stop on the road when I noticed a **Buzzard** posed on a rocky lookout – the only one I saw on the ground.



Views from the Pájara – Betancuria Mirador (lookout)

Day 3 - Tuesday 3rd February 2015

Today I was going to make a serious attempt to crack the **Houbaras**, starting with the Los Molinos reservoir, and then continuing with the Tindaya plains.

Embalse (Reservoir) de los Molinos – 11:20 to 12:55 – (28.512754, -14.031278)

Another trip to the reservoir in the hope of finding Houbaras, but again no luck. The birds seen were much the same as the previous visit; **Lesser Short-toed Larks**, **Trumpeter Finches**, **Spanish Sparrows**, **Berthelot's Pipits**, **Coots** and **Ruddy Shelducks**, plus my only **Egyptian Vulture** of the trip.

Tindaya plains – 14:00 to 16:30 – (cinder track crossroads – 28.606228, -14.002353)

Coming back to the main FV-207 road, passing north through Tefía and on towards La Oliva on the FV-10, to the left is a sign for the village of Tindaya. Taking this left, go through the village always staying on the main road (even though there are many turn-offs), and eventually you drop down in altitude and come to a track that leads toward the west coast of the island. About 1 ½ km along this track, there is a crossroads whose co-ordinates are marked above. Here you need to go in any direction, exploring all the tracks. Here there are many **Lesser Short-toed Larks** and **Berthelot's Pipits** and this is where I finally got to see my first (and second, third, fourth and fifth) **Houbara Bustards**. My first one was with the aid of another birder who had been watching it for some time – it was quite distant ('scope needed) and I only saw the neck and head of the bird. At the same time I saw my only **Cream Coloured Courser** of the trip, which is a shame, as I was concentrating on the Houbara and so only saw the Courser for a few seconds before it was lost to view.



After the last houses, the Tindaya plains stretch westwards to the sea



The whole area is crisscrossed by tracks to explore

While exploring, I had 2 falcons shoot across behind the car. I managed to rattle off a few photos, and later confirmed my initial suspicions that they were **Barbary Falcons**.

Continuing exploring the plains, I came across a building that seemed to be in re-construction, and out of no-where, 4 **Houbaras** appeared next to the car and wandered nonchalantly off, feeding on the vegetation as they went. I watched them for about 10 minutes before they eventually wandered off and out of view. What a result to have them so close, and obviously I took quite a few photos!

Fuerteventura Golf Course, Caleta de Fuste – 17:20 to 17:45 – (28.389993, -13.875242)

After finally seeing the third of my key species, I made my way back to Caleta de Fuste. As there was still plenty of light, I thought I'd have a look at the Fuerteventura Golf Course (one of two at Caleta de Fuste). Unsure as to whether it was open to the public for walking, I kept to the kart tracks, and had a look at the two ponds there. Both appeared very low in water, with the plastic liners showing well, but at one there was **Whimbrel, Redshank, Common Sandpiper, Mallard** and **Coots**. Wandering around the fairways were numerous **Ruddy Shelduck** (I

estimated a minimum of 50), and with them, to my surprise, a **Spoonbill**! Even more surprising was that it had a green colour ring, but I couldn't read it as it was just a bit too far away. I later found out that they are occasional winter visitors to the island, and that the bird I had seen was a German ringed bird. On my way out of the golf course, a **Desert Grey Shrike** posed on one of the fences for me, although the light was by now going fast.

Day 4 - Wenesday 4th February 2015

Return to the Houbaras, and on for the Chat.

Tindaya plains – 09:30 to 11:40 – (crossroads – 28.606228, -14.002353)

Returning by a more direct route, it took me about 30 minutes to get from Caleta de Fuste to Tindaya where I continued searching for **Houbaras**. I came across one almost immediately at the side of the track I was on before getting to the abovementioned crossroads. Taking a few photos, I then carried on, now more intent to find **Coursers**, but without any luck. I bumped into a pair of Swedish birders who were also looking for the Bustards, so I told them where I had seen the group the previous afternoon. As I was in no hurry, I said I'd guide them to the spot, but just beyond the crossroads I spotted one again close to the track. Waving them to stop, I pointed out the bird, and was then absolutely amazed (as the Swedish birders were) when a second drab looking bird suddenly turned into a spotlight dancing around the first. It was a male displaying to a female! What a sight – it was suddenly transformed into a brilliant white running 'flasher' with black sides to its neck. Luckily I had my LUMIX camera with me and was able to video some of the action.

We all watched transfixed for about 20 minutes, until the **Bustards** eventually moved on. The Swedish birders still wanted to see my previous afternoon site, so I took them to it and left them there. On my way back, I re-found the **Bustards**, and the male was still displaying, but this time even closer to the track I was on. I also soon realised that there were now three birds, a male and two females, and every so often the females would have a go at each other. Again I stayed transfixed, watching the display, which finished very suddenly when a **Buzzard** appeared overhead, and the **Bustards** ran off rapidly in Roadrunner fashion!

Barranco de la Muley – 15:00 to 16:00 – (28.420828, -13.885787)

Talking to some local people the previous night in a bar, I mentioned that the accesses to the Barrancos seemed to be very different now to when my guides were written, for various reasons. I mentioned that I would be looking in particular for **Fuerteventura Chats**, and I was told of one much closer than mentioned in the guides. Taking the FV-413 towards Antigua from the Costa de Antigua (from the FV-2 coast road), after a couple of km there is a track off to the right with a sign for the 'Depuradora' (sewage treatment plant). Taking this track but continuing straight on where there is another right turn for the treatment plant itself, you eventually end up at a Barranco which you can drop your car partway into. Leaving the car and walking to the left along the bottom of the barranco, I came across an area with water in, **Little Ringed Plovers**, various **Trumpeter Finches**, **Spanish Sparrows**, **Berthelot's Pipits**, **Ravens**, **Spectacled Warblers**, 2 pairs of **Ruddy Shelducks** and my last target species, a pair of **Fuerteventura Chats**, which I watched for quite a while.



Barranco de la Muley. Turn off at the 'depuradora' sign, go straight past the water treatment plant to the barranco

Goat farm, by the Aerodromo del Jarde – 16:30 to 17:30 – (28.391232, -13.983003)

The same local who told me about the Barranco for the Chats, also told me of another site where Egyptian Vultures regularly show. It is a goat farm behind the Antigua aerodrome, or Aerodromo del Jarde. On this goat farm, dead goats are regularly left out for the vultures. I had a look around the area, but there was no sign of vultures, but neither of dead goats! I did see all the standard birds for the type of terrain – **Lesser Short-toed Lark, Berthelot's Pipit, Desert Grey Shrike, Raven** and **Spanish Sparrow**.



The 'blink and you'll miss it' roadsign, and the actual aerodrome

Caleta de Fuste beach – 22:00 – (28.395072, -13.858158)

At the sandy beach at Caleta de Fuste on the way back from supper at a restaurant, we had more than 10 **Sandwich Terns**, **Ringed Plovers** and a single **Whimbrel** in the dark (i.d.'d from calls).

Day 5 - Thursday 5th February 2015

Having got all my target species, today I was on a trip down to the south of the island to see what I could find.

Morro Jable beach – 11:25 to 13:00 – (28.048514, -14.329506)

Heading south on the FV-2, I arrived at Morro Jable at around 11-15. I first headed straight for the port (I have this thing about ports), but the only birds seen there were the Atlantic race of **Yellow-legged Gulls**. Retracing my steps to the entrance of Morro Jable, I found somewhere to park and stopped for a coffee. The reason for stopping there

was that on my way down, I had had a **Swift** fly over the car, and I wanted to see if I could re-locate it. I was at the beach area close to the lighthouse, where there is quite a lot of scrub land between the beach and main road, and here indeed, I found two **Swifts** feeding over the scrub (together with a single **House Martin**). Were they the swifts I wanted though? Luckily they were making regular low passes over the wooden beach walkway I was on, and I got to see them very well, albeit against a light cloud background. I discounted **Common Swift** on the not very scientific basis that it was way too early for them. That only left **Pallid Swift** and **Plain Swift**. Obviously, not having anything else to compare them with, I couldn't compare speed and depth of wingbeats, but to my mind they DID have a deep 'V' in the tail, much more than **Common/Pallids**, and I thought them to be **Plain**. I managed to get a couple of reasonable record photos of them. So, a bonus bird to my collection! I took a walk down to the beach (mainly because I had seen a **Desert Grey Shrike** posed on top of the shower block, and I'd have liked to get a photo). At the shower block, no **Desert Grey Shrike**, but to my surprise, two **Greylag Geese** wandering around the people who were showering the sand off of their feet! Also, on nearby rocks, more **Barbary Ground Squirrels**. I have no idea where the geese came from, although they appeared so tame my suspicions are that they could have come from a now defunct zoo in the town, which is where I had seen a group of 4 **Cattle Egrets** and a **Spoonbill** as I entered the town.



Morro Jable – port at the far end of town, and lighthouse area as you enter

Pájara – 13:30 to 15:30 – (28.351202, -14.106009)

Now beginning to think of my stomach again, and knowing that there was a more than decent cafe-bar at my next stop, I left Morro Jable at around 1pm and headed off for Pájara, arriving around 1:30. Here I had a spot of lunch, and then headed back into the little tree-lined dry river bed for another go at the **Yellow-browed Warbler**. I soon located it from its constant calling, and this time not only managed to get a good look at it, but also a couple of photos (never easy with a Phyllosc!). And I noted that while I was watching it, I could hear another bird calling from a different tree – two of them! I also had **Chiffchaffs** singing with their metallic song, **African Blue Tits**, **Blackcaps**, **Goldfinches** and the ever present **Spanish Sparrows**.

Vega de Río Palmas – 17:30 – 18:00 (28.393590, -14.087958)

Now gradually making my way back towards base at Caleta de Fuste, I called in en route at various Miradores (Lookout Points) on the way up to Betancuria, but with nothing that I hadn't seen on my previous visit, I didn't stay long. Making my way to the dammed pool at Vega de las Palmitas, I heard the single call of a **Barbary Partridge**

somewhere up on the rocky sides of the valley, but couldn't pin the bird down. On the lagoon itself there was nothing but a few **Coots** and **Ruddy Shelduck**.



Looking down on the 'Presa de las Peñitas' dam, with the Vega de Río Palmas village to the right

From here I made my way back to home base, and as there was still a little bit of light when I got back, I had a look at the sandy bay at Coleta, but all I saw was a total of 48 **Sandwich Terns** there.

Day 6 - Friday 6th February 2015

My last day, and having seen all my target species, I wasn't quite sure what to do, but the pull of the **Houbaras** (and the possibility of better views of **Cream Coloured Courser**) got the better of me and I headed north.

Tindaya plains – 10:20 to 12:20 – (crossroads – 28.606228, -14.002353)

Dropping down from the village of Tindaya to the cinder crossroads, I had my first **Houbara** of the morning, wandering around at the side of the track, and exploring the area in general, I had a further two birds. No luck with the **Courser**s though, but I did have further **Desert Grey Shrike**, **Berthelot's Pipits**, **Lesser Short-toed Larks**, **Ravens**, **Buzzards**, **Ruddy Shelduck**, and in the Barranco at the very north of the plains area, a pair of **Little Ringed Plovers**.

La Oliva to El Cutillo – 13:00 to 15:00 - (Track begins 28.623278, -13.942319)

After a quick call into La Oliva to purchase food and drink, I tried the tracks from the north of La Oliva through to El Cutillo, where I stopped for a short seawatch (and bocadillo). No seabirds seen from here, and very little seen on my way there (just 3 **Buzzards** and a **Kestrel** at the beginning of the track, more or less over La Oliva itself).

Corralejo – 15:30 to 16:30 – (28.742425, -13.864510)

Wanting to complete my exploration of the island, I decided to go from Castillo to Corralejo, the most northerly town on the island, if nothing else, to see Lanzarote and the Isla de Lobos where seabirds were supposed to breed, and also the off-chance of a decent seabird. However, when I got there the only 'seabirds' seen were half a dozen **Yellow-legged Gulls**, and a couple of **Sandwich Terns**, so I took a leisurely drive back to Caleta de Fuste to finish my birding on the island.



Corralejo harbour



Views from Corralejo and my drive back to Caleta de Fuste

Birds I missed

As far as I am aware, the resident bird species I DIDN'T see on my trip were limited to Laughing (Palm) Dove (*Streptopelia senegalensis*) (at the Vega de las Palmitas area), Barn Owl (*Tyto alba gracilirostris*) (no sites), Canary (*Serinus canaria*) (south of Betancuria at a picnic area where there is a re-plantation of Canary Pines) and also an overwintering Red-breasted Flycatcher (*Ficedula parva*) (at the beach at the 'Los Gorriones' hotel complex area near Morro Jable).

List of species seen/heard - Lista de especies observadas/oidas

(In blue, species and sub-species endemic to the Canary Islands - En azul especies y subespecies endémicas de Las Canarias. In RED, Spanish rarity - En rojo rareza estatal)

- 1- Ruddy Shelduck - Tarro canelo - *Tadorna ferruginea*
- 2- Barbary Partridge (heard) - Perdiz moruna (oido) - *Alectoris barbara koenigi*
- 3- Cattle Egret – Garcilla bueyera – *Bubulcus ibis*
- 4- Grey Heron - Garza real - *Ardea cinerea*
- 5- Spoonbill - Espátula común - *Platalea leucorodia*
- 6- Egyptian Vulture - Alimoche - *Neophron percnopterus majorensis*
- 7- Common Buzzard - Ratónero común - *Buteo buteo insularum*
- 8- Kestrel - Cernícalo vulgar - *Falco tinnunculus dacotiae*
- 9- Barbary Falcon - Halcón tagarote - *Falco peregrinoides*
- 10- Coot - Focha común - *Fulica atra*
- 11- Houbara Bustard - Hubara canaria - *Chlamydotis undulata fuerteventurae*
- 12- Black Winged Stilt - Cigüeñuela - *Himantopus himantopus*
- 13- Cream Coloured Courser - Corredor sahariano - *Cursorius cursor*
- 14- Little Ringed Plover - Chorlitejo chico - *Charadrius dubius*
- 15- Turnstone - Vuelvepiedras - *Arenaria interpres*
- 16- Common Sandpiper - Andarríos chico - *Actitis hypoleucos*
- 17- Common Redshank - Archibebe común - *Tringa totanus*
- 18- Whimbrel - Zarapito trinador - *Numenius phaeopus*
- 19- Black-tailed Godwit – Aguja colinegra – *Limosa limosa*
- 20- Yellow-legged Gull – Gaviota patiamarilla – *Larus michahellis atlantis*
- 21- Lesser Black-backed Gull – Gaviota sombría – *Larus fuscus*
- 22- Sandwich Tern - Charrán patinegro - *Sterna sandvicensis*
- 23- Black-bellied Sandgrouse - Ganga ortega - *Pterocles orientalis*
- 24- Ring-necked Parakeet – Cotorra de Kramer - *Psittacula krameri*
- 25- Rock Dove - Paloma bravía - *Columba livia*
- 26- Collared Dove - Tórtola turca - *Streptopelia decaocto*
- 27- Hoopoe - Abubilla - *Upupa epops*
- 28- Lesser Short-toed Lark - Terrera marismeña - *Calandrella rufescens polatzeki*
- 29- Berthelot's Pipit - Bisbita caminero - *Anthus berthelotii*
- 30- White Wagtail - Lavandera blanca - *Motacilla alba alba*
- 31- Fuerteventura Chat - Tarabilla canaria - *Saxicola dacotiae*
- 32- Blackbird - Mirlo común - *Turdus merula*
- 33- Sardinian Warbler - Curruca cabecinegra - *Sylvia melanocephala leucogastra*
- 34- Spectacled Warbler - Curruca tomillera - *Sylvia conspicillata orbitalis*
- 35- Chiffchaff – Mosquitero común – *Phylloscopus collybita*
- 36- Yellow-browed Warbler - Mosquitero bilistado - *Phylloscopus inornatus*
- 37- African Blue Tit - Herrerillo africano - *Cyanistes teneriffae degener*
- 38- Desert Grey Shrike - Alcaudón real canario - *Lanius elegans koenigi*
- 39- Raven - Cuervo común - *Corvus corax tingitanus*
- 40- Spanish Sparrow - Gorrión moruno - *Passer hispaniolensis*
- 41- Goldfinch – Jilguero - *Carduelis carduelis parva*
- 42- Trumpeter Finch - Camachuelo trompetero - *Bucanetes githagineus amantum*

And finally, some of the photos and videos taken of the wildlife seen:



Female Trumpeter Finch (*Bucanetes githagineus amantum*), collecting nesting material



Trumpeter Finch (*Bucanetes githagineus amantum*)



Ruddy Shelduck (*Tadorna ferruginea*) in flight with Trumpeter Finch (*Bucanetes githagineus amantum*)



Ruddy Shelduck (*Tadorna ferruginea*) in flight



Male Spanish Sparrow (*Passer hispaniolensis*)



Female Spanish Sparrow (*Passer hispaniolensis*)



Berthelot's Pipit (*Anthus berthelotii*)



Black-bellied Sandgrouse (*Pterocles orientalis*)



Black-tailed Godwit (*Limosa limosa*)



Ruddy Shelduck (*Tadorna ferruginea*) pair



Sardinian Warbler (*Sylvia melanocephala leucogastra*) male



Male Trumpeter Finch (*Bucanetes githagineus amantum*)



Male Spectacled Warbler (*Sylvia conspicillata orbitalis*)



Yellow-legged (*Larus michahellis atlantis*) and Audouin's (*Larus audouinii*) Gulls



Common Raven (*Corvus corax tingitanus*)



Berthelot's Pipit (*Anthus berthelotii*)



Barbary Ground Squirrel (*Atlantoxerus getulus*)



Barbary Ground Squirrel (*Atlantoxerus getulus*)



Common Buzzard (*Buteo buteo insularum*)



Chiffchaff (*Phylloscopus collybita*)



Ring-necked Parakeet (*Psittacula krameri*)



African Blue Tit (*Cyanistes teneriffae degener*)



Monarch Butterfly (*Danaus plexippus*)



Ruddy Shelducks (*Tadorna ferruginea*) and Spoonbill (*Platalea leucorodia*)



Desert Grey Shrike (*Lanius elegans koenigi*)



Berthelot's Pipit (*Anthus berthelotii*)



Barbary Falcon (*Falco peregrinoides*)



Houbara Bustards (*Chlamydotis undulate fuerteventurae*)



Houbara Bustard (*Chlamydotis undulate fuerteventurae*)



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Houbara Bustard (*Chlamydotis undulate fuerteventurae*)



Houbara Bustard (*Chlamydotis undulate fuerteventurae*)



Kestrel (*Falco tinnunculus dacotiae*)



Male Fuerteventura Chat (*Saxicola dacotiae*)



Atlantic Lizard (*Gallotia atlantica*)



Male Fuerteventura Chat (*Saxicola dacotiae*)



Female Fuerteventura Chat (*Saxicola dacotiae*)



Male Fuenteventura Chat (*Saxicola dacotiae*)



Male Spectacled Warbler (*Sylvia conspicillata orbitalis*)



Lesser Short-toed Lark (*Calandrella rufescens polatzeki*)



Houbara Bustard (*Chlamydotis undulate fuerteventurae*)



Houbara Bustard (*Chlamydotis undulate fuerteventurae*)



Lesser Short-toed Lark (*Calandrella rufescens polatzeki*)



Lesser Black-backed Gull (*Larus fuscus*)



Atlantic Yellow-legged Gull (*Larus michahellis atlantis*)



Barbary Ground Squirrel (*Atlantoxerus getulus*)



Greylag Geese (*Anser anser*)



Plain Swift (*Apus unicolor*)



Yellow-browed Warbler (*Phylloscopus inornatus*)



African Blue Tit (*Cyanistes teneriffae degener*)



Barbary Ground Squirrel (*Atlantoxerus getulus*)



Common Raven (*Corvus corax tingitanus*)



Common Buzzard (*Buteo buteo insularum*)



Little Ringed Plover (*Charadrius dubius*)



Houbara Bustard (*Chlamydotis undulate fuerteventurae*)

For some video of the Houbaras, go to the following link:

http://youtu.be/uJ7n_ApUENU



And that's all folks!! A superb week of birds, food and drink!!