

CANARY ISLANDS MARCH 2016

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View from the Teide crater (Carlos Santisteban)

Introduction:

The Canary Islands are one of the top destinations for birdwatchers all around Europe. Their high number of endemic birds, excellent touristic infrastructure and good climate make them a perfect destination for a birdwatching holiday. The big contrast between the eastern and western islands regarding climate and habitats obliges you to visit at least Tenerife and Fuerteventura if you want to see all of the endemics and scarce birds.

We are a group of young birdwatchers who live and/or study in the area of Barcelona. During the Easter holiday 2016, we visited the island of **Tenerife (19 march to 23 march)** focusing mainly on endemic species and subspecies. Nico also continued to visit **Fuerteventura (24 march to 28 march)**.



From left to right: Nico Ordax, Carlos Santisteban, Claudio Bracho and Paula de Scheemaeker at Punta del Teno (Paula de Scheemaeker).

We decided to write separate chapters about Tenerife (with specific details for finding all the endemics) and Fuerteventura (focused mainly on finding the birds without a car). For each of the two parts we provide a basic synthesis of the itinerary, a detailed account of the places visited and species seen each day, a list of birds seen on the island (with general information about location and abundance) and a list of the best spots to see all of the important species. We got most of the information about locations and behaviour of the birds from other birdwatchers who had previously lived on or visited the islands, as Ferran López, Ferran Pujol and Cristian Jensen. We also used some trip reports to help out in case we didn't get one of the birds at the locations we had been told, they appear listed at the end of this report.

Transportation:

Flights:

- Barcelona-Tenerife Norte (Norwegian) **45€**
- Tenerife Norte-Barcelona (Norwegian) **45€**
- Fuerteventura-Barcelona (Vueling) **140€**

Car: We rented a car in Tenerife from AutoReisen directly at the airport. The car was a Citroën C-Elysee which was quite comfortable although we didn't like the fact that the trunk could only be opened from inside the car. The **rental cost** was about **115€** and we spent **30€ in petrol** (which is very cheap there).

Ferry: Nico took the night ferry from Santa Cruz de Tenerife to Puerto Del Rosario. The line is operated by Naviera Armas and you have to change ferries at Puerto de la Luz (Gran Canaria) which is a little stressful. The cost for a passenger without a car is **≈ 50€**.

Bus (guagua): Very important if you don't have a car (like Nico in Fuerteventura). There's a very good net of buses both on Tenerife and Fuerteventura with relatively high frequency and low cost.

TENERIFE

Basic itinerary: (19/03-23/03)

Day 1: Arrival at Tenerife Norte airport. Drive to the top of the Teide crater and descent through the Orotava valley to Icod el Alto. From there, drive to Erjos where we stayed for four nights.

Day 2: In the morning we explored the rocky coast at Buenavista Golf Course and proceeded to the Punta Del Teno road. During the afternoon we went to the viewpoint at La Grimona.

Day 3: We spent the third day mostly in the south beginning with the flatland around Los Frailes. From there we drove up to the Teide crater from the south stopping at Las Lajas picnic area. We finished our day at Los Gigantes cliffs.

Day 4: Having started the day hiking in the laurel forests around Erjos, we spent most of the afternoon again at Punta Del Teno.

Day 1 (19/03/2016):

We arrived at Los Rodeos airport at 10 AM approximately and headed directly for the car rental. At the parking lot before leaving we heard our first lifer of the trip, a singing **Canary Islands Chiffchaff**.

After a quick stop to get some food for the rest of the trip we decided to head up to the Teide crater in order to see the magnificent landscapes and start looking for some of the forest species. During the drive we entered the sea of clouds, which was present during our whole time on Tenerife. When you visit the island you have to keep in mind that it's very likely to find fog if you're at heights between 700 and 2000 meters.

Once at the edge of the crater the clouds disappeared revealing the magnificent volcanic scenery overlooked by the Pico del Teide (3718m above sea level). There we saw our second lifer, a **Berthelot's Pipit** on some nearby rocks, and the first of many **Kestrels**.

We continued to take the road that descends through the Orotava valley to try for **Blue Chaffinch** in the Canary Islands Pine forests. We stopped at the first picnic site we could find (28.3159580, -16.5743130) and Paula quickly pointed out a female in a nearby tree. It showed pretty well in spite of the fog.

While we were trying to get pictures, a male flew into another tree and we quickly noticed the whole area was full of Blue Chaffinches flying around. We counted up to 15-20 from the spot we were standing. The birds showed really well, as somebody had left some bread and they were feeding on the ground 2m away from us! While watching the Blue Chaffinch we also saw **African Blue Tit** and **Goldcrest** (sometimes considered as Canary Islands Goldcrest).

Thrilled, we continued downwards hoping to reach Icod el Alto with good light. We stopped a couple of times during the drive to see **Common Buzzard**, **Canary Islands Chiffchaff** and **Atlantic Canary**. Some **Plain Swifts** also flew past us. Icod el Alto is a little village located near the Barranco de Ruiz, one of the few laurel forest areas remaining in Tenerife. From the TF-342 road that crosses Icod el Alto (28.376092, -16.626140) you can already see a nice forest patch which is good for both pigeons. After only a couple of minutes the first **Laurel Pigeon** flew past. We spent about an hour there and saw several of them flying between trees, although no Bolle's Pigeon appeared in that time period. While watching the pigeons a slim peregrine-like falcon was hunting on the seaside of the barranco, our first **Barbary Falcon**.

As it was getting late we drove to Erjos, the village where we stayed for four nights, and enjoyed a nice supper at the local bar (28.326732, -16.805991). We recommend the roasted goat and "mojo picón" (a local spicy sauce).



Goldcrest (Carlos Santisteban) and Blue Chaffinch (Claudio Bracho) at La Orotava Valley



Pico del Teide 3718m (Paula de Scheemaeker)

Day 2 (20/03/2016):

On the second day we focused on the species we hadn't seen on the first day or the ones we had seen but only very briefly. We started the day at the Buenavista del Norte Golf Course. There's a coastal path that borders the golf course which allows you to see some parts of it and also the rocky shore and sea. You can start the short walk from the parking lot of a little church (28.375150, -16.859843). Before beginning the walk a quick scan of the sea revealed a **Northern Gannet** and one very distant **Cory's Shearwater**.

The walk itself proved quite interesting and although we didn't see spectacled warbler (which we were told was easy there), we had some good views of **Barbary Partridge** (although it vanished quickly into a bush), **Berthelot's Pipit**, **Little Egret** (flying over the golf course) and a group of **Whimbrels** (on the rocks and later feeding on the grass). **Kestrels** and **Plain Swifts** were present the whole time.

We were surprised by the incredibly high density of **Tenerife Lizard** (*Gallotia galloti*), which are really easy to see there. They aren't very shy so it is possible to get very good pictures of them with a little bit of patience.

Our next stop were the cliffs at Punta Del Teno area, which are one of the best spots to see Barbary Falcon on Tenerife. The best point to look for them is a viewpoint (28.375150, -16.859843) located next to the road at Punta Del Fraile (at the first tunnel). From there you have a great view of the cliffs, in fact, we didn't have to wait very long until Claudio spotted the first **Barbary Falcon** which showed pretty well. A while later another one appeared and we could see them from time to time flying past or sitting on the cliffs. This viewpoint is also great for seeing **Ravens** up close.

In the afternoon we decided to try for Bolle's Pigeon at a location different from the previous day as we had read that the La Grimona viewpoint (28.392775,-16.608832) was an excellent spot for both pigeons. Indeed, only one or two minutes after parking the first **Bolle's Pigeon** appeared. During the time we spent there we saw several of them and also several **Laurel Pigeons** which showed better than the day before. On the bushes around the viewpoint we also saw **Atlantic Canary** and **African Blue Tit**.



Barbary Falcon from above (Claudio Bracho) and below (Carlos Santisteban)



Barbary Partridge at Buenavista golf course (Nico Ordax)



Tenerife Lizard at Buenavista golf course (Carlos Santisteban)

Day 3 (21/03/2016):

As we had seen all of the endemics on the first two days we decided to visit the south of the island, looking for other species of birds.

Our first stop was the open area around the town of Fraile. The best option for visiting this area is parking at Fraile and walking from the football pitch (28.010858, -16.672163) towards the sea. This is a dry scrub area with a few scattered rocks and abandoned fields where we could easily see common birds such as **Berthelot's Pipit** and **Spanish Sparrow** and scarcer birds like **Great Grey Shrike** and **Spectacled Warbler** (the latter seemed to like the cactus). Two **House Martins** also flew over the scrubland.

From the coast we did some sea watching, finding an **Arctic/Pomarine Skua**, two **Comic Terns** and large numbers of **Cory's Shearwater**.

As we wanted to drive up to the Teide crater again (although from the south) we stopped for lunch at Vilaflor which proved to be a very good idea. The place served some really nice mojo and all sorts of tasty dishes for a very reasonable price (28.010858, -16.672163).

There is a big picnic site by the road that climbs to the crater from Vilaflor called Las Lajas (28.190642, -16.665770) which is the best place for all of the forest species including Blue Chaffinch. The entrance is on the left side of the road if you're driving from Vilaflor to the crater and it was pretty crowded with people when we arrived.

We quickly spotted a **Raven**, several **Atlantic Canaries**, **African Blue Tit**, **Goldcrest**, **Greater Spotted Woodpeckers** and some **Blue Chaffinch** looking for food amidst the picnic tables, all of them showed amazingly well. We think it's best going to the picnic site in the afternoon as all the tourists will have had lunch and there will be plenty of food left to attract birds.

After some non-birdwatching tourism at the Teide crater and surroundings we decided to visit the cliffs at Los Gigantes (28.240392, -16.836964) which are almost as amazing as the Teide

itself. Driving back to Erjos just as we left Los Gigantes, Carlos and Claudio spotted an **Osprey** which flew over the car towards the cliffs.



Great-Grey Shrikes (*koenigi*) at Fraile (Claudio Bracho).

Day 4 (22/3/2016):

On our last full day on Tenerife we first headed to one of the most impressive laurel forests of the island, Monte del Agua, located 15' on foot from Erjos. During our way there we saw **Chaffinch, Atlantic Canary, Sardinian Warbler** and **Canary Islands Chiffchaff**. Within the laurel forest we saw and heard some of the more common species like **Robin, Goldcrest, African Blue Tit** or **Blackbird**. There is a viewpoint (28.327483, -16.813899) just a few dozen meters after entering the woods which offers a good look over the forested hills. From there we saw a **Sparrowhawk** fly past us and it seems to be a nice place for pigeons (although we didn't see any). A little bit further down the path, trying to relocate the Sparrowhawk, Carlos spotted two **Bolle's Pigeons** on a branch not too far away.

After the laurel forest we decided to visit the Erjos ponds (28.319337, -16.809030), which were a little bit disappointing as the most interesting birds were a couple of **Moorhens**. Unfortunately the endemic subspecies of Grey Wagtail didn't appear.

We enjoyed a fantastic bbq at the house we were staying and shortly afterwards we left for home and headed to Punta Del Teno cliffs trying to see the Barbary falcon again. While Carlos was parking Paula spotted the **Barbary falcon**, landing really close to the road! By the time we

had left the car the falcon had already taken off. After this, the pair only showed flying over the cliffs.

To complete the day we headed to Faro del Teno, where you can admire the fantastic views and landscapes, especially the cliffs at Punta Del Teno and Los Gigantes and the island of La Gomera.



Bolle's Pigeon at Erjos (Nico Ordax).

List of birds seen on Tenerife:

Endemic species of the Canary Islands

Endemic subspecies of the Canary Islands

1. **Cory's Shearwater** *Calonectris (diomedea)*: seen on the second and third day while seawatching. It appears to be quite common.
2. **Northern Gannet** *Morus bassanus*: one ind seen on the second day from the coast at Buenavista golf course.
3. **Little Egret** *Egretta garzetta*: 1-2 ind seen the second day over Buenavista Golf Course.
4. **Grey Heron** *Ardea cinerea*: several seen on different locations.
5. **Common Buzzard** *Buteo buteo insularum*: common.
6. **Sparrowhawk** *Accipiter nisus granti*: one ind seen on the fourth day while hiking in the laurel forest around Erjos.
7. **Kestrel** *Falco tinnunculus dacotiae*: common.
8. **Barbary Falcon** *Falco (pelegrinus) pelegrinoides*: one ind seen on the first day at Barranco de Ruiz and a pair seen on the second and fourth day at Punta Del Teno.
9. **Barbary Partridge** *Alectoris barbara*: one ind seen on the second day at Buenavista golf course.

10. **Moorhen** *Gallinula chloropus*: three inds at the Erjos ponds the fourth day.
11. **Whimbrel** *Numenius phaeopus*: a medium sized (10-15) group the second day at Buenavista golf course.
12. **Arctic/Pomarine Skua** *Stercorarius parasiticus/pomarinus*: one ind the third day seen while sea watching from Fraile.
13. **Yellow-Legged Gull** *Larus michahellis atlantis*: common.
14. **Comic Tern** *Sterna hirundo/paradisaea*: 2 ind the third day seen while sea watching from Fraile.
15. **Feral Pigeon** *Columba livia*: common.
16. **Bolle's Pigeon** *Columba bolli*: quite elusive. Several seen the second day from La Grimona viewpoint (where you're guaranteed to see it) and two ind the fourth day while hiking in the laurel forest around Erjos (harder to find that at La Grimona but showing better).
17. **Laurel Pigeon** *Columba junionae*: quite elusive. Several seen the first day at Barranco de Ruiz and the second day from La Grimona viewpoint (like Bolle's Pigeon, this is the place to go if you want to see them).
18. **Collared Dove** *Streptopelia decaocto*: common.
19. **Plain Swift** *Apus unicolor*: several seen on different locations, specially along the coastline.
20. **Greater Spotted Woodpecker** *Dendrocopos major canariensis*: several at Las Lajas picnic area the third day. Easy to approach if you stay next to a table that still has leftovers from lunchtime.
21. **Barn Swallow** *Hirundo rustica*: seen at Buenavista Golf Course the second day.
22. **House Martin** *Delichon urbicum*: 2 ind flying over the scrublands near El Fraile the third day.
23. **Berthelot's Pipit** *Anthus berthelotii*: common and easy to approach.
24. **White wagtail** *Motacilla alba*: 2 ind from the car the first day.
25. **Robin** *Erithacus rubecula superbis*: common in forested areas.
26. **Blackbird** *Turdus merula cabrerae*: common.
27. **Blackcap** *Sylvia atricapilla*: common.
28. **Sardinian Warbler** *Sylvia melanocephala leucogastra*: common.
29. **Spectacled Warbler** *Sylvia conspicillata orbitalis*: several singing at the scrublands near Fraile the third day.
30. **Canary Islands Chiffchaff** *Phylloscopus canariensis*: common.
31. **(Tenerife) Goldcrest** *Regulus (regulus) teneriffae*: common in forested areas.
32. **African Blue Tit** *Cyanistes teneriffae teneriffae*: common.
33. **Great Grey Shrike** *Lanius excubitor koenigii*: several at the scrublands near Fraile the third day.
34. **Raven** *Corvus corax tingitanus*: common.
35. **Spanish sparrow** *Passer hispaniolensis*: common at the town of Fraile, the third day.
36. **Chaffinch** *Fringilla coelebs tintillon*: we only saw it the fourth day in the laurel forests around Erjos, but we didn't try very hard for it.
37. **Blue Chaffinch** *Fringilla teydea*: seen the first day at La Orotava valley where it was very common at one picnic area and also the third day at Las Lajas picnic area. They aren't very shy, especially if there's food.
38. **Atlantic canary** *Serinus canaria*: common.

List and map of the best places:

- **La Orotava picnic** (28.315958,-16.574313): a little picnic spot with only one table and a path entering the forest. Lots of Blue Chaffinches, African Blue Tit and Goldcrest.
- **Barranco de Ruiz** (28.376117,-16.626143): the coordinate marks a parking spot on the side of the road from which you can overlook a nice patch of laurel forest. You can also access the barranco on foot from the TF-5 road which runs parallel to the sea (28.391327, -16.626480). Pigeons, Barbary Falcon (although it was probably luck).
- **Buenavista golf course** (28.375143, -16.859818): the coordinate marks the parking spot. We recommend walking along the path that borders the golf course (28.375321,-16.864518). Barbary Partridge, migrants, possible rarities, lots of Tenerife Lizards.
- **Punta Del Teno** (28.366740,-16.884467): the coordinate marks the viewpoint at the first tunnel. You can park on the roadside although there isn't much space. Great views both of landscapes and Barbary Falcon and Raven.
- **La Grimona** (28.392775,-16.608832): small viewpoint at the side of the road which allows you to look at a little patch of laurel forest above you. Best place for Laurel and Bolle's Pigeon.
- **El Fraile scrublands** (28.010880,-16.672226): the coordinate marks the football field from which you can access the area. Great Grey Shrike, Spectacled Warbler and good seawatching spot.
- **Las Lajas picnic** (28.190170,-16.665463): a big picnic area with lots of tables visited by birds looking for food. Blue Chaffinch, Greater Spotted Woodpecker, other forest species.
- **Laurel forest around Erjos** (28.327481, -16.813903): from the village of Erjos a little path leads up the hillside west and into the laurel forest (you'll have to pass a communication antenna). The coordinate marks a viewpoint where you can see a very big area of forest. Both pigeons (although we only saw Bolle's), Sparrowhawk and other forest species.



FUERTEVENTURA

Basic itinerary: (24/03-28/03)

Day 1: Arrival early in the morning with the ferry and bus drive to El Cotillo where I stayed two nights. Once at El Cotillo I decided to walk the track that leads to Tindaya looking for steppe birds.

Day 2: Walk to Tindaya following the same basic route as the previous day.

Day 3: Depart from el Cotillo to Puerto del Rosario where I stayed the last two nights. From Puerto del Rosario I took the bus to El Matorral and from there walked to a Water Treatment Plant with a nearby "Barranco". In the afternoon I checked the Golf Course at Caleta de Fuste.

Day 4: Visit to the Vega Del Río Palma reservoir and short walk around the tamarisks and palm trees in the area.

Day 5: Return to Barcelona.

Note I did this part of the trip without a car, only with public transportation and walking. I think this part of the trip report will be interesting for those who want to visit the island and see all of the interesting species without a car. If you do have one, you still may find some of the spots interesting ;)

Fuerteventura has a pretty solid bus network with which you'll be able to reach most of the interesting sites. The frequencies aren't great but that shouldn't be much of a problem if you plan the trip well. Here you have a detailed timetable of the different lines (<http://es.enjoyfuerteventura.net/guaguas/>) (<http://www.tiadhe.com/es/rutas.htm>).

If you're planning on walking longer distances in the desert as I did always remember to bring enough water (at least 2L), sunscreen and some sort of hat or cap. At the desert track between El Cotillo and Tindaya you can shorten your walk considerably by doing auto-stop. Despite not being much frequented you encounter cars from time to time and your chances of getting a ride aren't bad at all.

Day 1 (24/03/2016):

I arrived from Tenerife with the night ferry (you have to change ferries at Las Palmas de Gran Canaria). The ferry from Gran Canaria to Fuerteventura (operated by Naviera Armas <http://www.navieraarmas.com/>) wasn't very comfortable (as I didn't pay for a cabin) and didn't offer many chances for birdwatching as it was overnight so if you're planning on travelling from Tenerife to Fuerteventura you might want to book a flight, which shouldn't be much more expensive than the ferry and will save you a considerable amount of time.

Once I arrived (at 07:00) at Puerto del Rosario (the main city on Fuerteventura) I headed to the bus station and took the bus to get to El Cotillo, a small village on the western coast which seems to be quite popular amongst surfers. In order to get there are two bus routes available:

- Taking the bus nr.7 directly to El Cotillo. Unfortunately the frequency isn't very good. 30 min from Puerto Del Rosario to El Cotillo.
- Taking the bus nr.6 to Corralejo and from there taking the bus nr.8 to El Cotillo. This was my choice as the schedules are far more regular although. About 1h from Puerto Del Rosario to El Cotillo.

I arrived at El Cotillo about 09:00 and after quickly dropping my backpack at the hostel, which was clean, comfortable and cheap (<http://www.lamareasurfhouse.net/>) I decided to start looking for some of the targets in the steppes that lie between El Cotillo and the village of Tindaya (to the south). There is a pretty good track that connects these two villages from which you should be able to see all of the interesting steppe species, especially if you're driving (unfortunately I had to walk most of the distance).

Amongst the bushes on both sides of the road it's very easy to spot **Spectacled Warblers** and **Berthelot's Pipit** once you've walked some distance it's also easy to see **Lesser Short-Toed Larks**. Exiting the town I could catch a glimpse of a rather large falcon chasing after birds, which I assumed it was **Barbary Falcon**. **Kestrels**, **Common Buzzard**, **Raven** and **Great Grey Shrike** were present all along the track. About two or three km from El Cotillo a couple of **Black-Bellied Sandgrouse** flew over the road showing well.

After walking about 7 or 8km from El Cotillo I got to the Barranco de Esquinzo, a dry riverbed with Tamarisks where Ferran López reports Fuerteventura Chat on his trip report (check the references). I wasn't lucky, although the place looks very promising for a number of species like the Chat and Trumpeter Finch.

I kept walking towards Tindaya looking for both Cream-Coloured Courser and Houbara Bustard which inhabit this area but wasn't very lucky the whole morning. There is a point where the track splits in two, although both ways will get you to the town (28.620526, -14.000888). After a quick stop for lunch at Tindaya, I decided to check the branch of the track I hadn't taken before and where Ferran López reported Houbara Bustard. You get there following the main street of Tindaya, which is asphalted (unlike the rest of the track).

Once I had walked the last houses I started looking and only 200m away from the village (28.598426, -13.994825) I was rewarded with the sight of a magnificent **Houbara Bustard** sitting in a bush only 20m from the road cleaning its plumage! An amazing observation of an amazing bird! It goes without saying that you should never walk off the track (as the numerous signs tell you) to avoid any disturbance to these highly endangered birds.

This area just outside Tindaya proved to be the best to see all of the steppe birds as I also saw a group of **Stone Curlews** and a couple of **Black-Bellied Sandgrouse**. An English birdwatcher whom I had met while observing the Houbara Bustard also saw several Cream-Coloured Coursers along this section of the track although I didn't manage to see them (I don't know if I simply didn't find them or if they ran away from me since I was on foot).

The way back home proved longer than expected and dragged on and on...fortunately I was picked up by a family driving to El Cotillo which were kind enough to take me with them, shortening my walk by about 7km. In the town of El Cotillo **Spanish Sparrow** was abundant. And along the track I saw **Ravens** fairly often.



Houbara Bustard at Tindaya (Nico Ordax).

Day 2 (25/03/2016):

On my second and last day at El Cotillo, I decided to walk the same route as the previous day (as it leads through some excellent steppe habitats). The only variation was that I got up earlier in order to make the most of the day on the plains, and that I headed directly to the spot where I had seen Houbara Bustard. In the morning many surfers drive from El Cotillo along the track to the beaches, use them to your advantage ;) (I spared myself a couple kilometres that way).

I didn't see anything special (except for two **Ruddy Shelducks** flying past at Barranco de Esquinzo) at first but once I got to the track section past the splitting point I mentioned earlier I managed to spot a couple of **Cream-Coloured Coursers** running through the scrublands (28.614631,-14.001415) although they were quite distant.

I was lucky to spot another group a lot closer from the road close to the place where I had seen Houbara Bustard. They were on an abandoned field south of the road which you could see very well from a path bordering it (28.601272, -13.998048). On my way back I decided to check a ruin near El Cotillo where Trumpeter Finch had been reported but was unlucky.



Cream-Coloured Courser at Tindaya (Nico Ordax).

Day 3 (26/03/2016):

On my third day I changed location and took the bus from El Cotillo to Puerto Del Rosario (bus nr.7) where I stayed the last two nights (I found a room via Airbnb).

Once I had dropped off my bags at the place I stayed I took another bus to El Matorral (bus nr.3 which leads to Caleta de Fusta and Las Salinas). From El Matorral I took a path that leads out of the village toward the plains (28.436350, -13.875716), and after the last houses of the village I turned left (28.432883, -13.884610). This track gets you to a water treatment plant after about 1500m which is a very good place for Fuerteventura Chat. Numerous **Lesser Short-Toed Larks**, **Great-Grey Shrike** were present, and on the way back, **Trumpeter Finch**.

I was told that the Chats can be seen on the water treatment plant's fence, although I didn't find them there. I walked down a path that leads to a riverbed directly next to the plant, where I was able to spot at least two pairs of **Fuerteventura Chat**, **Trumpeter Finches**, **Ruddy Shelducks**, **Black-Bellied Sandgrouse**, **Raven** and **Spectacled Warbler**.

After lunch watching **Barbary Ground Squirrels**, and the walk back (where amongst the species mentioned earlier I also saw some **Linnets**), I decided to take the bus nr.3 from El Matorral to Caleta de Fuste. My intention was to check out the Golf Course, which is supposed to be a great place for birds resting on the grass and at the ponds according to other trip reports.

Unfortunately the ponds were half empty and except for **Coot**, **Ruddy Shelduck**, **Hoopoe** and a **Great-Grey Shrike** there was nothing on the course. At a canal which seems to collect sewage waters, I could manage a **Little Ringed Plover** and **Common Sandpiper**, but that was all Caleta de Fuste had to offer.



Trumpeter Finch, Fuerteventura Chat, Spectacled Warbler and Ruddy Shelduck at El Matorral (Nico Ordax).

Day 4 (27/03/2016):

Having seen all of the target species on Fuerteventura I decided to sleep a little bit more on the last day and then to go to Vega Del Río Palma, a reservoir in the mountains south of Betancuria (28.432883, -13.884610). I took the bus nr.2 which has a very low frequency, but allows a day trip to the reservoir.

On arrival I saw my first **Great-Grey Shrike** and **African Blue Tit** of the *degener* subspecies (endemic to Fuerteventura) on the Palm Trees in the village. A little path departs from the main road (28.393673, -14.087730) and follows a dry river bed that leads to the reservoir. The reservoir itself is usually almost dry and muddy but you'll easily find **Moorhen** and **Ruddy Shelduck**.

The reservoir's dam is a very good place to watch **Pallid Swift**, **Palm Dove**, **Turtle Dove** and **Raven**. I could also see **Atlantic Lizard** in the area. A couple of **Goldfinches**, the only ones for the trip, flew past and so did a **Common Buzzard**.

Another interesting spot is the area just before the reservoir, which is covered by Tamarisks and Palm Trees, hosting lots of birds like **Sardinian Warbler**, **Chiffchaff**, **Great Grey Shrike** and **African Blue Tit**. I also flushed two **Barbary Partridges** while walking there.

To end the trip, I managed to catch a glimpse of a last **Barbary Falcon** just before leaving for Puerto del Rosario.



Palm Dove at Vega del Río Palmas (Nico Ordax).

List of birds seen on Fuerteventura:

Endemic species of the Canary Islands

Endemic subspecies of the Canary Islands

1. **Grey Heron** *Ardea cinerea*: seen on locations with water available. Scarce.
2. **Ruddy Shelduck** *Tadorna ferruginea*: common anywhere where you can find water.
3. **Common Buzzard** *Buteo buteo insularum*: common.
4. **Kestrel** *Falco tinnunculus dacotiae*: common.
5. **Barbary Falcon** *Falco (pegrinus) pegrinoides*: one ind seen on the first day at the plains next to El Cotillo and another one at Vega del Río Palma on the last.
6. **Barbary Partridge** *Alectoris barbara*: a small group seen from the bus on the first day and two seen at Vega del Río Palma the fourth day.
7. **Moorhen** *Gallinula chloropus*: some at Vega del Río Palmas the fourth day.
8. **Coot** *Fulica atra*: several at Caleta de Fuste golf course and one at Vega del Río Palmas on the last two days.
9. **Houbara Bustard** *Chlamydotis undulata fuerteventurae*: one ind seen at the plains close to Tindaya the first day. Hard to find on foot.
10. **Stone Curlew** *Burhinus oedipnemos insularum*: a group of 4 or 5 flushed at the same spot as the Houbara Bustard on the first day.
11. **Cream-Coloured Courser** *Cursorius cursor*: several seen on the second day at the plains next to Tindaya.
12. **Little-Ringed Plover** *Charadrius dubius*: 3 seen at Caleta de Fuste the third day.
13. **Common Sandpiper** *Actitis hypoleucos*: 1 seen at Caleta de Fuste the third day.
14. **Yellow-Legged Gull** *Larus michahellis atlantis*: common.
15. **Black-Bellied Sandgrouse** *Pterocles orientalis*: not scarce. It's easy to see them drinking at the riverbeds which hold some water.
16. **Feral Pigeon** *Columba livia*: common.
17. **Collared Dove** *Streptopelia decaocto*: common.

18. **Turtle Dove** *Streptopelia turtur*: two inds seen at the Vega del Río Palma dam on the fourth day.
19. **Palm Dove** *Streptopelia senegalensis*: several inds seen at Vega del Río Palma on the fourth day.
20. **Plain Swift** *Apus unicolor*: I didn't really look at swifts as I had already seen them on Tenerife. I saw *Apus sp.* the four days though and other trip reports say it's possible to see them at Fuerteventura.
21. **Pallid Swift** *Apus pallidus*: common.
22. **Hoopoe** *Upupa epops*: common.
23. **Lesser Short-Toed Lark** *Callandrella rufescens polatzeki*: common on the plains.
24. **Barn Swallow** *Hirundo rustica*: seen at Caleta de Fuste golf course the third day.
25. **Berthelot's Pipit** *Anthus berthelotii*: common and easy to approach.
26. **Fuerteventura Chat** *Saxicola dacotiae*: at least two pairs at the riverbed near the water treatment plant south from El Matorral on the third day.
27. **Sardinian Warbler** *Sylvia melanocephala leucogastra*: common.
28. **Spectacled Warbler** *Sylvia conspicillata orbitalis*: several singing at the scrublands near Fraile the third day.
29. **Chiffchaff** *Phylloscopus collybita*: 1-2 ind at Vega del Río Palma the fourth day.
30. **African Blue Tit** *Cyanistes teneriffae degener*: several at Vega del Río Palma the last day.
31. **Great Grey Shrike** *Lanius excubitor koenigii*: abundant on the plains.
32. **Raven** *Corvus corax tingitanus*: common.
33. **Spanish sparrow** *Passer hispaniolensis*: common.
34. **Linnet** *Carduelis cannabina harterti*: common on the plains.
35. **Goldfinch** *Carduelis carduelis*: some at Vega Del Río Palmas on the fourth day.
36. **Trumpeter Finch** *Bucanetes githagineus amantum*: common on plains south from El Matorral and the riverbed next to the water treatment plant on the third day.

List of the best places:

- **El Cotillo-Tindaya track** (28.598426,-13.994825)-(28.680452, -14.007852): the coordinates mark the two ends of the track. The first one is also the best spot along the track for Houbara Bustard and Cream-Coloured Courser. Steppe birds.
- **Water treatment plant south from El Matorral** (28.415585, -13.886270): the treatment plant and the riverbed to the west are a great spot for Fuerteventura Chat, Trumpeter Finch, Black-Bellied Sandgrouse and Barbary Ground Squirrel.
- **Caleta de Fuste golf course** (28.386878, -13.866365): I must admit I expected more. It has the potential to be one of the top spots on the islands with a nice grass area and several ponds.
- **Vega del Río Palmas reservoir** (28.386878, -13.866365): not only a nice birdwatching spot but also a stunning scenery. I recommend walking from the village to the dam of the reservoir in order to see everything. African Blue Tit (*degener*), Barbary Partridge, Palm Dove and other species that are scarce on Fuerteventura.

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