

ORNITHOLIDAYS' TOUR TO SPAIN – THE CANARY ISLANDS
Winter Sunshine Break

15 – 22 February 2009



Leaders: David Walsh and Paul Rogers

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A Personal Diary

Sunday 15th February

Conveniently, the Manchester and Gatwick flights arrived within minutes of each other at Tenerife South airport shortly after 7pm. At baggage reclaim, we all met up and were soon heading north-east up the motorway. The junctions had been renumbered since my last visit, but my notes told me to turn off *after* the Candelaria turn-off, and I followed my instinct. Soon we spotted signs to Tenerife Tour Hotel. Check-in was quick, and by 9.15pm we were relaxed and eating our buffet dinner, before retiring at a sensible hour.

Monday 16th February

We had a leisurely breakfast at 8am. I discovered that the local supermarket, the source of our picnic lunches on previous trips, was shut (being renovated), so we decided to try elsewhere and set off, driving down the motorway towards the airport. The main focus of today was to head into the hills but, with time on our side, we had a couple of hours to spare. We stopped by a small, seemingly unprepossessing, roadside reservoir called *Guargacho Dam* and were soon starting our bird list with three Eurasian Spoonbills the highlight and Little Egret, Little Ringed Plover, Common Sandpiper and Greenshank reminders of home for some. We also looked at the first of several 'Tenerife' Kestrels. A little further on, we parked in the main car park of Amarilla Golf Course and potted alongside one of the fairways. Overhead, we were able to compare Plain and Pallid Swifts, whilst the first of many Berthelot's Pipits showed at close range. At least one Spectacled Warbler stole the show, however, and we were treated to magnificent views. Some chose to look for butterflies, which included Bath White, whilst those who ventured a little further were rewarded with our first Hoopoe and a Southern Grey Shrike.

The road from Los Christianos up into the centre of Tenerife had been upgraded so it wasn't long before we were at the legendary picnic site amongst the pines at Las Lajas. As I had predicted, the target birds fell in quick succession, with all giving wonderful views. Blue Chaffinch was our main quarry, but Island Canary was, of course, popular and the local races of Great Spotted Woodpecker and Blue Tit were worth careful scrutiny. The numerous Canary Islands Chiffchaffs gave their characteristic song. Tenerife Goldcrest was seen well by some, but not quite all, of the group. We enjoyed our sandwiches on the picnic tables and, whilst some continued eating, others tried to photograph the species seen earlier. Eventually we decided it was time to move on, so we headed towards the volcanic scenery in Mount Teide National Park. We made several photo stops and enjoyed the splendid information boards. The scenery was spectacular and the weather the best I had ever experienced on Tenerife. Some roadside mammals were well-studied and soon identified as Mouflon, new for most if not all of us.

Having continued north through the picturesque countryside, we eventually arrived at our tea stop, a café at El Portillo. Here more Blue Chaffinches were amazingly obliging! Then it was time to slowly descend in an easterly direction, with further excellent scenery as well as more Tenerife Goldcrests. Cloud to the left gave us an insight into the typical weather of the north of the island. We arrived back just after 6pm and, having had time to unwind and then do the log, a reserved table awaited us for our 7.30pm dinner as we made inroads into the local wine.

Tuesday 17th February

As planned, we got up early and headed off at 6.45am down to Los Christianos, arriving 55 minutes later to buy our tickets for the ferry to La Gomera. However, the rules had changed last July (without being mentioned on the website) and, for the first time ever, passports for all passengers were needed. Most of ours were safely back at the hotel, so we had no option but to decide to abandon our attempt, try again tomorrow and do Wednesday's itinerary today.

We drove up the west coast road, the only bit of the main Tenerife 'orbital' not of motorway standard. Finding somewhere suitable for breakfast which also had parking proved a bit of a challenge, but perseverance eventually paid off. Then we drove to Erjos ponds in the north-west of the island. The surrounding hillsides had proved to be

good for the endemic pigeons in the past, but a recent fire had destroyed much of the habitat. However, the bushes around the ponds were still intact, and we enjoyed superb views of the endemic Tenerife Robin, our main target at this site, as well as a pair of Sardinian Warblers. On the ponds we found three Common Coot, one of which appeared to be on a nest. Providing variety beyond the birds were a Stripeless Tree Frog, a Small Copper and a Blue Emperor dragonfly, but the stunning Indian Red Admiral was the highlight. We also found our first Common Buzzard, a fairly numerous species in this part of the island.

We discovered that the track up the hillside to more pigeon habitat was now closed to vehicles, so we decided to try our luck for different birds elsewhere, and headed to the north-west tip of Tenerife, Punta del Teno. Just before the point we checked some fields by the road where, in the past, I had seen a flock of Rock Sparrows, but there was nothing doing this time, and the tomato plantations had all been covered so there weren't many other passerines around either, although we did enjoy a pair of Common Linnets. As on the previous day, we no more than glimpsed Barbary Partridge! We declared and picnicked by the sea, enjoying the company of at least two different species of lizard.

We felt we were due a bit of luck and it wasn't long in coming. We stopped close to the tunnels under the cliffs and scanned, and a pair of Barbary Falcons showed for close on twenty minutes! We had some spectacular views of the uppersides as well as from below. Then, refreshed from a pit stop in Buenavista, we descended around yet more hairpins before drifting east along the north coastal road. At what for me was a new site, a roadside vantage point looking out to sea (Mirador Grimones), we actually turned away from the sea and looked up the hillside. It wasn't long before White-tailed Laurel Pigeons were spotted in flight and we were treated to ace scope views of at least one perched individual. By the road itself we had close observations of a Canary Islands' Large White.

We headed east past Puerto de la Cruz towards Santa Cruz and negotiated the rather bizarre section linking the two motorways before arriving back at base at 5.30pm. We had done a complete circumnavigation of Tenerife! Birding wasn't finished, for some, as with the winds having freshened from the north-east we decided to seawatch. Cory's Shearwaters were fairly close inshore and, for the lucky few, a couple of Macaronesian (Little) Shearwaters were added to the list as well.

We enjoyed a relaxing dinner at the end of a day which hadn't turned out as expected, but during which we had seen several key species in some varied and spectacular parts of Tenerife on another generally sunny day.

Wednesday 18th February

It was a case of *déjà vu* as we headed for Los Christianos, and this time without hitches we boarded the ferry. I knew that if we were first in the queue for breakfast on board there would be time to enjoy our meal before birds started appearing, and so it proved. But there wasn't much time to spare! Just 10 minutes out, the Cory's Shearwaters started to appear, some at very close range, before (very surprisingly for me) the first of several Black-legged Kittiwakes was sighted. Then the cetaceans appeared: groups of Bottle-nosed Dolphins as well as a number of Shortfin Pilot Whales and Atlantic Spotted Dolphin. Indeed there was something to see for more or less the whole of the hour-long crossing before we arrived in San Sebastian at 9.45am.

Following a funeral cortege slowed us down somewhat as we headed up into the verdant hills, but of more concern was the cloud, and by the time we turned off the main road and stopped at our pigeon watchpoint, visibility was virtually nil. I took the decision to head on through what was effectively 'cloud forest' to El Cedro, a restaurant nestling in a picturesque valley. Here we had a welcome coffee and sorted lunch for later. The weather improved a little so we whizzed back to look for pigeons and most of us were successful in obtaining brief views of Dark-tailed (Bolle's) Laurel Pigeons as well as more White-taileds. At 1.15pm we went back for lunch which, for most, was a wonderful bowl of homemade watercress soup.

Thereafter, some stayed in the valley and had fine views of the local race of Chaffinch, so different from the one at home. Others returned for a final pigeon vigil and, at the eleventh hour, a Bolle's Pigeon flew across the main 'gap' allowing all those present to see the key features. Mission accomplished! We drove back down to San Sebastian, where inevitably it had been sunny all day. In the local park we found a number of butterflies including African Grass Blue and, better value for most, Monarch! Blackcaps were numerous, and there was time to admire a Grey Wagtail in the channel opposite before it was time to join the queue for the 5pm ferry.

The return journey was perhaps less birdy than the outward one, but there were some brief sightings of Macaronesian Shearwater for those who persevered the longest. Thence it was onward for our last dinner on Tenerife. We arrived back at 7pm.

Thursday 19th February

After a very leisurely breakfast, we bade farewell to Tenerife Tour Hotel shortly after 9am. We drove to Valle Molino reservoir, close to the airport, but on arrival the heavens opened. Nevertheless, we watched for a while from the shelter at the entrance; we found seven Grey Herons and eight Common Teal, but no rarities. Further on, at Tejina Ponds, the weather improved and we located eight Common Moorhens and a Common Snipe. We enjoyed our last Island Canaries and then, with further rain threatening, we headed for the airport, arriving there at noon. There was plenty of time for some repacking and some fine baguettes before our 40 minute flight to Fuerteventura.

We landed at 2.50pm. The baggage arrived quickly but sorting the vans took a little longer than anticipated. Soon, however, we were on our way south and the weather was warm, sunny, and (crucially) there wasn't a breath of wind. We turned off the road by some saltpans next to the sea and then headed inland up a track along the bottom of Barranco de la Torre (a rocky gorge). We went straight to the spot where I had seen the main target species, Fuerteventura Stonechat, on my January 'reccy'. En route we spotted a Hoopoe in a tree by the track and had wonderful views of some Trumpeter Finches. Our first Ravens were seen overhead – they were to be a regular sight over the next couple of days. Walking a short way up the barranco, we soon found our first Barbary Ground Squirrel and a Spectacled Warbler, a species which often associates with the chat, and, a little further on, there was our quarry! The pair irritatingly chose a spot which was into the light, but we couldn't really complain, and most of us had very respectable views. As we walked back to the buses, we had another of those magic moments which will live long in the memory as a Barbary Falcon chased and caught a pigeon and landed with it on the path in front of us. Inevitably it then saw us and left its prey behind, giving us further flight views. Awesome!

We had time to stop by some rocky pools near the saltpans, and this proved productive with Whimbrel, Ringed Plover, Greenshank and Turnstone in the pools and several Sandwich and one Common Tern offshore. Surprisingly, we also saw a number of Kittiwakes – there must have been an influx.....

Then we set off on the drive to our hotel, and less than an hour later we arrived (at 6.40pm). Check-in was very quick and although it took a while for some to locate their rooms, we were soon doing the log in the spacious entrance hall.

Dinner was a magnificent buffet. Most heeded my advice to take time to look at all the available options before choosing! Before bedtime we were able to photograph the 'welcome board' beamed onto the main wall in reception, as it had our names on!!

Friday 20th February

To enjoy the desert plains at their best, ie first thing in the morning, we met at 7.00am for the short drive to Costa Calma and the plains to the north-west. In January I had investigated the various tracks across the desert to find one suitable for our vans, so we edged along it into the desert itself and parked up. Waiting till everyone was ready for action, we headed a couple of hundred metres from the vehicles and scanned. There, on the ridge, in the same spot as six weeks ago, was our main prize, a male Houbara Bustard. For the next 90 minutes we were treated to the most amazing spectacle as, every so often, it displayed by raising its white breast feathers over its head and running around – either in a circle or a figure of eight. It would always finish with a quick flick of its head. It really was astonishing, and we were able to gradually get closer without seeming to disturb it at all. We spotted another two on more distant territories. In the same area we had wonderful views of Cream-coloured Coursers and Lesser Short-toed Larks, whilst pairs of Black-bellied Sandgrouse flew over calling.

It was hard to tear ourselves away, but we eventually decided it was time for breakfast. Yet another Houbara Bustard, right next to the track, plus three Stone-curlews, delayed us on the way back, but by 9.30am we were making our way around the extensive buffet!

We set off again at 10.30am for a day in the centre of the island. Our main morning birding spot was Los Molinos, just over an hour's drive from the hotel. This is the only area of permanent water on the island. Walking along the track parallel to the narrow reservoir allowed us to check it very thoroughly. The highlight was a grand total of 75

Ruddy Shelduck, but there were plenty of other things to enjoy. Around the muddy edges we found a variety of waders including a Spotted Redshank, a Black-winged Stilt and two Little Stints. On the water we counted 30 Coot but, a little surprisingly, there were no ducks. A Fuerteventura Stonechat on bushes along the far side was distant, the Trumpeter Finches by the track were much closer. Overhead, raptors were much in evidence with two Egyptian Vultures and several Common Buzzards and (Fuerteventura) Common Kestrels.

We lunched in a wonderfully picturesque spot a couple of miles away, our chosen restaurant beautifully situated in a sheltered cove by the west coast. Service was efficient and we enjoyed choosing from a selection of salads. Right next to our vans we had the best possible views of a pair of Fuerteventura Stonechat as well as another Spectacled Warbler, whilst Sahara Bluetail – a tiny dragonfly – was also popular.

We tootled along, stopping to photograph one of the windmills, before driving to a viewpoint on top of a hill near Betancuria. I was expecting the array of wild flowers and the selection of butterflies (which included Greenish Black-tip and Green-striped White), but I wasn't expecting Fuerteventura Blue Tit! We had super views at close range, allowing us to discuss the differences both from the one seen on Tenerife and from the one in the UK. A Common Linnet was also well-studied, being yet another endemic subspecies.

Twenty minutes further on, we walked along a valley towards a dried up reservoir at Vega de Rio Palmas. This was supposed to have been the Blue Tit spot, and we heard several. A European Turtle Dove purred for us from the top of a dead tree, and we also found nominate European Robins and a number of Sardinian Warblers, as well as a Clouded Yellow among the much commoner Painted Ladies. Two Goldfinches flew over, our only ones of the week.

In Tuineje the eagle-eyed spotters in the second van found a Stone-curlew in a field by the side of the road which we briefly enjoyed, despite our stop leading to a traffic jam! Then it was on to our final spot, Rosa de Catalina Garcia, a lovely pond in the middle of the desert. We added Dunlin to our list, and other birds seen included two Black-winged Stilts, 50 Coot, several Moorhens and two more Eurasian Spoonbills.

We headed back, our return journey taking around 45 minutes. The log this evening took a fair time, reflecting the superb quality and quantity of exciting species we had seen, before we enjoyed another superb meal in the restaurant.

Saturday 21st February

Those who walked around the hotel grounds before breakfast found several birds, with Song Thrush the highlight. Common Chiffchaffs and Spanish Sparrows were everywhere, including around the restaurants! We set off at 9am, positioning one bus at the hotel and one a little way down the coast at Risco del Paso. Before we set off from there on foot up the beach, we found our first obliging Barbary Partridges and enjoyed great scope views. We also found several Cattle Egrets. On the shore itself we located a Sanderling and four Whimbrels alongside one Eurasian Curlew, as well as Black-headed Gull with a Common Tern and several Sandwich Terns. On the extensive beach we counted several Kentish Plovers and studied the *Atlantis* Yellow-legged Gulls. On the tidal lagoon we soon found a number of Little Egrets as well as three Eurasian Spoonbills, one of which was colour-ringed. Enquiries showed that it had been ringed as a nestling on 29th May 2008 at Niedersachen, an island off the north-west coast of Germany, 3,232 km away!

The last bit of the walk was a bit of a slog but it was quickly forgotten once we were tucking into our sandwiches in the snack bar. Then there was time for a siesta – or a swim in the sea! At 3.30pm we set off again on something of a twitch. 15 minutes drive down the coast in Jandia there is a colony of Monk Parakeets, and we had good views. We were pleased to find a Rose-ringed Parakeet too, as this species is much rarer. Just as we were about to leave, we added another tick to our list in the form of a European Starling! There were also several Barn Swallows and Northern House Martins overhead.

At 5pm we headed onto the plains for one last foray, and we weren't to be disappointed. The Houbara was still in residence and it displayed for us again, in even better light than the previous day. We had more stunning views of Cream-coloured Coursers as well as Black-bellied Sandgrouse on the deck right next to the bus. We managed to find a driveable track right across the desert towards La Pared so we could keep the sun behind us.

With wine courtesy of Ornitholidays, we enjoyed our final magnificent buffet dinner before most retired to pack. I stayed up for a while to brief some birders arriving from Luxemburg!

Sunday 22nd February

We met for an early breakfast before departing at 6.15am for the hour long drive to the airport. Our return flight to Tenerife went without a hitch. On landing, we picked up two buses at the highly efficient CICAR desk before pausing at the airport for a coffee. Then we headed round to the south motorway for the final time.

We spent a highly productive couple of hours before lunch at, and around, a reservoir in the south-west corner of Tenerife named Roquito del Fraile. Walking across the nearby semi-desert produced good views of Southern Grey Shrike and there was a final chance to admire Spectacled Warbler and Berthelot's Pipit. In a repeat of the first day, we had the opportunity to compare Pallid and the more numerous Plain Swifts at close range. On the reservoir itself, viewing through the holes (which actually had the strange effect of putting us in a large open air hide) we found two Eurasian Spoonbills, a Tufted Duck, two Shovelers, 50 Coot, a variety of common waders and our first Island Darter dragonflies. But the best was yet to come. An Osprey was sighted in the distance and flew closer before lingering for ages. We were delighted that Paul, who had stayed to guard the vans, also saw it (well enough in fact to take a photograph).

We drove the short distance to the seaside resort of Las Galletas where, after a short search, we found a pleasant restaurant which suited our needs with a car park nearby. Most of us chose the local speciality which was a variety of meat and vegetables cooked together.

The afternoon was, perhaps inevitably, slightly anticlimactic. We revisited the sites from our first morning, and the highlight was a pair of Grey Wagtails adjacent to the Golf Course. I took the same wrong turn near Amarilla Golf Course for, mercifully, the third and final time, then it was onwards to the airport where we dropped off the buses and prepared for our return journey at the end of a splendid week. With the exception of a couple of days in the middle of the week the trip had justified the tag of 'winter sunshine break', and some of us braced ourselves for further snow back in the UK!

Acknowledgements

Many thanks to you all for finding so many of the birds, and also for showing such interest in the other natural history aspects of the trip. Thanks too for your cheerfulness and good humour throughout the week. It was great to share so many special moments with you, and Paul and I look forward to meeting up with you all again on another Ornitholidays trip in the near future.

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April 2009

Itinerary and Weather

- 15th February Mid-afternoon flight from London Gatwick or Manchester to Tenerife South. Mid-evening transfer to Tenerife Tour Hotel in Las Caletillas-Candelaria in time for dinner.
- 16th February Morning birding at Guargacho Dam and Amarilla Golf Course. Ascend into hills via TF51 from Los Christianos. Birding/picnic lunch at Las Lajas picnic site in the pines north of Vilaflor, then scenic drive through Mount Teide National Park with several photo stops. Tea at El Portillo Restaurant, then descend via TF24 and TF523 via Arafo to the hotel. Warm and sunny even at high altitudes, max 18°C.
- 17th February Early morning drive to Los Christianos for abortive attempt to catch ferry. Scenic drive up west side of Tenerife for morning birding at Erjos Ponds and then at the fields and cliffs at Punta del Teno either side of our picnic lunch by the sea. Tea in Buenavista, then late afternoon birding at Grimones watchpoint on the north coast west of Puerto de la Cruz before returning to the hotel. Mostly sunny, but windy, max 18°C.
- 18th February Early morning drive to Los Christianos and travel via 8.45am ferry to La Gomera. Drive west then south into Laurel Forest in Garajonay National Park. Birding at El Rejo viewpoint and El Cedro village (lunch in the restaurant). Further afternoon birding at El Rejo viewpoint and in San Sebastian Park before catching 5.00pm ferry back to Tenerife. Drive back to hotel. Sunny in lowlands, max 17°C, but misty, windy and cold in the hills.
- 19th February Morning birding at Valle Molino Reservoir and Tejina Ponds in the north of Tenerife. Lunch at Tenerife North airport, before afternoon flight to Fuerteventura. Late afternoon birding at Barranco de la Torre and the shore adjacent to the Salinas south of the airport, before driving to Gorriones Hotel at Playa Barca south of Costa Calma in good time for dinner. Heavy showers on Tenerife; warm, sunny and calm on Fuerteventura, max 21°C.
- 20th February Pre breakfast birding on the plains between Costa Calma and La Pared. Leave mid morning for drive to central Fuerteventura, with birding at Los Molinos reservoir prior to lunch at a nearby restaurant by the sea on the west coast. Afternoon birding at the viewpoint north of Betancuria, Vega de Rio Palmas, the town of Tuineje and the lake at Rosa de Catalina Garcia before returning to the hotel. Calm, fine and mostly sunny, max 21°C.
- 21st February Optional pre-breakfast birding in the hotel grounds. Morning walk along the beach from Risco del Paso to Hotel Gorriones (lunch in the snack bar). Short siesta before afternoon birding at Jandia and the plains between Costa Calma and La Pared. Warm and sunny, calm am but some wind pm, max 22°C.
- 22nd February Early morning drive to airport for flight to Tenerife North. Drive to south of the island for birding at Roquito del Fraile reservoir prior to lunch in a restaurant at Las Galletas. Afternoon birding at Guargacho Dam and Amarilla Golf Course then short drive to Tenerife South airport for evening flight to London Gatwick or Manchester. Warm and sunny, max 22°C.

CHECKLIST OF BIRDS SEEN DURING THE TOUR

No of days recorded	Location	Abundance Scale
1 2h means seen on 1 day and heard on 2 other days	T = Tenerife G = La Gomera (including from boat) F = Fuerteventura	(max seen on one day) 1 = 1 - 4 2 = 5 - 9 3 = 10 - 99 4 = 100 - 999 5 = 1,000 +

Species	No of days recorded	Location	Abundance Scale	Scientific name
Cory's Shearwater	2	T, G	3	<i>Calonectris diomedea borealis</i>
Macaronesian Shearwater (Little Shearwater)	2	T, G	1	<i>Puffinus baroli baroli</i> *
Grey Heron	4	T, F	2	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>
Little Egret	6	T, F	2	<i>Egretta garzetta</i>
Cattle Egret	1	F	2	<i>Bubulcus ibis</i>
Eurasian Spoonbill	4	T, F	1	<i>Platalea leucorodia</i>
Ruddy Shelduck	1	F	3	<i>Tadorna ferruginea</i>
Common Teal (Eurasian Teal)	1	T	2	<i>Anas crecca</i>
Northern Shoveler	1	T	1	<i>Anas clypeata</i>
Tufted Duck	1	T	1	<i>Aythya fuligula</i>
Osprey	1	T	1	<i>Pandion haliaetus</i>
Egyptian Vulture	1	F	1	<i>Neophron percnopterus majorensis</i> **
Common Buzzard	5	T, G, F	3	<i>Buteo buteo insularum</i> **
Common Kestrel (<i>Tenerife/Gomera subspecies</i>)	5	T	3	<i>Falco tinnunculus canariensis</i> *
Common Kestrel (<i>Fuerteventura subspecies</i>)	3	F	1	<i>Falco tinnunculus dacotiae</i> **
Barbary Falcon	3	T, F	1	<i>Falco peregrinoides</i>
Barbary Partridge	4	T, F	1	<i>Alectoris barbara</i>
Common Moorhen	3	T, F	2	<i>Gallinula chloropus</i>
Common Coot	4	T, F	3	<i>Fulica atra</i>
Houbara Bustard	2	F	1	<i>Chlamydotis undulata fuertaventurae</i> **
Black-winged Stilt	1	F	1	<i>Himantopus himantopus</i>
Stone-curlew (<i>Fuerteventura subspecies</i>)	2	F	1	<i>Burhinus oedicnemus insularum</i> **
Cream-coloured Courser	2	F	3	<i>Cursorius cursor</i>
Ringed Plover	3	T, F	1	<i>Charadrius hiaticula</i>
Little Plover (Little Ringed Plover)	3	T, F	1	<i>Charadrius dubius</i>
Kentish Plover	1	F	3	<i>Charadrius alexandrinus</i>
Common Snipe	1	T	1	<i>Gallinago gallinago</i>
Whimbrel	2	F	1	<i>Numenius phaeopus</i>
Eurasian Curlew	1	F	1	<i>Numenius arquata</i>
Common Sandpiper	4	T, F	1	<i>Actitis hypoleucos</i>
Spotted Redshank	1	F	1	<i>Tringa erythropus</i>
Common Greenshank	4	T, F	1	<i>Tringa nebularia</i>
Ruddy Turnstone	1	F	1	<i>Arenaria interpres</i>
Sanderling	1	F	1	<i>Calidris alba</i>
Little Stint	1	F	1	<i>Calidris minuta</i>
Dunlin	1	F	1	<i>Calidris alpina</i>
Black-headed Gull	1	F	1	<i>Chroicocephalus ridibundus</i>
Black-legged Kittiwake	2	G, F	3	<i>Rissa tridactyla</i>
Yellow-legged Gull	7	T, G, F	3	<i>Larus michahellis atlantis</i> *
Lesser Black-backed Gull	5	T, G, F	3	<i>Larus fuscus</i>
Common Tern	2	F	1	<i>Sterna hirundo</i>
Sandwich Tern	2	F	3	<i>Thalasseus sandvicensis</i>
Black-bellied Sandgrouse	2	F	3	<i>Pterocles orientalis</i>
Rock Dove	7	T, G, F	4	<i>Columba livia</i>
Dark-tailed Laurel Pigeon (Bolle's Pigeon)++	1	G	1	<i>Columba bollii</i>
White-tailed Laurel Pigeon++	2	T, G	2	<i>Columba junoniae</i>
Eurasian Collared Dove	7	T, G, F	3	<i>Streptopelia decaocto</i>
European Turtle Dove	1	F	1	<i>Streptopelia turtur</i>

Rose-ringed Parakeet	1	F	1	<i>Psittacula krameri</i>
Monk Parakeet	1	F	3	<i>Myiopsitta monachus</i>
Plain Swift+	6	T, G, F	3	<i>Apus unicolor</i>
Pallid Swift	2	T	1	<i>Apus pallidus</i>
Hoopoe	4	T, F	1	<i>Upupa epops</i>
Great Spotted Woodpecker	1	T	1	<i>Dendrocopus major canariensis**</i>
Lesser Short-toed Lark	2	F	3	<i>Calandrella rufescens polatzeki**</i>
Barn Swallow	3	T, F	2	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>
Northern House Martin	4	T, F	1	<i>Delichon urbicum</i>
Berthelot's Pipit+	6	T, F	2	<i>Anthus berthelotii</i>
Grey Wagtail	4	T, G, F	1	<i>Motacilla cinerea canariensis**</i>
Song Thrush	1	F	1	<i>Turdus philomelos</i>
Common Blackbird	5	T, G	3	<i>Turdus merula cabreræ*</i>
European Robin (<i>nominata subspecies</i>)	2	1h G, F	1	<i>Erithacus rubecula rubecula</i>
European Robin (<i>Tenerife subspecies</i>)	1	T	1	<i>Erithacus rubecula superbus**</i>
Fuerteventura Stonechat (Canary Islands Stonechat)++	2	F	1	<i>Saxicola dacotiae</i>
Tenerife Goldcrest(++)	1	1h T, G	2	<i>Regulus (regulus) teneriffæ**</i>
Common Chiffchaff	2	1h T, F	1	<i>Phylloscopus collybita</i>
Canary Islands Chiffchaff++	5	T, G	3	<i>Phylloscopus canariensis</i>
Blackcap	5	2h T, G, F	2	<i>Sylvia atricapilla</i>
Spectacled Warbler	5	T, F	1	<i>Sylvia conspicillata orbitalis*</i>
Sardinian Warbler	4	T, F	1	<i>Sylvia melanocephala leucogastra**</i>
Tenerife Blue Tit (<i>Tenerife/Gomera subspecies of Canary Blue Tit</i>)	4	T, G	2	<i>Cyanistes teneriffæ teneriffæ**</i>
Fuerteventura Blue Tit (<i>Fuerte subspecies of Canary Blue Tit</i>)	1	F	1	<i>Cyanistes teneriffæ degener**</i>
Southern Grey Shrike	5	T, F	2	<i>Lanius meridionalis koenigi**</i>
Common Raven	3	F	3	<i>Corvus corax tingitanus</i>
Common Starling	1	F	1	<i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>
Spanish Sparrow	7	T, G, F	3	<i>Passer hispaniolensis</i>
Chaffinch	1	G	1	<i>Fringilla coelebs canariensis**</i>
Blue Chaffinch++	1	T	3	<i>Fringilla teydea teydea</i>
European Goldfinch	1	F	1	<i>Carduelis carduelis</i>
Common Linnet (<i>Gomera and Tenerife subspecies</i>)	1	T	1	<i>Acanthis cannabina meadewaldoi**</i>
Common Linnet (<i>Fuerteventura subspecies</i>)	2	F	2	<i>Acanthis cannabina harterti**</i>
Island Canary (Atlantic Canary)+	4	T, G	3	<i>Serinus canaria</i>
Trumpeter Finch	2	F	3	<i>Bucanetes githagineus amantum**</i>

Canary Islands endemic species++

Macaronesian endemic species+

Subspecies confined to the Canary Islands**

Subspecies confined to Macaronesia*

Notes on the bird list

The bird list uses the nomenclature and taxonomy of the Handbook of the Birds of the World (HBW); some alternative names used on the trip (or in the Collins Guide) are included in brackets.

Many of the notes below refer to details mentioned in the Birds of the Atlantic Islands (BAI) by Tony Clarke; the other reference used is Birds of the Western Palearctic Concise Edition (BWPC) edited by Snow and Perrins.

Cory's Shearwater *Calonectris diomedea borealis*

Some other authorities split Cory's Shearwater *C.borealis* (the race which breeds on the Canaries) from Scopoli's Shearwater *C.diomedea* (which breeds in the Mediterranean).

Macaronesian Shearwater (Little Shearwater) *Puffinus baroli baroli**

Macaronesian Shearwater *P.baroli* has recently been split from Little Shearwater *P.assimilis*; the latter occurs solely in the southern hemisphere.

Egyptian Vulture *Neophron percnopterus*

BAI states that the race on the Canaries is *N.p.majorensis***, which has only recently been described. It is said to be "distinctly larger, with the white in its plumage impregnated with rufous, particularly on the crown, nape, median coverts, breast and tail."

Common Buzzard *Buteo buteo*

The Canaries race *B.b.insularum*** is described as “brown above and more streaked below, being less densely barred or marked.”

Common Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus*

Relative to the nominate race, *F.t.canariensis** (which we saw on Tenerife) is described as being “considerably darker with heavier spotting (male) or barring (female) on upperparts.” *F.t.dacotiae*** (Fuerteventura): male is “paler than both *canariensis* and *tinnunculus* on the upperparts, the spotting is intermediate between those two races and the underparts are paler.” The female is “less heavily marked” and is the “palest of all female races.”

Houbara Bustard *Chlamydotis undulata*

Compared to the nominate race breeding in North Africa, the Canaries race *C.u.fuertaventuræ*** is smaller, with darker upperparts, and the dark areas of the upperwing are blacker.

Stone-curlew *Burhinus oedicnemus*

The race on Fuerteventura is *B.o.insularum***. It is said to be smaller than the nominate race, and similar to the North African race *saharæ* having a sandy-pink coloration.

Yellow-legged Gull *Larus michahellis*

It is generally considered that the birds on the Canaries are *L.m.atlantis** and some authorities consider that this race should be split as Atlantic Gull, *L.atlantis*. However, others believe that the only true *atlantis* occur on the Azores and that further studies are needed on the Canary Island birds.

The adult in breeding plumage is the darkest-backed of all the Yellow-legged Gulls.

Great Spotted Woodpecker *Dendrocopus major*

The Tenerife race *D.m.canariensis*** differs from the nominate *major* in “being darker brown or grey-brown on the belly, with a more orange-red vent and reduced white in the outer tail feathers.”

Lesser Short-toed Lark *Calandrella rufescens*

The race breeding in the Canaries is *C.r.polatzeki*** which is slightly smaller than the nominate race and has narrower streaking on the upperparts and a pale sandy-rufous ground colour.

Grey Wagtail *Motacilla cinerea*

BAI states that the race is *M.c.canariensis***. It has a deeper colour on the underparts than the nominate race, and has facial and wing markings more contrasting.

Common Blackbird *Turdus merula*

The race *T.m.cabrerae** occurs on Madeira and the Canaries. It is slightly smaller than the nominate race; the male is blacker, the female darker blackish-brown with a smaller pale area on the throat.

European Robin *Erithacus rubecula*

The nominate race *E.r.rubecula* breeds on Gomera and is a scarce winter visitor on Fuerteventura. The endemic subspecies *E.r.superbus*** breeds on Tenerife and recently some authorities have suggested it should be split as Canary Islands Robin *E.superbus*. It has darker brown upperparts, the bib is redder, the rest of underparts whiter, there is an obvious white eye-ring, and the blue-grey band separating the bib from the upperparts is wider.

Tenerife Goldcrest *Regulus regulus teneriffae*

HBW treats this as only an endemic race of Goldcrest *R.r.teneriffae***. However, BAI treats it as a full endemic species *R.teneriffae*++. The most obvious difference is that the black crown-stripes meet on the forehead; the song (which we didn't hear) is intermediate between Goldcrest and Firecrest.

Canary Islands Chiffchaff++ *Phylloscopus canariensis*

The most obvious difference from Common Chiffchaff *P.collybita* is the song. It also has a longer bill, shorter wings and slightly longer tail.

Blackcap *Sylvia atricapilla*

The endemic race on Tenerife and Gomera is *S.a.heineken** and any birds seen on Gomera were almost certainly of this race. However, the status of birds on Fuerteventura is unclear as the nominate *atricapilla* has been reported and is considered to be a regular passage migrant and winter visitor.

Spectacled Warbler *Sylvia conspicillata*

The endemic race is *S.c.orbitalis** which is generally darker and more richly coloured than the nominate race and the male has a more solidly dusky head.

Sardinian Warbler *Sylvia melanocephala*

The endemic race is *S.m.leucogastra*** : generally both sexes are darker on the upperparts than the nominate.

Canary Blue Tit *Cyanistes teneriffae*

HBW splits Canary Blue Tit *C.teneriffae* from Common Blue Tit *C.caeruleus*, with the latter including African Blue Tit *C.c.ultramarinus* (seen, for example, in Morocco). It identifies four races of Canary Blue Tit, including *C.t.teneriffae*** (found on Gomera and Tenerife) and *C.t.degener*** (found on Fuerteventura). However, BAI regards the four Canary Islands races as subspecies of African Blue Tit *C.ultramarinus*; it still splits them from Common Blue Tit.

Southern Grey Shrike *Lanius meridionalis*

*L.m.koenigi*** is the endemic race. It is one of the darker-backed races, the narrow white supercilium is often lacking, and the pale grey breast contrasts with the white chin and throat.

Common Raven *Corvus corax*

C.c.tingitanus occurs in North Africa and the Canaries. It is the smallest race, but the most noticeable feature is the fact that it has a wide variety of relatively high pitched calls not normally heard from the nominate race (the one found in the UK).

Chaffinch *Fringilla coelebs*

The race is *F.c.canariensis*** . The male is deep slate-blue above with a black forehead, dull yellowish-green rump, black wings with prominent white bars on median coverts and tips of greater coverts, and it is peachy-buff below. The female is dull grey-brown above with an olive tone to the rump. The throat is dull peachy-buff, washed brownish.

Blue Chaffinch++ *Fringilla teydea*

The race *F.t.teydea* occurs only on Tenerife. (*F.t.polatzeki*, on Grand Canaria, is close to extinction).

Common Linnet *Acanthis cannabina*

*A.c.meadewaldoi*** (Gomera and Tenerife) differs from the nominate race in its more richly coloured mantle and brighter red forecrown and chest.

*A.c.hartermi*** (Fuerteventura) is paler above; the sides and flanks lack rufous-cinnamon and are less prominently streaked.

Trumpeter Finch *Bucanetes githagineus*

*B.g.amantum*** is the darkest race with the deepest pink colour on the body.

BUTTERFLIES

The nomenclature and order follow "Butterflies of Britain and Europe" by Tolman and Lewington (Collins)

Canary Islands' Large White	<i>Pieris cheiranthi</i>
Small White	<i>Artogeia rapae</i>
Bath White	<i>Pontia daplidice</i>
Green-striped White	<i>Euchloe belemia hesperidum</i>
Greenish Black-tip	<i>Elphinstonia charltonia</i>
Clouded Yellow	<i>Colias crocea</i>
Small Copper	<i>Lycaena phlaeas</i>
African Grass Blue	<i>Zizeeria knysna</i>
Monarch	<i>Danaus plexippus</i>
Indian Red Admiral	<i>Vanessa indica</i>
Painted Lady	<i>Vanessa cardui</i>
Canary Speckled Wood	<i>Parage xiphioides</i>

DRAGONFLIES

The nomenclature and order follow "Field Guide to the Dragonflies of Britain and Europe" by Dijkstra and Lewington (BWP)

Sahara Bluetail	<i>Ischnura saharensis</i>
Blue Emperor	<i>Anax imperator</i>
Island Darter	<i>Sympetrum nigrifemur</i>

OTHER SPECIES (not intended to be a complete list)

Rabbit	<i>Oryctolagus cuniculus</i>
Barbary Ground Squirrel	<i>Atlantoxerus getulus</i> (Introduced)
Mouflon	<i>Ovis musimon</i> (Introduced)
Shortfin Pilot Whale	<i>Globiocephala macrorhynchus</i>
Bottle-nosed Dolphin	<i>Tursiops truncatus</i>
Atlantic Spotted Dolphin	<i>Stenella frontalis</i>
Canary Lizard	<i>Gallotia galloti</i> (Tenerife)
Canary Skink	<i>Chalcides viridanus</i> (Tenerife) – tentative identification
Haria Lizard	<i>Gallotia atlantica</i> (Fuerte)
Marsh Frog	<i>Rana perezi</i> (heard at Erjos on Tenerife)
Stripeless Tree Frog	<i>Hyla meridionalis</i> ((Tenerife)

These lists represent those birds and other animals as seen by party members of the tour.



Berthelot's Pipit



Stone-curlew



Houbara Bustard



Cory's Shearwater



Blue Chaffinch



Fuerteventura Stonechat



Osprey



Barbary Falcon

**Front cover: Cream-coloured Courser
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