

Report of a Birding Trip to

The Cape Verde Islands

from 20th March to 27th March 2009

Participants:

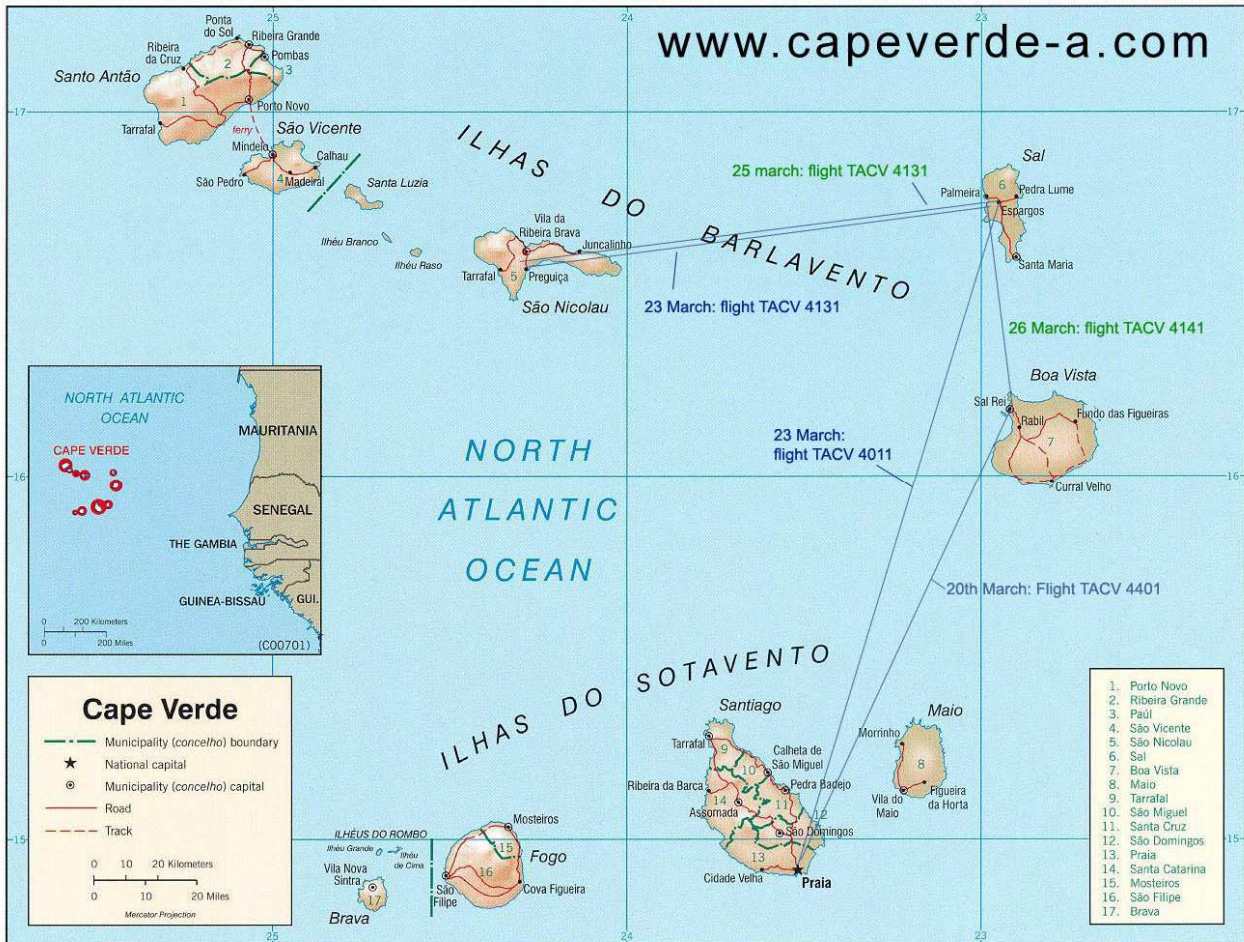
Vaughan Ashby, Svetlana Ashby, Cock Blouw, Ernie Davis, Kevin Davis, John Dyer, Alan Hands, Cor Hopman, Thierry Jansen, Dominic Mitchell, Jan van der Laan, Huig Ouwehand, Barry Smithson, Peter Taylor, Nigel Warren and Jan van der Zee.



Male Magnificent Frigatebird – *Fregata magnificens*;
26 March 2009, Curral Velho, Boavista © Jan van der Laan

Introduction

Between 20th and 27th March 2009 I made a birding trip with Cor Hopman to the Cape Verde Islands. After seeing an advertisement in *Birding World*, we decided to join a trip with Birdfinders (www.birdfinders.co.uk). This proved to be an excellent choice. It was even cheaper than doing it individually, since charters from London are much cheaper than the regular flights between Amsterdam and the Cape Verde Islands. Moreover we had a wonderful group, with six birders from the Netherlands, nine from the UK and one from Russia.



© http://www.capeverde-a.com/cape_verde_islands_map.shtml

The Cape Verde Islands were on my wish list ever since the *Birds of The Western Palearctic* were published. These strange islands in the left down corner always had a certain attraction on me. Moreover, the first color prints in the Dutch *Birding Magazine* were about the Cape Verde Islands, with pictures of the highly restricted Raso Lark. 10 Years later, Kees Hazevoet published his Checklist to the Birds of the Cape Verde Islands, being the first publication on the Western Palearctic using the phylogenetic species concept (PSC). This book served as a basis for the taxonomic decisions by the Committee of Dutch Systematics and is still provoking the birding community up to today! Nowadays it is hard to understand why an obvious different bird as e.g. Neglected Kestrel is still considered a subspecies of Common Kestrel by the mainstream!

Finally, it was the publication of *Petrels Night and Day* by Magnus Robb and the *Sound Approach* that decided me to go eventually. Magnus Robb lively describes several species – e.g. Fea's Petrel, White-faced Storm Petrel, Cape Verde Shearwater, Boyd's Shearwater - in such a way that I had to go. And so I did.

Itinerary

- 19 march** Departure for London Gatwick with Easy Jet (8882) at 21:30 hours. Arrival on time at 21:40 hours. Phoned hotel for transport to hotel (The Gatwick White House Hotel in Horley for € 47).
- 20 march** Departure from London Gatwick with Thomson Airlines (TOM 365) at 10:00 hours. Arrival on time at 14:50 hours. Connecting flight with Cape Verde Airlines (TACV 4401) at 16:35 hours to Santiago, arriving at 17:25 hours in time. After some hassle about the numbers of rented cars we finally drove to Praia city centre to our hotel Residencial Praia Maria (www.caboverde.com/pages/618580.htm). A good dinner in a nice local restaurant ended our first day on the Cape Verde Islands.
- 21 march** Birding on Santiago. First we checked the reservoir Barragem de Poilão for Bourne's Heron, but nothing yet. However interesting birds were Great Egret, Squacco Heron, Little Ringed Plover, Common Snipe, Alexander's Kestrel, Grey-headed Kingfisher, Iago Sparrow, Spectacled Warbler, and Helmeted Guineafowl. Next we checked if there were any Bourne's Herons at the nesting site at Liberão, but they were not, only 12 empty nests were counted. We lunched at São Jorge dos Orgãos, while watching the Pico da Antónia for Cape Verde Peregrine and Cape Verde Buzzard. We managed to get very good views of at least four Cape Verde Buzzards, but the Peregrine was not seen. Also we found two Cape Verde Warblers easily and some - albeit distant - Cape Verde Swifts. In the afternoon we went to Liberão again, but again no Bourne's Heron was seen, so we decided to spend the last hours of daylight at the Barragem de Poilão. This was a great success, no less than three adult Bourne's Herons were seen well and - perhaps the best bird of the trip - a Black-headed Heron that came to sleep in the reservoir too! In the dark we drove back to Praia where we had a good lunch in our already favourite restaurant.



Left: Bourne's Heron nesting tree at Liberão, Santiago; right: Barragem de Poilão, Santiago, the place where we saw Bourne's and Black-headed Heron amongst others © Jan van der Laan.



Left: São Jorge dos Orgãos, Santiago, good place for Cape Verde Buzzard. Right: cliffs east of Praia, good for Red-billed Tropicbird © Jan van der Laan.

- 22 march** Before breakfast we checked the cliffs east of the harbour of Praia. In the harbour of Praia we found a dark phase Western Reef Egret, probably the same that is observed here the past years? On our way to the cliffs we encountered Cream-coloured Courser, Bar-tailed Desert Lark and Black-crowned Sparrow-

larks. At the cliffs we had good sightings of Red-billed Tropicbirds nesting on the cliffs. Again no Peregrine. After breakfast we went again to the cliffs. Most interesting birds were our first Cape Verde Shearwater, closer-by Cape Verde Swifts, plus the same birds we saw earlier in the morning. A short visit to Barragem the Poilão produced no other new birds. At lunch we tried some high cliffs for the Peregrine and later in the afternoon we drove to Pedro Badejo, but again no new birds. Finally we tried the former breeding site of Cape Verde Peregrine, north of Milho Branco (15° 2'32.88"N, 23°31'31.22"W), but no Falcons. Just after sundown we returned to our hotel in Praia, but before we had dinner, we tried the Cape Verde Barn Owl behind the Sol Atlântico under the plateau, but no result. So again dinner at our favourite restaurant.

23 march

We had an early rise (5:00) to be on time for our flight to Sal (6:45-7:30 TACV 4011). The plane left on time, so we had time to have breakfast on Sal before our plane to São Nicolau departed (10:40-11:20 TACV 4131). At São Nicolau we were picked up by three cars and drove on a long bumpy road to Tarrafal on the western coast. Halfway the road improved and we saw several Neglected Kestrels along the road. At around 13:00 hours we finally arrived at our hotel for the coming two nights, the nice Residencial Casa de Pasto Alice (<http://www.caboverde.com/pages/361187.htm>), where our arrival came as a total surprise! But after some talking we all had our rooms. After a very nice lunch, we headed for Ponta do Barril, just north of Tarrafal to do some seawatching. Lots of Cape Verde Shearwaters were seen, c 20 Boyd's Shearwaters, three Great Skuas, Brown Boobies and a group of Melon-headed Whales (*Peponocephala electra*). Before it was getting dark, we decided to give the Cape Verde Barn Owl another try. We drove for more than an half hour to the small mountain village of Cachaço and settled ourselves behind the church. We waited after sundown, but some of us – including myself - only heard the Cape Verde Barn Owl. Our way back was very slow as one of the drivers was too scared to drive in the dark so it seemed. After a late evening dinner we went to bed.



Left: near Cachaço, São Nicolau, left side is the place for Cape Verde Barn Owl; the cliffs in the middle is a breeding site for Fea's Petrel. Right: Raso, southern shore. Larks were seen above these cliffs © Jan van der Laan.

24 march

After breakfast we went to the harbour and boarded on the small vessel *Alianca* for our trip to Raso. We knew already we were not granted to land on Branco, but now we heard Raso was also off limits too. The journey to Raso was at first calm without any wind, but once we had left the leeward side of São Nicolau, waves were coming over the boat and we were getting quite wet. But birds were everywhere. Large numbers of Cape Verde Shearwaters, good numbers of Boyd's Shearwaters, several Fea's Petrels – one looked me straight in the eyes when it passed the vessel - and one Cape Verde Storm Petrel, unfortunately only seen by the birders on the left side of the vessel. Also Flying Fish and a Hawk-billed Turtle were seen. Closer to Raso we saw another vessel leaving the island and two men stayed behind, apparently to kill some seabirds to guard the island. The skipper approached the island as close as possible and this strategy was rewarded with the sighting of no less than eight Raso Larks. We also could hear one singing! We had lunch on the boat under the cliffs with Brown Boobies and a lone Red-billed Tropicbird close by and the Cape Verde Shearwaters stayed close to the vessel too. The journey back to

Tarrafal proved to be the most exciting piece of birding I ever encountered. The wind had increased and just east of Raso the current was stronger than on our way to Raso. Waves came over the vessel and soon everyone was soaked to the bone. Some of us were save just standing in the shade of the skippers cabin, but the other half of us didn't and it was vital to have some grip. At a certain moment the only thing I could grasp was the arm of Dominic. Luckily we managed to cope with the high waves and soon the worst was over and we could do some birding. A Sooty Shearwater passed the boat, more Boyd's Shearwaters, a few more Fea's, and, discovered by Vaughan, a bird that was thought to be a Cape Verde Storm Petrel at first. The skipper was able to follow this bird for quite a while, so everyone had the opportunity to get good views, but after studying the photo's, however, it turned out to be a Leach's Storm Petrel! Another interesting thing was a Portuguese Man o' War (*Physalia physalis*), a dangerous and poisonous jellyfish, floating close to the vessel. In the late afternoon we reached Tarrafal safely, tired and very wet - but content we returned to Alice's, where we had a shower and several beers. Before dinner we tried the Cape Verde Barn Owl again at Cachaço. No luck this time, so we returned to Alice's again, had dinner and went to sleep.

25 march

We had to rise early since our flight to Sal (TACV VR 4131) was changed two hours earlier. On arrival at the airport, the plane was delayed for an hour or so. So we departed at around 9:50 and after a 20 minutes flight we reached Sal. Sal was a little bit of a nightmare, a flat, sandy barren place with several resorts on the coast or apartments in the construction phase – most of them will apparently never be finished. Also compared to the other islands a lot of rubbish aside the roads. And lots of package tourists, bored as ever, never pleased and sun-burnt as ever. First we decided to check the famous Salinas de Pedra de Lume, but were charged a high entrance fee, so we sent two birders in and kept contact with the portable radio. Only a few distant Curlew Sandpipers were seen, so we went to our hotel Aparthotel Santa Maria Beach (www.capeverdetravel.com/aparthotelsantamariabeach.html). After checking in we went to some salt pans north of Santa Maria, where we added several birds to the trip list, like Grey Plover, Black-winged Stilt, Ruff, Kentish Plover, Dunlin and Little Stint. In the evening we had dinner in a pizzeria which was quite good.

26 march

After an early breakfast we checked the large pond in the middle of Santa Maria and went to the airport. On arrival at 9:25 hours we heard we had only 4 minutes to check in, since our flight to Boavista was changed to an hour earlier to 10:00 hours instead of 10:40 hours (TACV VR 4141). Happily we did not check the salt pans! At the airport of Boavista our travel agency brought us to the hotel Estoril Beach Resort (www.estorilbeachresort.com/) and Pedrin Lopez had arrived too. He told us he had to do some preparations for meals and the boat and that we would depart at 12:30 hours. We were getting a little bit nervous, because we had only a few hours for the Magnificent Frigatebirds at Ilhéu de Curral Velho. With three four-wheel pick-ups we drove for an hour the southern tip of the island. On our way we saw several Hoopoe Larks. When we saw the island for the first time we saw two or three big birds, the Frigatebirds! However, when we went closer only Brown Boobies were seen plus the lone Red-billed Tropicbird. Pedrin and his girlfriend decided to swim to the island to see if the bird were breeding this year. It took them c 20 minutes to reach the island and several Brown Boobies flew into the air (all breeding birds stayed on their nests however). Then, three enormous birds went off too and there they were, 75% of all birds known in the Western Palearctic! We had great views of all three of them. After the females had landed on the island again and the male disappeared behind the horizon, we went north again, now to the northeastern part. Vaughan, Svetlana, John and Alan would not accompany us to Ilhéu dos Pássaros, so with two pick-ups we drove to Fundo das Figueiras to find the skipper. At first we could not find him and we feared he had already spent his money on beer. But finally he was found, so we could drive to Baía das Gatas and at 17:30 hours we prepared ourselves to land on the small islet. We had to do it in two rides and I was on the second. The distance was c 1 km and c 50 meter before the

island you have to jump from the boat into the water (waist-high) and wade to the island. A little wet we reached the island unharmed, dried ourselves and set up our camp. At around 19:30 it was dark, so I started to scan the island with my Yukon 4x50 Infrared monocular. Immediately I saw several White-faced Storm Petrels coming in and by the time I had 20 or something, the others finally saw one before their feet. Pedrin managed to catch one and we could see this one close by. Later another one was dug out of a collapsed burrow, just under the wooden boardwalk! After seeing about 100 birds we finally went to sleep. I had a nice warm sleeping bag, but I woke up every hour or so and then I inspected the island with the infrared. At a certain moment I saw several near the head of a sleeping Jan van der Zee! At around 4:30 hours I saw all birds leaving the island one by one.



Left: Ilhéu de Curral Velho, Boavista, now the only breeding place for Magnificent Frigatebird; right: the small islet Ilhéu dos Pássaros, Boavista, breeding site of White-faced Storm Petrel © Jan van der Laan.

27 march At 7:00 hours the boat picked us up. We then drove to an old water well where a Cape Verde Barn Owl had bred the previous years, but nothing appeared. On our way back we saw an adult Egyptian Vulture and at the Rabil Lagoon two Moorhens and good numbers of Black-crowned Sparrow Larks. We arrived at the hotel at 9:30, just in time to have a shower and a good breakfast. The rest of the remaining hours nothing much was done, so finally we were at the airport for our Thomson flight to Gatwick again (TOM 366). We had a delay of c 2 hours, so our plane departed at around 18:00 instead of 15:50 hours, so around midnight we reached London Gatwick. We said goodbye to all our fellow travelers, checked our bags in at Easyjet and took a cab to our hotel (Gainsborough Lodge in Horley for c € 40) to have a short sleep.

28 march Departure from London Gatwick with Easy Jet (8871) at 6:30 hours. Arrival on time at 7:45 hours. Picked up by Marieke and Bob and that ended our very successful trip to the Cape Verde Islands.

Recommended Literature and Trip Reports

For identification we used *Birds of the Atlantic Islands* by Tony Clarke published in 2006 (ISBN 0-7136-6023-6). Perhaps better is to buy the video tape of the *Birds of the Macaronesian Islands, part two: The Cape Verde Islands and the Azores*, filmed by Leo Boon and narrated by Magnus Robb (published in 2002 by Cursorius (www.cursorius.com)). For all petrel lovers the new *Petrels Night and Day a Sound Approach Guide* by Magnus Robb, Killian Mullarney & The Sound Approach (ISBN 978-90-810933-2-3) is an absolute must. The best book on Cape Verde is of course *The Birds of the Cape Verde Islands* by Cornelis J. (Kees) Hazevoet, published in 1995 (ISBN 0-907446-17-5).

Useful trip reports can be found at <http://www.birdtours.co.uk/> and <http://www.travellingbirder.com/>.

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank Harry Smit, Leo Boon, Max Berlijn, René Pop, Kees Hazevoet, Arnoud van den Berg and Magnus Robb for information and useful tips, Vaughan Ashby and Nigel Warren for leading us all the way, Dominic Mitchel for letting me holding his arm (“the only thing that was between me and the Almighty”) during the boat trip to and from Raso, Pedrin López Suárez for guiding us to Curral Velho and Ilhéu dos Pássaros on Boavista, Marianne van der Laan for bringing us to the airport and Marieke Wiringa for picking us up on return (and taking care of our children of course!).

The Species Accounts

The order and nomenclature follows *Dutch Birding bird names: list of Western Palearctic birds species in 2008* by Arnoud van den Berg published in 2008 (ISBN 978-90-808433-4-9). Endemic taxa are in capitals.

Alkmaar, April 2009.

If you have any remarks, questions or suggestions, please contact:

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01. **Helmeted Guineafowl / Helmparelhoe** – *Numida meleagris*
 21 March c 50 totally at Barragem de Poilão and Liberao, Santiago
 22 March c 10 east of São Jorge dos Orgãos, Santiago
 24 March 8 between Tarrafal and Cachaço, São Nicolau
02. **FEA'S PETREL / GON-GON** – *Pterodroma feae*
 24 March c 10 between São Nicolau and Raso
03. **CAPE VERDE SHEARWATER / KAAPVERDISCHE PIJLSTORMVOGEL** – *Calonectris edwardsi*
 22 March 1 seen at sea at Praia, Santiago
 23 March c 1000 Ponta do Barril, São Nicolau
 24 March 1000s At sea during the trip to Raso.
 26 March 6 Curral Velho, Boavista
04. **Sooty Shearwater / Grauwe Pijlstormvogel** – *Puffinus griseus*
 24 March 1 between Raso and São Nicolau
05. **BOYD'S SHEARWATER / KAAPVERDISCHE KLEINE PIJLSTORMVOGEL** – *Puffinus boydi*
 23 March c 20 Ponta do Barril, São Nicolau
 24 March c 50 between Raso and São Nicolau
06. **White-faced Storm Petrel / Bont Stormvogeltje** – *Pelagodroma marina*
 26 March c 100-200 Ilhéu dos Pássaros, Boavista
 27 March c 25 Ilhéu dos Pássaros, Boavista
07. **Leach's Petrel / Vaal Stormvogeltje** – *Oceanodroma leucorhoa*
 24 March 1 between Raso and São Nicolau
08. **CAPE VERDE STORM PETREL / KAAPVERDISCH STORMVOGELTJE** – *Oceanodroma jabejabe*
 24 March 1 between São Nicolau and Raso
 This bird was darker in plumage and the white rump was less conspicuous than the Leach's Petrel.
09. **Red-billed Tropicbird / Roodsnavelkeerkringvogel** – *Phaethon aethereus*
 22 March 15 east of Praia harbour, Santiago
 24 March 7 Raso
 26 March 6 Curral Velho, Boavista
10. **Brown Booby / Bruine Gent** – *Sula leucogaster*
 23 March 1 Tarrafal
 c 10 Ponta do Barril, São Nicolau
 24 March c 50-60 Raso
 26 March c 100 Curral Velho, Boavista
 27 March 6 Sal Rei Harbour, Boavista (seen by the second group)
11. **Magnificent Frigatebird / Amerikaanse Fregatvogel** – *Fregata magnificens*
 26 March 3 (1 male, 2 females) Ilhéu de Curral Velho, Boavista
12. **Black-crowned Night Heron / Kwak** – *Nycticorax nycticorax*
 21 March 1 2nd cy, Barragem de Poilão, Santiago
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13. **Squacco Heron / Ralreiger** – *Ardeola ralloides*
21 March 2 Barragem de Poilão, Santiago
14. **Cattle Egret / Koereiger** – *Bubulcus ibis*
Common, seen on all islands. We counted 128 birds in one tree on 21st March at Barragem de Poilão, Santiago.
15. **Western Reef Egret / Westelijke Rifeiger** – *Egretta gularis*
22 March 1 (dark phase) in the harbour of Praia, Santiago
24 March 1 (dark phase) Raso
16. **Little Egret / Kleine Zilverreiger** – *Egretta garzetta*
21 March c 10 Barragem de Poilão, Santiago
22 March 1 cliff east of Praia, Santiago
 6 Barragem de Poilão, Santiago
24 March 1 Raso
26 March 1 Ilhéu do Curral Velho, Boavista
17. **Great Egret / Grote Zilverreiger** – *Casmerodius albus*
21 March 1 Barragem de Poilão, Santiago
Only the second record for the Cape Verde Islands. Large size and with the gape extended behind the eye, therefore excluding Intermediate Egret. Legs were dull dark, so most probably it was of Eurasian/African origin.
18. **Black-headed Heron / Zwartkopreiger** – *Ardea melanocephala*
21 March 1 (imm.) Barragem de Poilão, Santiago
This bird came to roost in the last hour of daylight. The underwing pattern was most striking and made identification as Black-headed Heron straightforward. The first record for the Cape Verde islands.
19. **Grey Heron / Blauwe Reiger** – *Ardea cinera*
21 March 3 Barragem de Poilão, Santiago; also on 22 March
27 March 3 Rabil Lagoon, Boavista
20. **BOURNE'S HERON / KAAPVERDISCHE PURPERREIGER** – *Ardea bournei*
21 March 3 (adults) Barragem de Poilão, Santiago
The birds came to roost in the last hour of daylight. The colony at Liberão was not active this month, so happily this new reservoir is a good back-up.
21. **Eurasian Spoonbill / Lepelaar** – *Platalea leucorodia*
21 March 1 (imm.) Barragem de Poilão, Santiago; also on 22 March in the same tree.
22. **Egyptian Vulture / Aasgier** – *Neophron percnopterus*
27 March 1 (adult) between Praia de Gatas and Rabil, Boavista
23. **Western Marsh Harrier / Bruine Kiekendief** – *Circus aeruginosus*
26 March 1 (male) Curral Velho, Boavista
24. **CAPE VERDE BUZZARD / KAAPVERDISCHE BUIZERD** – *Buteo bannermani*
21 March 4 São Jorge dos Orgãos, Santiago
Two birds were displaying and calling. All birds were uniform dark brown buzzard-types. São Jorge dos Orgãos is currently the best place to observe this rare buteo.
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25. **Osprey / Visarend** – *Pandion haliaetus*
 23 March 1 Tarrafal, São Nicolau
 24 March 1 Raso, São Nicolau
 1 Tarrafal, São Nicolau
 26 March 6 Curral Velho, Boavista
26. **ALEXANDER'S KESTREL / ALEXANDERS TORENVALK** – *Falco alexandri*
 Common on Santiago. On Boavista, 6 were seen on 26 March and another 2 on 27 March.
27. **NEGLECTED KESTREL / VERGETEN TORENVALK** – *Falco neglectus*
 23 March 11 São Nicolau
 24 March c 5 São Nicolau
 25 March 3 São Nicolau
 It is hard to understand why the Kestrel-taxa have not been split into full species, especially *F neglectus*.
28. **Common Moorhen / Waterhoen** – *Gallinula chloropus*
 21 March 3 Barragem de Poilão, Santiago
 22 March 2 Barragem de Poilão, Santiago
 27 March 2 Rabil Lagoon, Boavista
29. **Black-winged Stilt / Steltkluut** – *Himantopus himantopus*
 25 March 2 Saltpans just north of Santa Maria, Sal
30. **Cream-coloured Courser / Renvogel** – *Cursorius cursor*
 22 March 11 East of Praia, Santiago
 26 March 4 en route between Curral Velho and Sal Rei, Boavista
31. **Little Ringed Plover / Kleine Plevier** – *Charadrius dubius*
 21 March 1 Barragem de Poilão, Santiago; also on 22 March.
32. **Common Ringed Plover / Bontbekplevier** – *Charadrius hiaticula*
 22 March 4 Barragem de Poilão, Santiago
 25 March 1 Beach of Tarrafal, São Nicolau
 25 March 10 Santa Maria, Sal
 26 March 1 Santa Maria, Sal
 27 March 2 Sal Rei, Boavista
33. **Kentish Plover / Strandplevier** – *Charadrius alexandrinus*
 25 March c 10 Saltpans north of Santa Maria, Sal
 c 10 Santa Maria, Sal
 26 March 3 Santa Maria, Sal
 27 March c 20 Boca de Salina, Boavista (seen by the second group)
34. **Grey Plover / Zilverplevier** – *Pluvialis squaterola*
 24 March 1 Beach of Tarrafal, São Nicolau
 25 March 2 Saltpans north of Santa Maria, Sal
35. **Sanderling / Drieteenstrandloper** – *Calidris alba*
 Seen daily between 22 March and 26 March with highest numbers (64) at Curral Velho, Boavista.
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36. **Little Stint / Kleine Strandloper** – *Calidris minuta*
 25 March 1 Saltpans north of Santa Maria, Sal
 7 Santa Maria, Sal
 26 March 2 Santa Maria, Sal
37. **Curlew Sandpiper / Krombekstrandloper** – *Calidris ferruginea*
 25 March 5 Pedra Leguma, Sal
 10 Saltpans north of Santa Maria, Sal
 4 Santa Maria, Sal
 26 March 3 Santa Maria, Sal
38. **Dunlin / Bonte Strandloper** – *Calidris alpina*
 25 March 2 Santa Maria, Sal; also on 26 March.
39. **Ruff / Kemphaan** – *Philomachus pugnax*
 25 March 2 Saltpans just north of Santa Maria, Sal
40. **Common Snipe / Watersnip** – *Gallinago gallinago*
 21 March 7 Barragem de Poilão, Santiago; also on 22 March
41. **Bar-tailed Godwit / Rosse Grutto** – *Limosa lapponica*
 26 March 3 Curral Velho, Boavista
42. **Whimbrel / Regenwulp** – *Numenius phaeopus*
 22 March 4 Praia harbour, Santiago
 23 March 2 Tarrafal harbour, São Nicolau
 24 March 2 Tarrafal harbour, São Nicolau
 26 March 3 Curral Velho, Boavista
 27 March 1 Boca de Salina, Boavista (seen by the second group)
43. **Common Sandpiper / Oeverloper** – *Actitis hypoleucos*
 21 March 9 Barragem de Poilão, Santiago
 22 March 10 Barragem de Poilão, Santiago
 25 March 2 Saltpans north of Santa Maria, Sal
 27 March 1 Sal Rei Harbour, Boavista (seen by the second group)
44. **Green Sandpiper / Witgat** – *Tringa ochropus*
 21 March 1 Barragem de Poilão, Santiago; also on 22 March.
45. **Greenshank / Groenpootruiter** – *Tringa nebularia*
 21 March 14 Barragem de Poilão, Santiago
 22 March 12 Barragem de Poilão, Santiago
 One bird was colour-ringed and turned out be ringed in Ythan Estuary, Aberdeen, Scotland ‘after 2003’ by the Grampian Ringing Group and Farlington Ringing Group!
46. **Wood Sandpiper / Bosruiter** – *Tringa glareola*
 21 March 4 Barragem de Poilão, Santiago
 22 March 2 Barragem de Poilão, Santiago
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47. **Common Redshank / Tureluur** – *Tringa totanus*
 21 March 1 Barragem de Poilão, Santiago
 25 March 1 Saltpans north of Santa Maria, Sal
48. **Ruddy Turnstone / Steenloper** – *Arenaria interpres*
 22 March 1 Praia Harbour, Santiago
 6 cliffs east of Praia, Santiago
 23 March 5 Tarrafal harbour, São Nicolau
 17 Ponta do Barril, São Nicolau
 24 March 12 Raso
 25 March 17 Tarrafal harbour, São Nicolau
 12 saltpans north of Santa Maria, Sal
 26 March 5 Ilhéu dos Pássaros, Boavista
 27 March 3 Ilhéu dos Pássaros, Boavista
 c 40 Sal Rei, Boavista
49. **Great Skua / Grote Jager** – *Stercorarius skua*
 23 March 3 Ponta do Barril, São Nicolau
50. **Black-legged Kittiwake / Drieteenmeeuw** – *Rissa trydactyla*
 23 March 2 (one adult, one 2nd cy) Ponta do Barril, São Nicolau
51. **Rock Dove / Rotsduif** – *Columba livia*
 Seen daily in good numbers on Santiago, São Nicolau, Sal and Boavista. The birds were darker and more uniform (no 'Speckled Jim's') than the normal Feral Pigeons.
52. **CAPE VERDE BARN OWL / KAAPVERDISCHE KERKUIL** – *Tyto detorta*
 23 March 1 (heard only) behind the church of Cachaço, São Nicolau
 On Boavista Pedrin showed us an old water well where a pair had bred successfully the past few years.
53. **CAPE VERDE SWIFT / KAAPVERDISCHE GIERZWALUW** – *Apus alexandri*
 Rather common and widespread on Santiago (c 10 birds seen daily) and São Nicolau (c 20 birds seen daily).
54. **Grey-headed Kingfisher / Grijskopijsvogel** – *Halcyon leucocephala*
 Common, seen in good numbers (c 50 daily) on Santiago. Birds are almost everywhere.
55. **RASO LARK / RAZOLEEUWERIK** – *Alauda razae*
 23 March 8 2 groups of three, 1 lone displaying bird and one heard singing from the boat on the south-western part of Raso. Raso is off-limits now, but with patience and luck, the species is still tickable!
56. **Black-crowned Sparrow-lark / Zwartkruinvinkleeuwerik** – *Eremopterix nigriceps*
 22 March 4 east of Praia Harbour, Santiago
 26 March 4 just north of Curral Velho, Boavista
 27 March c 50 Boavista, with more than 15 drinking at Rabil Lagoon
57. **Bar-tailed Lark / Rosse Woestijnleeuwerik** – *Ammomanes cincturus*
 22 March 3 east of Praia Harbour, Santiago
 23 March 2 airstrip of Aeroporto do Preguiça, São Nicolau
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25 March	2	saltpans north of Santa Maria, Sal
26 March	c 64	between Sal Rei and Curral Velho and Baía das Gatas, Boavista
27 March	c 30	between Baía das Gatas and Sal Rei, Boavista

58. **Greater Hoopoe-Lark / Witbandleeuwerik** – *Alaemon alaudipes*

26 March	c 50	between Sal Rei and Curral Velho and Baía das Gatas, Boavista. Our group saw actually about six birds, but the few who did not go the Ilhéu dos Pássaros and drove back to Sal Rei had c 50 birds!
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59. **Red-rumped Swallow / Roodstuitwaluw** – *Hirundo daurica*

26 March	1	rubbish dump of Sal Rei, Boavista (seen only by Svetlana)
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60. **Barn Swallow / Boerenwaluw** – *Hirundo rustica*

26 March	2	Santa Maria, Sal
27 March	5	Sal Rei, Boavista (seen by the second group)

61. **House Martin / Huiswaluw** – *Delichon urbica*

27 March	4	rubbish dump of Sal Rei, Boavista (seen by the second group)
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62. **Northern Wheatear / Tapuit** – *Oenanthe oenanthe*

22 March	1	east of Praia Harbour, Santiago
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63. **CAPE VERDE WARBLER / KAAPVERDISCHE RIETZANGER** – *Acrocephalus brevipennis*

21 March	2-3	São Jorge dos Orgãos, Santiago
22 March	1	(heard) east of São Jorge dos Orgãos, Santiago, during picnic lunch (see Google Earth 15°01'01.53" N, 23°32'29.40" W)

64. **Blackcap / Zwartkop** – *Sylvia atricapilla*

Common on Santiago; on 23 en 24 March 4 seen at the church at Cachaço, São Nicolau. 27 March 1 Boavista.

65. **Spectacled Warbler / Brilgrasmus** – *Sylvia conspicillata*

Common on Santiago (c 20 birds seen daily), São Nicolau (5 and 2 seen). One on Boavista on 20 and 27 March.

66. **Brown-necked Raven / Bruinnekraaf** – *Corvus ruficollis*

Several were seen daily on all islands, even on Raso. Most common on Boavista.

67. **House Sparrow / Huismus** – *Passer domesticus*

22 March	10	east of Praia Harbour, Santiago
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68. **Spanish Sparrow / Spaanse Mus** – *Passer hispaniolensis*

Common on Santiago. On 25 March 2 seen on Sal. On 20 and 27 March 2 nesting on the Boavista airport.

69. **IAGO SPARROW / KAAPVERDISCHE MUS** – *Passer iagoensis*

The most common and widespread bird on the Cape Verdes, even seen on Raso. A large flock was seen on 21 March at Liberão, with c 250 birds.

70. **Common Waxbill / Sint-helena Fazantje** – *Estrilda astrild*

Common on Santiago, where flocks of up to c 100 birds were seen.



Left: Cape Verde Shearwater, the most common bird between São Nicolau and Raso on 24 March 2009; middle: one of the many Boyd's Shearwaters between Raso and São Nicolau © Vaughan Ashby; right: Fea's Petrel, 24 March 2009 © Jan van der Laan.



Left: White-faced Storm Petrel on Ilhéu dos Pássaros, 26 March 2009 © Jan van der Laan; See for a slide show of the night on Ilhéu dos Pássaros (www.flickr.com/photos/dominicmitchell/sets/72157616732415373/show/with/3445237389/). Middle and right: Leach's Storm Petrel between Raso and São Nicolau, 24th March 2009 © Vaughan Ashby.



Left: the first Black-headed Heron for the Cape Verde Islands! 21st March 2009, Barragem de Poilão, Santiago. © Cor Hopman, and right: one of the Bourne's Herons on 21st March 2009, Barragem de Poilão, Santiago. Note the contrasting black cap, lack of any black neck stripe and obvious white foreneck. © Cor Hopman.



Cape Verde Buzzards at São Jorge dos Orgãos, Santiago, 21st March 2009. An all dark Buteo © Jan van der Laan. All 4 observed birds were like these two; right: Alexander's Kestrel, male, Santiago, 21st March 2009. Only the cheeks show some grey. Tail is bluish-grey with black tailbands, also a unique feature in males not found in any Eurasian Kestrel-taxa © Cor Hopman.



Grey-headed Kingfisher, Liberão, Santiago, 21st March 2009 © Jan van der Laan; right: Cape Verde Warbler, São Jorge dos Orgãos, Santiago, 21st March 2009 © Vaughan Ashby.



Raso Lark as seen from the vessel at Raso, 24 March 2009 © Dominic Mitchell. For more pictures taken by Dominic Mitchell, see the slide show on www.flickr.com/photos/dominicmitchell/sets/72157616187306073/show/with/3408150380/.