

Report Of A Birding Trip To

Madeira

from July 3rd till July 17th 2008

Participants:

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Marieke Wiringa

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Greetje Brink, Ronald en Hugo Loonstra



Desertas Petrel – *Pterodroma deserta*; 10 July 2008 between Madeira and the Desertas © Jan van der Laan.

Introduction

Between July 3rd and July 17th 2008 we went to Madeira for a holiday together with Greetje Brink, Ronald Loonstra and their son Hugo. Our main goal was to have a rest, away from our stressful life in the Netherlands, but of course I had planned (cunningly) some birding trips in order to see the most important birds such as the Zino's Petrel, Desertas Petrel, Trocaz Pigeon and Madeira Firecrest.



© <http://www.madeiraarchipelago.com/map/>



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We booked a package tour with Sudtours and for two weeks we had a nice apartment in the northeastern part of Funchal ([Quinta Mãe Dos Homens](#) in Funchal). From the balcony I was able to do some seawatching and that produced several dolphins and Bryde's Whales on several occasions. The only seabirds I did see, however, were Cory's Shearwater (common) and Bulwer's Petrel (on one occasion two birds).

We rented a Renault modus from [Economy Car Rentals](#) for a reasonable price (c 330 euro for two weeks). I booked two birding tours with [Madeira Wind Birds](#), one for going to the Zino's Petrel on 8 July (65 €) and one to the Desertas on 10 July (80 €). Unfortunately I saw too late there was an overnight trip to the Desertas with [Ventura do Mar](#), increasing the chance of seeing the summer population of Madeiran Storm-Petrel. But I have planned to go the Salvagens one day in the future and chance to see them are almost guaranteed.

Recommended Literature and Trip Reports

For birding I used the brilliant *Birds of the Atlantic Islands* by Tony Clarke published in 2006 (ISBN 0-7136-6023-6). A must, however, for all petrel lovers is the new *Petrels Night and Day a Sound Approach Guide* by Magnus Robb, Killian Mullarney & The Sound Approach (ISBN 978-90-810933-2-3).

For directions I used information from <http://madeira.seawatching.net/sites.html>. This site gave useful information on all important birding sites, for example how to find Trocaz Pigeons at Fajã da Nogueira.

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

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank Annet Meijers and Walter & van Zijl for taking care of the house during our stay on Madeira

The Species Accounts

Order and nomenclature follows [Gill, F & D Donsker \(Eds\). 2019. IOC World Bird List \(v9.2\)](#). Endemic species are in capitals. Dutch names follow Dutch Birding's [Vogelnamen](#).

Alkmaar, July 2008.

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

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Itinerary

I will not bother my readers with a complete itinerary. Most of the time was spent with my family alongside the swimming pool and on the hotel grounds plus some sites-seeing in Funchal. I did birding on the following days:

- 3 July (Thu)** Arrival in the morning. Seawatching from hotel room produced lots of Cory's Shearwaters and two Bulwer's Petrel flying west. In the evening a Barn Owl was heard.
- 5 July (Sat)** Drive from Funchal to the Botanical Gardens north of Funchal. Only Common Kestrels, Plain Swifts, Robin and Blackcaps were observed.
- 7 July (Mon)** Drive from Funchal to Ribeiro Frio. Not enough petrol and we were forced to drive all the way to Santana for petrol, where finally a gas station was found. Returned to the road to Fajã da Nogueira and after a km or so I found two Trocaz Pigeons (see picture below). On our way back we had several Chaffinches of the Madeiran form.
- 8 July (Tue)** Night expedition with Madeira Wind Tours. While waiting for the bus at the hotel a Sparrow Hawk flew over. In the bus I met Kris de Rouck and Dirk Colijn, two birders from Belgium and famous for their endless searches for new birds in the Western Palearctic.
- 9 July (Wed)** With our children with the Pirate ship Santa Maria de Colombo on the southern shore of Madeira. Only a few Cory's Shearwaters were seen out in the sea. In the harbour I managed to find one Roseate Tern and had good looks of all plumages of the Atlantic Yellow-legged Gull.
- 10 July (Thu)** Pelagic trip to the Desertas. On our way we had a group of Bottle-nosed Dolphins and a Fin Whale (or Bryde's Whale as I thought it was). Met several birders on the boat, Lee Evans, Robert Fuges, Sue Bryan, Mark Barrett and again Dirk Colijn and Kris de Rouck. On the Desertas we landed with rubber boats and could make a short walk on the island. A Bulwer's Petrel was caught and shown. During both legs we had Fea's Petrel and several Cory's Shearwaters. Only one Bulwer's and no Barolo's (Little) Shearwaters or storm-petrels.
- 12 July (Sat)** Visit to Monte Palace above Funchal. Managed to find Madeira Firecrest finally. Other birds were Madeira Chaffinch and Common Buzzard.
- 13 July (Sun)** Saw two whales from the hotel before Funchal. Thought them to be Bryde's Whale. Also several groups of Dolphins, Bottle-nosed and Common Dolphins.
- 14 July (Mon)** In the evening Ronald and I visited the statue of Christ – Cristo Rei - at Garajau, hoping to find the summer-breeding form of Madeiran Storm-Petrel. No luck, but we saw and heard several Cory's Shearwaters. The place is completely lit at night (the parking lot is now a place where other travellers of the night gather) and I wonder if this place is still suitable for Madeiran Storm-Petrels. Better is to book an overnight trip to the Desertas or the easternmost islet Ponta de São Lourenço (see introduction).
- 15 July (Tue)** I systematically counted all passing Cory's Shearwaters between 20:30 and 21:20 hours. A good total of 211 birds, all but three flying to the east.
- 16 July (Wed)** Saw the two whales from the hotel before Funchal again. Few Cory's were the last seabirds of the holiday.
- 17 July (Thu)** Departure to the Netherlands again. Plain Swifts were the last birds seen.



01. **Plain Swift / Madeiragierzwaluw** – *Apus unicolor*
Common on Madeira, with daily totals of up to c 50.

02. **Pallid Swift / Vale Gierzwaluw** – *Apus pallidus*
09 July 2-3 seen from hotel room above Funchal , flying west. White throats well seen.

03. **Rock Dove / Stadsduif** – *Columba livia 'domestica'*
Common on Madeira.

04. **TROCAZ PIGEON / TROCAZDUIF** – *Columba trocaz*
07 July 2 road to Fajã da Nogueira, Madeira.

05. **Atlantic Yellow-legged Gull / Atlantische Geelpootmeeuw** – *Larus michahellis atlantis*
Common in the harbour and surrounding waters of Funchal (see below). I estimated c 1000 birds on one occasion behind a fishing boat. All plumages in the harbour were present, from juveniles to adults. Also a few birds were seen on the Ilhas Desertas.

06. **Lesser black-backed Gull / Kleine Mantelmeeuw** – *Larus fuscus graellsii*
10 July 1 Deserta Grande, Ilhas Desertas.

07. **Roseate Tern / Dougalls Stern** – *Sterna dougalli*
09 July 1 (adult fishing) harbour of Funchal.

08. **Common Tern / Visdief** – *Sterna hirundo*
Quite common in the harbour and surrounding waters of Funchal, with daily totals of up to 10 birds. Also several juveniles were seen. Also c 5 seen on de Ilhas Desertas.

09. **ZINO'S PETREL / FREIRA** – *Pterodroma madeira*
08 July c 4-8 Pico de Arieiro, Madeira.

We heard birds calling on about 8-10 occasions, starting just before 23:00 hours. On 4 occasions I managed to see birds flying, two times a bird at close range, another only a glimpse and one bird was flying around a crag and was seen landing by Kris de Rouck using his infra-red binoculars.

10. **DESERTAS PETREL / DESERTASTORMVOGEL** – *Pterodroma feae deserta*
10 July c 10 between Madeira and the Ilhas Desertas (see picture below); the birds seemed to be concentrated just south of Caniçao. All birds – except one – that were close enough seemed to have heavy bills.

11. **Cory's Shearwater / Kuhls Pijlstormvogel** – *Calonectris diomedea*
Common at sea and seen daily. During the trip to the Desertas on 10 July c 100 birds were seen. During a visit in the night at Garajau on 14 July we heard and saw c 50 birds. During a seawatch from the hotel room between 20:30 and 21:20 hours on 15 July I counted 211 birds.

12. **Bulwer's Petrel / Bulwers Stormvogel** – *Bulweria bulwerii*
 03 July 2 flying east, Funchal, Madeira.
 10 July 1 taken from a burrow Deserta Grande, Ilhas Desertas (see picture below)
 11 between Ilhas Desertas and Madeira.
13. **Little Egret / Kleine Zilverreiger** – *Egretta garzetta*
 04 July 1 flying west in the morning and flying east in the evening, Funchal, Madeira.
14. **Eurasian Sparrowhawk / Sperwer** – *Accipiter nisus granti*
 08 July 1 (female) Quinta Mãe Dos Homens, Funchal, Madeira.
15. **Common Buzzard / Buizerd** – *Buteo buteo buteo*
 04 July 1 Quinta Mãe Dos Homens, Funchal, Madeira.
 12 July 1 Monte Palace, Funchal, Madeira.
16. **Barn Owl / Madeirakerkuil** – *Tyto alba schmitzi*
 03 July 1 (heard only) Quinta Mãe Dos Homens, Funchal, Madeira.
17. **Common Kestrel / Torenavalk** – *Falco tinnunculus canariensis*
 Seen daily above the hotel grounds, Quinta Mãe Dos Homens, Funchal, Madeira, with daily totals up to 4 birds. Darker than the birds seen here in Europe, especially the blue on the head of the male.
18. **Blackcap / Zwartkop** – *Sylvia atricapilla heineken*
 The second most common songbird, with daily totals of up to 25 birds, on Madeira.
19. **MADEIRA FIRECREST / MADEIRA VUURGOUDHAAN** – *Regulus madeirensis*
 12 July 1-2 Monte Palace, Funchal, Madeira.
20. **Common Blackbird / Merel** – *Turdus merula cabreræ*
 The most common songbird, with daily totals of up to 30 birds, on Madeira.
21. **European Robin / Roodborst** – *Erithacus rubecula rubecula*
 05 July 1-2 Botanical Garden, Funchal.
 12 July 2-3 Monte Palace, Funchal.
22. **Grey Wagtail / Grote Gele kwikstaart** – *Motacilla cinerea schmitzi*
 Seen daily (1-2 birds) Quinta Mãe Dos Homens, Funchal, Madeira. Also seen in downtown Funchal, the Botanical Garden, Monte Palace and several during the trip to Santana on the north coast.
23. **Berteloth's Pipit / Berteloths Pieper** – *Anthus berthelotii madeirensis*
 10 July 3 Deserta Grande, Ilhas Desertas.

24. **Common Chaffinch / Macaronesische Vink** – *Fringilla coelebs maderensis*

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| 07 July | c 5 | Around Ribeiro Frio, Madeira. |
| 12 July | c 5 | Monte Palace, Funchal, Madeira (see picture below). |

25. **Goldfinch / Putter** – *Carduelis carduelis parva*

Small numbers in downtown Funchal were seen during all times we visited the place. On 10 July also c 5 at the port of Ponta de São Lourenço (east of Caniçal).

26. **Atlantic Canary / Kanarie** – *Serinus canaria*

Seen daily (c 5-10 birds) Quinta Mãe Dos Homens, Funchal, Madeira. Also seen in downtown Funchal, the Botanic Garden, Monte Palace and several during the trip to Santana on the north coast. On 10 July c 10 birds were seen on Deserta Grande, Ilhas Desertas.



Habitat of Trocaz Pigeon, along the road to Fajã da Nogueira, 7 July 2008; © Jan van der Laan.



Bugio (left) and Deserta Grande (right). Bugio is the only place in the world where the Desertas Petrel - *Pterodroma desertae* is known to breed, 10 July 2008; © Jan van der Laan.



Left: Bulwer's Petrel at Deserta Grande, Ilhas Desertas; right: Desertas Petrel near Ilhas Desertas, 10 July 2008; © Jan van der Laan.



Left: Atlantic Yellow-legged Gull in the harbour of Funchal, 9 July 2008; right: Madeiran Chaffinch, Monte Palace, Funchal on 12 July 2008; Note the characteristic colours of the upperparts and pink orange cheeks; © Jan van der Laan.



Left: Madeiran Lizard, Funchal, 8 July 2008; right: whale between Madeira and the Desertas, 10 July 2008; © Jan van der Laan.



Flight action of Desertas Petrel on 10 July 2008 between the Desertas and Madeira. The bird flies low over the sea surface, then it catches wind and towers into the air with an high arc far above the horizon. Then the bird turns 180 degrees and the whole process starts again. © Jan van der Laan.
