

Canary Islands, 2 – 10 September 2019

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This short trip was mainly to get to see the specialities and endemics of the islands and nudge my WP list a little bit nearer to 500, so I make no apologies for not spending a lot of time doing general birding or visiting sites not likely to produce anything new! Other times of year will likely produce quite different results.

As always, Dave Gosneys's guide (Finding Birds in the Canaries, www.easybirder.co.uk) was my main guide, but I also found Eduardo Garcia-del-Rey's Birds of the Canary Islands (Helm Guides) very useful for background information, distribution, ID notes and extra sites not covered in Gosney.

A road map of Tenerife at 1:75,000 from Stanfords (Globe series) was very detailed and accurate and fine for getting around. On Fuerteventura, the 'Tour and Trail' map at 1:65,000, also from Stanfords, was even better, covering the whole island in detail.

I flew Easyjet to Fuerteventura, hired a car at the airport and stayed a few days in Puerto del Rosario, near the airport and with easy access to the key sites, which are mostly in the north. I then took an internal flight (Binter) to Tenerife North, the terminal for inter-island flights. International flights are from the south airport, so I got the express bus there, hired a car, then stayed in accommodation near Santiago del Teide, near to the main sites and within easy reach to return the car and fly back. The roads are excellent and driving standards generally much better than in mainland Europe!

FUERTEVENTURA

Barranco de Rio Cabras

Famous as a site for Fuerteventura Chat, I enjoyed several productive visits. The best access is as described in Garcia-del-Rey: from the FV20 out of Puerto del Rosario, about 2km beyond the FV3 junction, take the left exit on the roundabout (signed PIRS), then after about 1km there's a barrier on the right with no entry signs, leading to the Carreteras depot. Drive down the track to the right of this barrier, park by the lone palm tree and continue on foot to the barranco.

There were **Egyptian Vultures** on nearly all the pylons, and very obliging **Berthelot's Pipits** along the track. Climbing down into the barranco I soon found a male **Fuerteventura Chat**, and got good views of **Trumpeter Finch**. In the pool further down were a couple of **Green Sandpipers**, a **Little Egret**, two **Ruddy Shelducks** and a **Little Ringed Plover**, and I added **White Stork** and **Hoopoe** to the list, amongst the many **Ravens** and **Buzzards**. In the trees in the bottom of the barranco were **African Blue Tit**, **Canary Island Chiffchaff** and **Spectacled Warbler**.



Trumpeter Finch, Barranco de Rio Cabras



Barranco de Rio Cabras



Berthelot's Pipit, Barranco de Rio Cabras



Egyptian Vulture, Barranco de Rio Cabras

Tindaya Plain

A disappointment, although maybe not the best time of year. I managed a distant glimpse of 3 Cream-coloured Coursers, but couldn't find any Houbaras in two visits of 3-4 hours, in fact I hardly saw any birds at all, though I could hear Lesser Short-toed Larks. Fairly easy driving on rough but level tracks.

Las Penitas

I walked as far as the reservoir, which was completely dry. On the way, had Great Grey Shrike (the first of several good views on the island), plenty of Sardinian Warblers, a few Spectacled Warblers and good views of African Blue Tit in the palms.



Great Grey Shrike, Las Penitas

Antigua Plain

I was hoping for Houbaras again here, but two visits of several hours brought no sightings, although I got close views of several groups of Black-bellied Sandgrouse flying over.

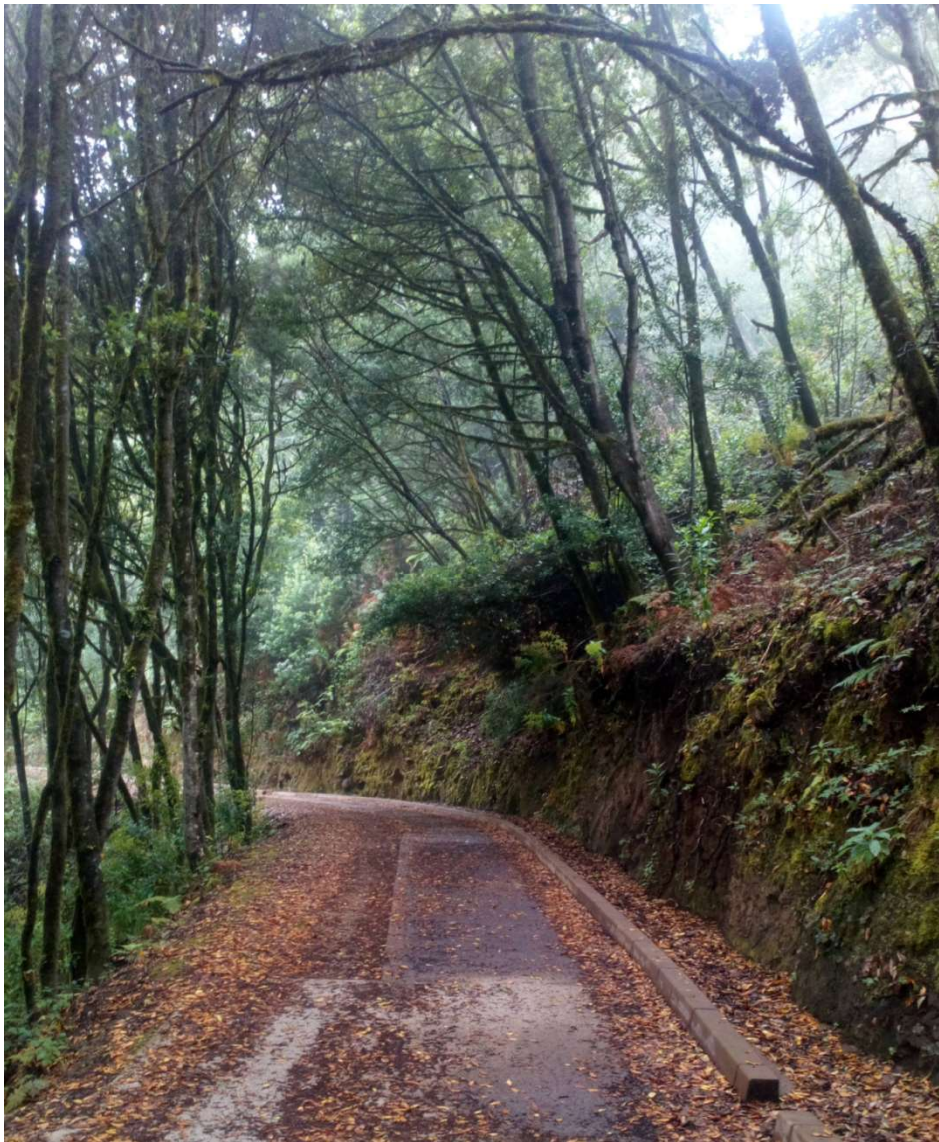
Salt museum and Barranco de la Torre

The barranco is another key site for the Chat, but no luck, but African Blue Tits, GG Shrike, Spanish Sparrows and Spectacled Warblers. The salt museum area was disappointing, no waders at all.

TENERIFE

Erjos track & pools

It's not possible to drive along this track at all now, a good thing in my mind. There's a parking area just before the masts, then there's a barrier and a disabled access path for a short distance. It's a lovely walk along a mostly level track, but birdwise you don't really need to go very far. Just beyond the masts, a track leads off to the right along a ridge where you can overlook the valley and possibly spot pigeons (I didn't), and at the end of the disabled path there's a boardwalk to another viewpoint. But I got good views of Bolle's Pigeon by listening for their flapping in the canopy and being patient. African Blue Tit, Robin, Canary and Canary Island Chiffchaff were plentiful, and the viewpoints gave good views of Plain Swifts. The Erjos pools were completely dry and birdless.



Laurel forest track, Erjos

La Montaneta

The extensive pine woods south of the little village of La Montaneta have lots of paths, and I got Canary Island Goldcrest here.

Los Cristianos – La Palma ferry

On Sundays only you can get the Armas ferry to La Palma at 8.45, returning at 18.00 the same day, a much longer trip than the short hop across to La Gomera, so more chance of getting views of seabirds from deck, although it will cost you around £100. Don't get the Fred Olsen fast ferry, the view is much more restricted. I was hoping for something else amongst the hundreds of Cory's Shearwaters, but the only other bird I saw was a lone Manx Shearwater. Just to rub it in, a photographer on board I got chatting to showed me a back of camera shot of a Bulwer's Petrel he took earlier! Spring or later in autumn might be better?

Las Lajas

On arrival in the car park at around 10am, I was surprised and pleased to be the only person there! In the next few hours a few more cars did arrive, but nothing to cause any great disturbance, although I would avoid weekends. No birds were on show at the troughs, but there was very little water in them. I turned on the taps at one and retired to a bench a little distance away. I had hardly sat down when Blue Chaffinches and Canaries came down to drink. African Blue Tit and GS Woodpecker were also around.



Blue Chaffinch, Las Lajas

Icod el Alto area

I watched from the Ruiz Gorge mirador (Gosney p. 14), and a little way down the path from the mirador, where there are good places to sit and scan from the hillside. I only saw 2 White-tailed Pigeons in 2 visits, but had a Barbary

Falcon on a distant pylon. But I also had a Peregrine very close up on a bush there, Garcia-del-Rey lists this is a rare visitor with less than 10 records, so beware! I had more good views of Plain Swift here, plus Kestrel, Sparrowhawk and Buzzard. The viewpoint lower down by the old restaurant and the Mirador el Lance further on produced nothing. The road to Punta de Teno was closed for roadworks.

Garachico

This is a horrendously busy tourist resort with no easy parking, I didn't see anything offshore and quickly moved on. Also avoid the TF 436 mountain road between Santiago and Buenavista, very slow and tricky driving.

A total of 14 lifers, so I was not too disappointed with the few dips! Photos taken on Panasonic FZ150 with telephoto adaptor.