

FUERTEVENTURA MARCH 21ST – 26TH 2019

PMC, SEC, JC, APM, RJD

INTRODUCTION

Fuerteventura always offers a unique range of species, but in spring 2019 the island looked particularly attractive. It was hosting a long-staying vagrant **African Dwarf Bittern**, plus four pairs of recently-colonised **Red-billed Tropicbirds**, both difficult birds to tick off in the Western Palearctic (or indeed anywhere).

March looked like the best month. Firstly, it was late enough to ensure the Tropicbirds would be on territory; secondly, March is peak breeding season for many resident species, with the chance of seeing the **Houbara Bustard**'s courtship display. In addition, northward wader migration would be well underway and hopefully overwintering vagrants might also still be found; in the event, we had a real 'east-meets-west' experience with both **Yellow-browed Warbler** and **Green-winged Teal** during our week.

Weather

As expected the weather was highly changeable, with hot afternoons often giving way to very chilly evenings. Our first night in the accommodation was particularly cold, followed by two days of sunshine and very strong winds: we actually had trouble standing upright at 'spurge valley' in Jandia! On the third day a lovely, balmy spell arrived, lasting until lunchtime the next day when the clouds rolled over, bringing rain in the evening. The final day began promisingly but the cloud returned mid-afternoon, heralding a proper downpour with floodwater streaming off the semi-desert.

Accommodation and Food

Through booking.com we found a self-catering bungalow north of the resort of Gran Tarajal in the suburb of La Fuentita, part of the new Villas Fuentita complex. Gran Tarajal isn't one of most attractive resorts but our priority was to have a strategically central base along the new FV-2 highway. Arriving two weeks before Easter, the main tourist season wasn't yet underway, and the island and its resorts were pretty quiet – except for all the birders who'd had the same idea as us!

Our two favourite restaurants were: the Restaurant Casabel, on the Camino Jaifa just off the FV-20 about 5km west of Puerto del Rosario, and the Restaurant La Falúa in the centre of La Lajita resort. On the coast northwest of the Embalse Los Molinos, the café in Puertito de Los Molinos was a handy stop-off, as was the Café Don Antonio in Vega de Rio Palmas (although the Casa de la Naturaleza tapas bar, halfway up the Barranco looked even better, but was closed when we visited). I'm told that the Restaurante Los Caracolitos near Caleta de Fuste is pretty good, handily overlooking the Salinas del Carmen.

Transport

For our five-strong team, we decided to hire a '*Renault Espace or similar*', which turned out to be a Volkswagen Caddy. This people-mover was very roomy and had good ground clearance (very important in Fuerteventura) but did have a few drawbacks: although there was a decent all-round view, the middle windows opened only halfway, leaving just room enough for one scope or camera lens. Also, the third row of seats were raised, making it tricky for rear passengers to see initially anything spotted by the driver or co-driver. Details like this become important on Fuerteventura, where the car is frequently used as a hide.

Except for the winding mountain road between Betancuria/Las Lajas, most of the island is low-lying and easy driving with no tolls. The new FV-2 highway from Puerto del Rosario all the way down to Morro Jable has sped things up, in addition to providing tourists with views of some impressive lava fields, south of the junction with the FV-420 to Pozo Negro.

Books & References

The local bird recorder is Eduardo Garcia-del-Rey of the Sociedad Ornitológica Canaria, author of "Birds of the Canary Islands". His Facebook page is the best resource for up-to-date bird news, and please report any interesting sightings to him.

The latest Gosney guide "Finding birds in the Canaries" (2013), ISBN 978-1-907316-44-9 proved its worth, containing many updates from the old 1994 edition. I also had a copy of

"Birdwatcher's Guide to the Canary Islands" (1996, Tony Clarke & David Collins), ISBN 1-871104-068, very old now but still quite handy.

Two other books I would recommend are: "Wildlife of Madeira and the Canary Islands" (John Bowler) from Wildguides, ISBN 978-0-691-17076-3, which contains everything you need to know about splits & subspecies, especially herptiles, butterflies and dragonflies. Also the Crossbill Guide "Canary Islands – I – Lanzarote and Fuerteventura" (KNNV), ISBN 978-94-91648-04-5 is a wonderful resource filled with recommended walks, pointers and background information on the island's fauna and flora, ecology and geology.

There are bags of trip reports on Cloudbirders and elsewhere. I would suggest looking up:

Wolfbirder – 'Northern Fuerteventura 20-30 May 2018';

Austin's Birding Blog: 'Fuerteventura April 2018';

Pete & Rosemary Royle – 'Fuerteventura in February (2017)';

Stephen Burch's Birding & Dragonfly Website – Fuerteventura, February 2011.

In addition to our trusty sat-nav, the car hire firm provided us with a passable island map, which was a useful update on my increasingly outdated but very detailed EuroMap Euro-Regional Map 1:150,000 of the Canaries, ISBN 3-575-11273-8.

One plus-point of Fuerteventura is the lack of stray dogs which plague some Mediterranean islands. We did notice that many locals favour a particular breed of large, black 'hell-hound' to guard their rural properties, but most of these were safely chained up.

ITINERARY

- Thu 21st - Land Puerto del Rosario airport 6pm, drive to Gran Tarajal.
- Fri 22nd - Rosa de Catalina Garcia, Embalse de Los Molinos, Puertito de Los Molinos, Tindaya track, first attempt for Tropicbird.
- Sat 23rd - Risco de Paso, Hotel Melia (Los Gorriones), Costa Calma, Jandia Playa, Punta de Jandia, Oasis Park.
- Sun 24th - Barranco de Rio Cabras, second attempt for Tropicbird, Embalse de Los Molinos, Barranco de Rio Cabras.
- Mon 25th - Rosa de los James, Mirador Risco de las Peñitas, Barranco de las Peñitas, Betancuria, Antigua plains, Barranco de Rio Cabras.
- Tues 26th - Istmo de la Pared, Salinas del Carmen, Barranco de la Torre, fly out 6pm.

SITE LIST

Our itinerary took in all the main birding sites, except La Oliva in the far north, which we omitted only for lack of time. Note that the recent FV-2 highway improvements have sliced through a lot of shortcuts, so even the latest trip reports may contain directions which are now out-of-date. Sites are listed roughly north to south:

El Cotillo – Tropicbird site

The tropicbirds first colonised these cliffs around three years ago, although their exact location is still not public domain. We made our first attempt at 5pm, under the misapprehension that birds flew to roost in the evening. Upon arrival we met two departing minibus-loads of birders, who'd just been waiting for two hours without success. We then endured a similar experience ourselves, exposed to uncomfortably strong winds until sunset (7pm) before heading back. We did get some decent views of Cory's Shearwaters and a **Barbary Falcon** for our trouble.

We later learned that the prime time for the Tropicbirds is actually



Red-billed Tropicbird, El Cotillo

midday. On our second attempt therefore, we arrived at five minutes past noon in much more clement conditions. Within ten minutes we were watching a lone **Red-billed Tropicbird** coming in off the sea from the southwest! After a close pass to check us out, the bird performed a series of twelve swoops into its cliff below, before disappearing back out to sea. Definitely the highlight of the trip.

Tindaya Track

A top spot for desert species. There are two alternative tracks out of Tindaya village: a more northerly one which leads to the surfers' beach at Playa de Esquinzo, or a metalled road that heads northwest towards La Huesilla (sometimes known as Punta Paso Chico). The latter road, which is recommended in most reports, is called Calle Virgen de la Caridad as it arrives in and departs Tindaya. It's easy to find on your Satnav but be warned it is severely potholed.

After only a few km we could see the small, isolated patch of fig trees on the left shortly before a cross tracks, exactly as described in Gosney. This spot is apparently a dead cert for bustards, with sightings as recent as spring 2018; however, we discovered the grass had grown up strongly around the figs and cactus, making it tricky to see if anything was hiding underneath.

We continued down the road, stopping and searching the semi-desert regularly. After passing a low wall and ruined building on the right, the landscape became very sandy and we began hearing larks. Soon a huge flock of over a hundred **Lesser Short-toed Larks** materialised, presumably parents and juveniles, given how advanced the breeding season was for most species. Remaining in the car, we were getting good views of the larks when an adult **Cream-coloured Courser** appeared close by, followed by its mate and three juveniles.

At the end of this road, La Huesilla is basically two houses, one occupied and one ruined. The final hundred yards of the track are too rutted for most vehicles, but there's no need to drive right up to these buildings.

Embalse de Los Molinos

This is a site which always deserves more than one visit, as the collection of waterbirds present can change daily at this time of year. The old route in, to the south-east end of the reservoir via a goat farm (as described in Gosney c1994) is no longer permitted. We did however explore tracks off the approach road to the farm, which the new edition of Gosney suggested as a good area for courser. There were distant views of **Trumpeter Finch** and **Lesser Short-toed Lark** here, but not much else.



Semi-desert near Los Molinos: Cream-coloured Courser habitat

The road to the north-west end of the reservoir is now the approved route, ending in a small parking area by the dam. From here you can easily view the entire reservoir by following the track along the north side. We had good views of **Trumpeter Finch**, numerous breeding pairs of **Ruddy Shelduck**, many overflying **Black-bellied Sandgrouse** (we happened to have arrived at 10am, drinking time), and best of all two **Green-winged Teals** among a very skittish Teal flock. A smattering of waders populated the distant lakeshore including a Wood Sandpiper.

The nearby tourist beach of **Puertito de Molinos** is the outlet for the reservoir's river, and is mentioned in Gosney as a likely site for Canary Islands Chat. We searched thoroughly for the chat with no luck, but there are **Spectacled Warblers** here and some quite bold Berthelot's Pipits around the car park. The place is worth remembering as a handy café stop on a windy day, sheltered as it is in a deep valley, with a terrace facing the sea where Cory's Shearwaters were passing.

The Mountains – Betancuria

Betancuria is a beautiful small town, probably the greenest place on the island. There were **African Blue Tit** here but no sign of the introduced Atlantic Canaries and Greenfinch for our trip list. Our main objective though was the butterflies: we soon notched up six **Plain Tigers** and one **Monarch** in the village. Following advice, we tried wandering along the dry river bed south from the village, although this turned out to be blocked by debris after a few hundred yards. The Crossbill Guide suggests a circular walk into the hills northeast of town that covers some of the best areas for Greenish Black-Tip and Green-striped White. We set out on the first part of the walk, but with unfortunate timing the dark clouds rolled over and we had to curtail our butterfly hunting.

The Mountains – Barranco de las Peñitas

This beautiful valley is a popular tourist walk that leads up from the village of Vega de Rio de Palmas to a dry dam in the mountains. It's easy to park at the end of the Barranco road, but rather than drive that far I'd suggest parking just beyond the GC-620 junction and walking the whole valley.

The valley is renowned as the best site on Fuerteventura for **Sardinian Warbler** and **Barbary Partridge**, and sure enough we were soon ticking off both species in addition to the numerous **Laughing Doves** which are more recent colonists. Two **Canary Island Chats** hanging around the pools just below the dam were a surprise. The good weather also brought out a range of butterflies including **Plain Tiger**, **Monarch**, **Bath White**, **Long-tailed Blue** and **Austaut's Blue**.

Roughly halfway to the dam, an area of terraced stone walls on the right (north) side of the valley is meant to be one of the top spots for the endemic East Canary Skink, according to our Crossbill Guide. A quick scout around the walls confirmed that this is a good spot for lizards, but finding the skink would probably require a more thorough search.

High above the Barranco, on the GC-620 south to Pajara, is the **Mirador Risco de las Peñitas**, which used to be a popular stop-off for tourists to feed the Barbary Ground Squirrels. The signs here suggest feeding has now been prohibited, but we did pause here anyway to feed the tame Ravens, and found an unexpected bonus in the form of a **Canary Islands Chat** not far from the car park.



Feeding Ravens at Mirador Risco de las Peñitas

The plains at Antigua

The new Gosney guide suggests a site for bustards just north of the town of Antigua, off the main GC-610. We followed the directions easily, spotting the isolated yellow bungalow on the right and then turning left towards some farm buildings. There's no public access beyond these farm buildings, so the area of plains to be searched is actually not that vast. We didn't encounter any bustards, but did get amazing views of a family of three **Stone Curlews**, in an area of embanked fields just before the buildings.

Barranco de Rio Cabras

This valley was the home of a well-twitched African Dwarf Bittern, only the sixth ever seen in the Western Palearctic, present since late 2017 and still there at time of writing, in May 2019. We'd seen numerous photographs of the barranco but these pictures don't convey what a beautiful spot it is, a real desert oasis deep in a rocky canyon.

The new FV-2 highway has prevented access from the airport direction, so the best route in is from the north: join the FV-20 off the FV-3 at Puerto del Rosario, continue for 2.5km, then at the roundabout turn left (south) onto the Camino Vertedero. After passing a barriered entrance to a farm on the right, an industrial site appears up ahead; before reaching this,

find a track on the right and park on the road (be aware that HGVs use this road), then walk south c400yds to the Barranco.

Apparently in March 2019 the bittern had abandoned its favourite bush by the upper dam, instead choosing to roam along the stream below the lower dam. We positioned ourselves at vantage points to cover all the dams, but over three visits (one morning and two evenings, staying til dusk both times) we drew a blank. The bird was spotted on the Saturday before our first visit.

Despite this disappointment we had an awesome time birding the barranco. Two **Spotted Crakes** pottered about the river, while **Canary Islands Chats**, **Spectacled Warblers** and **African Blue Tits** all gave superb close views, and **Trumpeter Finches** came down to drink. There was a supporting cast of commoner species including Hoopoe, Turtle and **Laughing Doves**, plus five wader species. This barranco does eventually lead to the sea, although the lower section looked less heavily vegetated further down, so we didn't bother walking it.



Trumpeter Finch drinking at Barranco de Rio Cabras

Salinas del Carmen

An old area of concrete salt basins just outside the huge resort of Caleta de Fustes, now flanked by a new 'Museo de Sal'. The main attraction is the adjacent small lagoon and beach, which in the right conditions may host a range of passage species. We had Ringed Plover and Whimbrel here.

Barranco de la Torre

We made one brief stop at this well-known site for Canary Islands Chat, although our main objective was the introduced Giant Tenerife Lizard (ref. Crossbill Guide) which failed to perform. As on my previous holiday in 2001, the **Spectacled Warblers** here showed very nicely, despite the rain!

Rosa de Catalina Garcia, reservoir

This was our first stop on our first morning, simply because it was only a few miles from of our accommodation at Fuentita. The dry reservoir with a few thick patches of rushes and plentiful scrub wasn't much to look at, habitat-wise. However, stopping here proved a fateful decision: APM soon spotted a **Houbara Bustard**, and we also ran into our first pair of **Black-bellied Sandgrouse**. The bustard was feeding nonchalantly among some shrubs; little did we know it would be our only one of the trip!



Houbara Bustard, Rosa de Catalina Garcia

The site can be found by heading north on the FV-20 from Gran Tarajal. At the 9km post there is a left turn to the hamlet of Rosa de Catalina Garcia and a right turning down a fairly rough track by a farm. The latter track passes left of a patch of palm trees but, according to Gosney, at the start of this track we should have found a turning to take us right of the trees – we couldn't see it though. The reservoir is included in several guidebooks, but none mention bustards – although they do assert the species roams the whole plain between Gran Tarajal – Antigua – Puerto del Rosario, so could turn up anywhere.

Pond near Rosa de los James / La Calablaza

This pond hosted a Pectoral Sandpiper in September 2017. It lies just 3km north of the junction with the FV-2/FV-511, just on the right of the FV-511 as you head towards Tesejerague, so well worth a quick diversion if you're travelling along the FV-2 during migration season. We made a short stop and had Moorhen, Coot, Ruddy Shelduck and Black-winged Stilt.

Oasis Park, La Lajita

This is one of the largest areas of vegetation on the island and is famous for its colony of escaped **Red-vented Bulbuls**; there's no need to pay entry, as most birds seem to be recorded around the car park. We made just one visit, arriving late in the day on our way back from Jandia. Checking around the car park area produced one Bulbul plus Chiffchaff, Blackcap and best of all a **Night Heron** which flew in to fish in the goldfish pond by the entrance gate.

Istmo de la Pared

Since the construction of the FV-2, accessing this area of prime semi-desert directly from Costa Calma resort has required taking a slightly different route in (ref. M.Grienenberger's trip report, Sep 2017).

However, we followed the route described in Gosney: head north on the FV-605 towards La Pared until you see a very obvious masonry sign to 'Pueblo del Mar', and a track turning left off the road. Shortly after this there is a junction of tracks; we



Rain clouds arriving over Istmo La Pared and Jandia

chose to turn left and followed this one for a couple of miles, regularly stopping and scanning, until we reached a rocky area that looked too much for our Volkswagen Caddy. We parked and carried on walking down the track; this can often be a bad idea in the desert, as the birds will go to ground, but on this occasion we managed to find two flocks of **Black-bellied Sandgrouse** and a group of three **Cream-coloured Courser**. Our main target, the bustards, proved elusive once again.

Costa Calma resort

Despite being in the middle of one of the larger tourist resorts on the island, the woods here were a wonderful spot, and on a day of strong westerlies they proved surprisingly sheltered from the wind. The 'woods' are basically several long strips of trees bordering the main roads of the resort (see map, Appendix II). The easiest access is to park anywhere along the 'Avenida Jahn Reisen' and explore. The 'lower' path beneath the trees seems to be the best bet for birds, while a parallel upper promenade bordered by flowering shrubs is a better option for butterflies such as **Monarch**.

We'd received directions from Eduardo Garcia-del-Rey to the flycatcher's regular spot along the lower path, which proved to be a definite 'hotspot'. In addition to the **Red-breasted Flycatcher**, a **Yellow-browed Warbler** appeared, along with Tree Pipit, Blackcap and a very noisy flock of Goldfinches for the trip list. Puddles caused by leaking watering hoses were undoubtedly the attraction here.

Jandia Beach

This long beach with its lagoon is variously referred to as 'Costa Calma beach' or 'Playa de Sotavento de Jandia' and is generally regarded as the best wader area on the island. The trick here is to get out early before the birds get flushed by kite surfers, nudists et al. We

started at 8am at the far end of the long bay, at a small resort known as **Risco de Paso** beach. Two **Kentish Plovers** here were our only ones of the trip, and there was a moment of excitement when we 'scoped a probable first-summer **Audouin's Gull**. This species is regular in early March but unusual this late in the month; unhelpfully the bird flew off after a few seconds. Noting that low tide was 9am, we chose to head back to the tourist complex at **Hotel Melia / Los Gorriones** which is regarded as the optimum spot for waders. Out of season, the kitesurfing centre here was pretty quiet in the morning, and the palms surrounding the resort produced a **Red-vented Bulbul** along with Blackcap and Chiffchaff. We then followed a raised causeway south through a marshy area that looked like it would take us directly to the lagoon. Unluckily it terminated in front of an impassable stream (we should have just walked straight out from the kitesurfing centre) and since the tourists were beginning to appear in numbers, so we decided to quit and double back to Costa Calma.



Hotel Melia / Los Gorriones & Jandia beach

Jandia Playa resort

This large tourist resort lies on the southernmost tip of Fuerteventura, and is famous for the assortment of escaped species from the (now closed) Stella Canaris zoo. This mobile menagerie doesn't appeal to all birders, but we rather enjoyed it. The first birds we encountered were flocks of **Monk Parakeets** near the old zoo, accompanied by smaller numbers of Ring-necked Parakeets.

The Crossbill Guide suggested strolling out along the boardwalk to the beachfront cafés, a promenade along the beach, then back along the other boardwalk. This route encompasses a fenced-off area of salt marsh which held our first **Cattle Egrets** of the trip, plus an unexpected Blue-headed Wagtail. The tourists had obviously been feeding the wildlife generously, and we photographed some very tame **Barbary Ground Squirrels**, Spanish Sparrows and Berthelot's Pipits, plus a Monk Parakeet that was being fed by hand.

We soon realised that the seafront here is used as a nudist beach, so we beat a retreat back to the zoo area where we ran into two escaped Hadedda Ibis feeding on the lawns. Just adjacent to the zoo is a piece of waste ground, partly screened by a low wall, where we had our best views of Hoopoe, plus Turtle Dove and more Tree Pipits.

On the return journey we passed through Jandia Playa again and stopped the car to scan through a flock of hirundines over the salt marsh; a good decision, because this flock contained 2 **Red-rumped Swallows**, as well as Barn Swallows and House & Sand Martins for our trip list.

Jandia Peninsula

To find the road out to Punta de Jandia, leave Jandia Playa west on the main FV-2, which then skirts the resort of Morro Jable. Arriving at a roundabout with all three exits marked 'Morro Jable', take the second exit which is also signed for the port ('Puerto'), and then keep a sharp eye out for the right turn onto the Carretera Punta de Jandia (signed 'Cofete').

This metalled road soon becomes a gravel track, but for the next 10km it is perfectly driveable with not too many potholes. The wind on this day was howling down the bare slopes, so unsurprisingly we had very few birds en route. We did make a stop for the endemic **Jandia Spurge** (*Euphorbia handiensis*), at **Barranco Gran Valle**; the site is actually not too hard to spot, since a huge area of the west-facing slope of the valley is covered by this cactus-like plant.

The most exciting part of the journey was arriving at the lighthouse at the headland, **Punta de Jandia**. It was soon clear that many **Cory's Shearwaters**, along with some Sandwich

Terns, were being driven into the shelter of this headland by the powerful winds; it's interesting to speculate what might pass by here on a long morning or evening's seawatch. At the lighthouse, there was a handy table from which to sit and seawatch south-eastwards, and the lea of the lighthouse building itself could offers better shelter if needed. The conditions meant there were few land birds about, except for one Yellow Wagtail and a small, shy flock of **Trumpeter Finches** around the village of Casiero Puerto de la Luz. We did manage to pick up more trip ticks though, in the shape of a party of Sanderlings and Ringed Plovers, feeding on the barren plains just behind the lighthouse.



Jandia Spurge; approximately a third of the world population is in this picture!

BIRD SPECIES LIST

Total: 71 species

Ruddy Shelduck (*Tadorna ferruginea*): A very noisy and visible species. A flock of c30 birds plus several goslings at Los Molinos on both visits; several in the Barranco de Rio Cabras; a pair with 12 goslings at Rosa de los James.

Eurasian Teal (*Anas crecca*): A flock of 8 at Los Molinos reservoir on 22nd, and between 10-14 there on 24th.

Green-winged Teal (*Anas carolinensis*): 1 male seen with the flock at Los Molinos reservoir on 22nd, and 2 males here on 24th. Both birds had apparently been present for several days.

Barbary Partridge (*Alectoris barbara*) (Cat.C): Female with c10 chicks crossing the road, en route between Risco del Paso and Hotel Melia Gorrones; also 4 adults with c12 chicks of varying ages in the Barranco de las Peñitas.

Cory's Shearwater (*Calonectris diomedea*): By far the commonest seabird on the surrounding waters, particularly in the early evening as thousands head north to their nests on Los Lobos. Our best views were from the lighthouse at Punta de Jandia on the afternoon of 23rd, when strong westerly winds were pushing birds into the lea of the headland.

Gannet (*Morus bassanus*): 1 fw off Risco del Paso beach; 2 adults off El Cotillo.

Red-billed Tropicbird (*Phaethon aethereus*): 1 adult visiting the cliffs near El Cotillo at 12:15pm, watched for five minutes. Undoubtedly the bird of the trip!

Night Heron (*Nycticorax nycticorax*): 1 adult at the Oasis Park, La Lajita; another adult at Los Molinos, where we heard that a pair may have bred in 2018.

Cattle Egret (*Bubulcus ibis*): 3 on the marsh at Jandia Playa in the morning, and then 35 birds feeding all over the grassy areas at Jandia Playa in the late afternoon.

Little Egret (*Egretta alba*): Total of 15 at Los Molinos reservoir; flock of 4 at Barranco de Rio Cabras.

Grey Heron (*Ardea cinerea*): 2 at the dry Rosa de Catalina Garcia reservoir; 3 around the goat farm, at the east end of Los Molinos reservoir; odd ones seen flying over elsewhere.

Spoonbill (*Platalea leucorodia*): 1 at Barranco de Rio Cabras, 24th (gone by 25th). A vagrant species on the island.

Egyptian Vulture (*Neophron percnopterus majorensis*): Seen daily at many sites. Our best views were of 2 on the ground at Punta de Jandia, and 2 on a lava field near El Cotillo.

Common Buzzard (*Buteo buteo insularum*): Common, with individuals seen daily eg. at Los Molinos, Barranco de Rio Cabras, Barranco de las Peñitas.

Kestrel (*Falco tinnunculus*): Seen daily in all habitats; often seen carrying canarian lizards.

Barbary Falcon (*Falco pelegrinoides*): 1 on cliffs near El Cotillo, seen on both visits.

Spotted Crake (*Porzana porzana*): 2 in the Barranco de Rio Cabras, evening of 25th, and 1 seen again on 26th. At least one of these birds had been present for several days.

Moorhen (*Gallinula chloropus*): 1 in the Barranco de Rio Cabras on 23rd & 24th ; 7 on the pond at Rosa de Los James.

Coot (*Fulica atra*): Flock of 25 at Los Molinos; 1 with chicks at Rosa de Los James.

Houbara Bustard (*Chlamydotis undulata fuerteventurae*): 1 male feeding at Rosa de Catalina Garcia reservoir was our only one of the trip. We also searched along the Tindaya track, off the GC-610 north of Antigua and at Istmo de la Pared without success; perhaps a dawn visit was needed? (ref. S.Burch, 2011).

Black-winged Stilt (*Himantopus himantopus*): Several at Los Molinos reservoir on both visits; several at Barranco de Rio Cabras; 1 at Rosa de Los James.

Stone Curlew (*Burhinus oedicnemus*) (East Canarian subspecies): A pair with one juvenile, just north of Antigua at the bustard site given in Gosney. Another one was spotted from the car by JC, somewhere near Barranco Rio Cabras.

Cream-coloured Courser (*Cursorius cursor*): Adult pair with three juveniles, close to the road along the Tindaya track; also 3 seen in flight and on the ground, at the Istmo de la Pared.

Little Ringed Plover (*Charadrius dubius*): 2 at Los Molinos on both visits; 2 at Barranco de Rio Cabras.

Ringed Plover (*Charadrius hiaticula*): A flock of 4 feeding with Sanderlings behind the lighthouse at Punta de Jandia; a flock of 15 at Salinas del Carmen, outside Caleta de Fuste.

Kentish Plover (*Charadrius alexandrinus*): 2 at Risco del Paso beach.

Sanderling (*Calidris alba*): A flock of 12 feeding behind the lighthouse at Punta de Jandia.

Wood Sandpiper (*Tringa glareola*): 1 at Embalse Los Molinos on both visits.

Green Sandpiper (*Tringa ochropus*): 1 at Barranco de Rio Cabras on both visits.

Common Sandpiper (*Actitis hypoleucos*): 3 at Embalse Los Molinos on 22nd; 1 at Puertito de Molinos; 2 at Barranco de Rio Cabras; 2 at Salinas del Carmen, outside Caleta de Fuste.

Greenshank (*Tringa nebularia*): 2 at Embalse Los Molinos; 1 at Barranco de Rio Cabras.

Whimbrel (*Numenius phaeopus*): 2 at the Salinas del Carmen were our only ones.

Snipe (*Gallinago gallinago*): 1 at Embalse Los Molinos on 24th.

Ruff (*Philomachus pugnax*): 1 at Embalse Los Molinos on 24th.

Yellow-legged Gull (*Larus michahellis*): By far the commonest gull, seen heading north in numbers along the coast each evening, and also assembling on goat farms, in the desert or at other random locations inland.

Lesser Black-backed Gull (*Larus fuscus*): 3 seen along the Tindaya Track; a few at Jandia Playa and over Barranco de Rio Cabras.

Sandwich Tern (*Sterna sandvicensis*): A flock on the beach at Risco del Paso, 8am; many passing by the lighthouse at Punta de Jandia on 24th; a flock of 21 at Salinas del Carmen.

Black-bellied Sandgrouse (*Pterocles orientalis*): Our top site was Embalse Los Molinos where regular small flocks passed over, mid-morning on 22nd, presumably having drunk nearby (only one pair flew past here on the afternoon of 24th). Also, flocks of 3 and 2 flushed in the desert at Istmo Las Pared, and seen on the ground, and 2 seen on the ground at Rosa de Catalina Garcia reservoir.

Rock Dove/ Feral Pigeon (*Columba livia*): Common throughout.

Collared Dove (*Streptopelia decaocto*): Abundant throughout.

Turtle Dove (*Streptopelia turtur*): 1 at Jandia Playa; 2 at Barranco de Rio Cabras on both visits; several in Barranco de las Peñitas.

Laughing Dove (*Streptopelia senegalensis*): The best site was undoubtedly Barranco de las Peñitas in the mountains, with many birds highly visible and audible. Also 1 seen at Barranco de Rio Cabras, on both visits. Surprisingly, we had none at Oasis Park or Costa Calma.

Ring-necked Parakeet (*Psittacula krameri*) (Cat.C): 3 seen at Jandia Playa.

Monk Parakeet (*Myiopsitta monachus*) (Cat.C): Numerous at Jandia Playa, in the vicinity of the closed Stella Canaris zoo. We even saw one being fed by hand along the boardwalk!

Pallid Swift (*Apus pallidus*): At least 4 around Los Molinos and 1 at Jandia Playa were our only ones, both on the first two days when strong winds forced the swifts to fly lower.

Plain Swift (*Apus unicolor*): Fairly common; similarly to the Pallid Swifts, we had particularly good views on the first two days when winds forced the swifts to stay lower. Seen at Los Molinos, Costa Calma, Jandia Playa, El Cotillo and elsewhere.

Hoopoe (*Upupa epops*): Seen daily, at many sites. Our best views were of birds feeding on waste ground at Jandia Playa; also 2 at Embalse Los Molinos; several at Barranco de Rio Cabras; several at Barranco de las Peñitas.

Lesser Short-toed Lark (*Calandrella rufescens*) (East Canaries subspecies): Our best views were from the car along the Tindaya track, where a flock of c100 were present on 23rd, although only a few showed up on our next visit. We also had good views from the car in the Istmo de la Pared, and heard/saw distant individuals at the southeast end of Los Molinos and near Antigua.

Sand Martin (*Riparia riparia*): 2 in the hirundine flock at Jandia Playa, late afternoon.

Barn Swallow (*Hirundo rustica*): 1 at Rosa de Catalina Garcia reservoir; 1 at Risco del Paso beach; 3 in the hirundine flock at Jandia Playa, late afternoon.

Red-rumped Swallow (*Cecropis daurica*): 2 in the hirundine flock at Jandia Playa, late afternoon. Not a common bird on Fuerteventura.

House Martin (*Delichon urbicum*): Several in the hirundine flock at Jandia Playa, late afternoon.

Berthelot's Pipit (*Anthus berthelotii*): Common throughout, with some particularly tame individuals on the boardwalk at Jandia Playa.

Tree Pipit (*Anthus trivialis*): At least 2 in the woods at Costa Calma; at least 2 on waste ground at Jandia Playa; 1 in the Barranco de Rio Cabras.

White Wagtail (*Motacilla alba*): 1 flew around the Barranco de Rio Cabras at dusk on 24th, though it was not seen to land. Not a common bird on Fuerteventura.

Blue-headed Wagtail (*Motacilla flava*): 1 on the marsh at Jandia Playa; 1 at Punta de Jandia.

Canary Islands Chat (*Saxicola dacotiae*): Excellent views of several birds around the dams at Barranco de Rio Cabras; also 1 at Mirador Risco de las Peñitas; 2 around the pool at the base of the dam in Barranco de las Peñitas. Despite the species' supposed affinity with 'dry' barrancos, we usually encountered them around water. We were surprised not to find any at Los Molinos reservoir or on the Jandia peninsula, although the strong winds on both these days may have been a factor.

Blackcap (*Sylvia atricapella*): 1 singing at the Kitesurfing centre near Hotel Melia Gorriones; 2♂♀ in the woods at Costa Calma; 2 at the Oasis Park, La Lajita; 1 in Betancuria village.

Sardinian Warbler (*Sylvia melanocephala*): Good views of several birds at Barranco de las Peñitas in the mountains, including some carrying food. Our only other record was a 'possible' heard at Barranco de la Torre, not known as a site for them.

Spectacled Warbler (*Sylvia conspicillata*): Some really good views of this species, including several at the Barranco de Rio Cabras; 2 at the Puentito de Molinos; 1 at Risco del Paso beach; 1 at Jandia Playa; 1 in Barranco de las Peñitas; and several in Barranco de la Torre.

Willow Warbler (*Phylloscopus trochilus*): 1 seen on both visits to Barranco de Rio Cabras.

Chiffchaff (*Phylloscopus collybita*): 1 by the Kite Surfing centre at Hotel Melia Gorriones; 1 in the woods at Costa Calma; 2 at the Oasis Park, La Lajita; 1 in the Barranco de las Peñitas.

Yellow-browed Warbler (*Phylloscopus inornatus*): 1 seen in the woods at Costa Calma, reported present for several weeks. Elsewhere on the island, we did have some difficulty with certain 'squeaky' Spanish Sparrows making noises surprisingly close to Yellow-browed call!

Red-breasted Flycatcher (*Ficedula parva*): 1 non-breeding plumage bird in the woods at Costa Calma, present for several weeks. There may even have been two birds wintering in this area, since a bird with a red breast had apparently been spotted also.

African Blue Tit (*Cyanistes teneriffae*): A family of 4 (2 juvs), in the Barranco de Rio Cabras; 1 in Barranco de las Peñitas, near the Vega de Rio Palmas end; also several in Betancuria village.

Southern Grey Shrike (*Lanius excubitor koenigi*): Surprisingly widespread, with individuals present in almost every habitat including suburban gardens. One was seen with a dismembered lizard at Rosa de Catalina Garcia reservoir.

Raven (*Corvus corax tingitanus*): The island subspecies was common and visible in all habitats, with one even passing over our accommodation. Very tame individuals at the Mirador Risco de las Peñitas.

Spanish Sparrow (*Passer hispaniolensis*): Common throughout, with some particularly tame individuals on the boardwalk at Jandia Playa. A bustling colony was in the ruined building just above the dam at Embalse Los Molinos.

Linnet (*Carduelis cannabina*): 3 in the woods at Costa Calma; 2 at the Oasis Park, La Lajita.

Goldfinch (*Carduelis carduelis*): A flock of at least a dozen in the woods at Costa Calma, generating a constant background noise here; also 3 in the Barranco de las Peñitas.

Trumpeter Finch (*Bucanetes githageneus*): Our best views were in the Barranco de Rio Cabras, where birds were coming to drink by the upper dam. Also seen well around Los Molinos reservoir (some carrying food here), and seen at Punta de Jandia, Barranco de las Peñitas and Istmo La Pared.

Feral and 'Probable' Species (Cat.D/E):

Greylag Goose (*Anser anser*), (Cat.E): A small flock of apparently free-roaming birds, loitering by the beachfront café at Playa Jandia.

Audouin's Gull? (*Larus audouinii*): A probable first-summer bird was on the beach at Risco del Paso, Jandia, at 8.30am on 23rd. Scoped at c300m, this smallish, dark-legged, long-billed gull departed southwest before we could get better views. There were several Yellow-legged Gulls along the beach, but not associating with this bird.

Muscovy Duck (*Cairina moschata*) (Cat.D): A small flock on the stream at Casas Los Molinos; individuals seen at various locations.

Hadedda Ibis (*Bostrychia hagedash*), (Cat.E): There were 2 of these African birds at Playa Jandia, feeding on the lawn outside the closed Stella Canaris zoo.

Red-vented Bulbul (*Pycnonotus cafer*) (Cat.D): 1 in palms around the Kitesurfing centre near Hotel Melia Gorrones; 1 at the Oasis Park, La Lajita.

Other resident species, not seen:

Greenfinch: A small population is supposed to be in the vicinity of Betancuria.

Barn Owl: No luck, despite quite a bit of night driving.

Atlantic Canary (*Serinus canaria*): a small introduced population exists around Betancuria. They are reported to favour an area "south of the town"; although we didn't visit it, this may possibly be referring to the wooded picnic site east of the main road at Castillo de Lara?

MAMMALS

4 species seen:

Algerian Hedgehog (Cat.C): Occasionally seen dead on the roads; no live ones seen despite plenty of night driving.

Barbary Ground Squirrel (*Atlantoxerus getulus*) (Cat.C): Very widespread, seen around Rosa de Catalina Garcia, Los Molinos, Jandia Playa, and many other locations. Previously the easiest place to see the squirrels up close was the popular tourist stop-off at the Mirador Risco de las Peñitas; however there are now signs here cautioning tourists not to feed the squirrels, and we only saw one mangy-looking individual. We found the best place for close photo opportunities is now along the boardwalk at Jandia Playa.

Rabbit (*Oryctolagus cuniculus*): Only 1 seen, at the Mirador Risco de las Peñitas.

Kuhl's Pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus kuhlii*): Several small bats over the reservoir at Barranco de Rio Cabras at dusk must have been this species.

HERPTILES

3/4 species encountered:

Atlantic Lizard (*Gallotia atlantica*): An east Canaries endemic, present at many sites around the island. Probably the best area was along the low stone wall above Embalse Los Molinos.

East Canarian Gecko (*Tarentola angustimentalis*): A largely nocturnal endemic. However, after discovering a dead gecko in the hide at Los Molinos on 22nd, on our return visit we decided to look through the open hide window, and spotted one on the inside wall! It ducked behind the information board before making its escape between the floorboards.

Perez's/Iberian Water Frog (*Rana perezii*): An introduced species, several were heard in the evenings at Barranco de Rio Cabras although we never spotted one.

Stripeless Tree Frog? (*Hyla meridionalis*): Probably heard briefly, in the Barranco de Rio Cabras.

BUTTERFLIES

9 species seen. We struggled a bit with butterflies on this trip, arriving as we did towards the end of the main season and encountering cloud and heavy rain at just as we arrived at Betancuria. Our top three targets were the recently-split species of Common Blue (Austaut's Blue), the endemic Green-striped White, plus the beautiful Greenish Black Tip at its only site outside Africa, now that the Spanish population has been split into a separate species.

Small White (*Pieris rapae*): Common in all vegetated habitat.

Bath White (*Pontia papilidice*): 2 in the Barranco de las Peñitas.

Clouded Yellow (*Colias crocea*): Individuals seen daily around the island.

Long-tailed Blue (*Lampides boeticus*): 1 in the Barranco de las Peñitas.

Austaut's Blue (*Polyommatus celina*): 1 in the Barranco de las Peñitas. A recently-split species of Common Blue distributed through North Africa, southern Spain and the eastern Canary Islands. Very difficult to positively identify, normally speciated by range.

Monarch (*Danaus plexippus*): 1 on flowering shrubs in the woods at Costa Calma; 1 in Barranco de las Peñitas; 1 in Betancuria town.

Plain Tiger (*Danaus chrysippus*): 1 in the Barranco de las Peñitas; a total of 6 in Betancuria town.

Red Admiral (*Vanessa atalanta*): 1 in the Barranco de las Peñitas.

Painted Lady (*Vanessa cardui*): 1 at Embalse de Los Molinos.

Other species, not seen:

Greenish Black Tip (*Euchloe charltonia*): Reputedly a strong flying, widespread species that is on the wing in Fuerteventura from December – April. Should have been fairly easy?

Canary Green-striped White (*Euchloe hesperidum*): An endemic species, supposedly widespread at greener sites, though we never even had a 'probable' sighting.

DRAGONFLIES/DAMSELFLIES

6 species seen:

Sahara Bluetail (*Ischnura saharensis*): 1 at Puertito de Los Molinos.

Vagrant Emperor (*Anax ephippiger*): 1 at Puertito de Los Molinos.

Broad Scarlet (*Crocothemis erythraea*): 1 at Puertito de Los Molinos.

Red-veined Darter (*Sympetrum fonscolombii*): 1 at Jandia Playa.

Blue Emperor (*Anax imperator*): 1 at Barranco de las Peñitas.

Epaulet Skimmer (*Orthetrum chrysostigma*): 1 at Barranco de las Peñitas.

APPENDIX I - PHOTO GALLERY



Canary Islands Chat, Barranco de Rio Cabras



Spotted Crake, Barranco de Rio Cabras



Betancuria: African Blue Tit habitat



Barranco de las Peñitas: top spot for Laughing Dove & Barbary Partridge



Red-vented Bulbul, Oasis Park



Plastic fantastic: escaped Hadedia Ibis, Jandia Playa



Semi-desert habitat at Istmo La Pared, home to Bustards, Courser & Sandgrouse



Looking north-east from Hotel Melia / Los Gorriones, along Jandia beach at low tide.



Berthelot's Pipit, Jandia Playa



Egyptian Vultures, Jandia peninsula



Punta de Jandia, looking north from the lighthouse.



Typical desert scene (on our last day)

APPENDIX II - COSTA CALMA RESORT

