

Fuerteventura, Spain

14th – 18th February 2018

Both a birding and sightseeing trip, fairly laid back and lacked any intense birding. All the sites we visited were easily accessible and we had no issues at any one site. The trip was based around seeing the vagrant Dwarf Bittern that had turned up, fortunately that was successful. Focus should be made on seeing Houbara Bustards, as the species is easy to see on Fuerteventura. For me, the best site we visited was Tindaya plains, the site provides visitors with the best chances of semi-desert specialists such as Cream-coloured Courser and Black-bellied Sandgrouse alongside the Houbara Bustards.



Black-bellied Sandgrouse - Tindaya Plains – February 2018 - ©Andrew Kinghorn

For this trip I was with my non-birding partner Nikola Zalas. I wouldn't expect a large trip list at any time of year. Though Fuerteventura does offer some specialist birds, some being endemic and others being hard to see in other locations. February is warm and pleasant, and you can birdwatch throughout the day comfortably. Most of the birds within this trip report can be expected to be seen in February apart from the Dwarf Bittern and Tristram's Warbler as these birds were vagrants.

WEDNESDAY 14TH FEBRUARY 2018 – Travel & Llanos Pelados

Due to prices in flights, we decided not to fly from Newcastle and instead went from Manchester. The security was appalling, but as soon as we were through, we were boarding the flight. We landed in Fuerteventura around 14:30 and by around 15:00 we were in the car and on the way to Llanos Pelados, which is where a **Dwarf Bittern** had been frequenting.

On arrival it became apparent that **Berthelot's Pipit** were very common. We arrived and parked at the side of the road and made our way to the barranco where the **Dwarf Bittern** had been frequenting. After about 10 minutes on site the bird appeared on top of some tamarisks and made its way to the side of the water and showed well, the bird was almost constantly on view for around 20 minutes, we were rather complacent about the whole affair but both pleased to have seen the bird. The barranco itself was excellent for birds, we had our first **Ruddy Shelducks** of the trip and few noisy **Black-winged Stilts** were a welcome addition to the trip list. We also had first views of **Fuerteventura Stonechat**, the **Ravens** were an obvious presence, as were **Egyptian Vultures**, **Buzzards**, and **Yellow-legged Gulls**. The surrounding landscape held **Lesser Short-toed Lark** and an impressive 25+ strong flock of **Trumpeter Finches**. **Collared Doves** added a sense of familiarity and I was surprised to see **House Martins** whirring around the airspace and a **Chiffchaff** revealed itself by singing briefly. A single **Spectacled Warbler** was out and about, as was a **White Wagtail** which spent most of its time feeding. After the excitement of the **Dwarf Bittern**, we retired to our hotel in Corralejo, which was the Oasis Village hotel (not Oasis Dundas).



Dwarf Bittern - February 2018 - ©Andrew Kinghorn



THURSDAY 15TH FEBRUARY 2018 – Tindaya, La Olivia, Parque National Corralejo, and Teifa (Los Molinos)

Up at 06:15 AM for a drive to Tindaya plains, arriving just before first light the first bird seen here was a **Southern Grey Shrike** in the half light of dawn, dawn itself brought two **Black-bellied Sandgrouse** flying across the plains before landing on the road and running for cover, slowly creeping along the road allowed for the birds to be located on the deck. Minutes later I located a distant **Houbara Bustard**, a scan round revealed at least eight birds with most in some form of display. As the action began to die down another distant **Black-bellied Sandgrouse** appeared before being lost to view. As was the case in most locations visited throughout the trip, **Berthelot's Pipits** were a constant presence.

After breakfast a visit was made to Parque Natural Corralejo for a look, the scenery was fantastic but the birds sparse, though we did have good views of **Southern Grey Shrike**, **Hoopoe**, and finally **Yellow-legged Gulls**, the latter species seemingly ever present.

Not far from Los Molinos there is a reservoir, we didn't see it signposted but discovered the site on the internet before visiting. The road down was simply a dirt track but the reservoir itself was situated between Los Molinos and Tefia. With it being an extensive body of water, it was immediately obvious it was popular with the birds. **Spanish Sparrows** made the most of a windowless derelict building whilst both **Berthelot's Pipits** and **Raven** were ever present. A walk along the dam revealed at least four **Eurasian Spoonbills**, whilst I had a max count of twenty **Little Egrets**. A single **Black-headed Gull** here was the only one seen on the trip! As usual, **Black-winged Stilts** made their presence very evident with their constant calling, and a **Greenshank** amongst them provided the only sighting of the trip alongside a single **Ringed Plover**. **Ruddy Shelducks** were plentiful here, at least one pair had a very small chick which a **Yellow-legged Gull** was intent on taking but failed to do so. **Grey Herons** were roosting around the reservoir and were put up by **Buzzards** and **Egyptian Vultures** joined in the aerial action. **Coot** and **Eurasian Teal** were present on the water and a real surprise came in the form of two **Plain Swifts** briefly, no sooner had they showed up that they were gone without a trace leaving only the **House Martins** to occupy the section of skyline I had seen them in. Viewing from the hide provided little else other than a male **Black-bellied Sandgrouse** briefly flying over before landing out of site, unsurprisingly I did not locate it on the deck. **White Wagtails** were also present around the reservoir but could be easily overlooked had they not been vocal.

A visit to La Oliva to explore the touristy bits, with the church being quite interesting and the Aloe Vera shop being ridiculously overpriced. Here we saw a single **Cattle Egret**, **Southern Grey Shrike**, **Egyptian Vultures**, **Collared Doves**, and plentiful **Spanish Sparrows**.

On the evening a return visit to Tindaya was in order, three **Houbara Bustards** were located almost straight away with one bird walking across the road, a distant **Black-bellied Sandgrouse**



was located feeding on the deck and a slow approach allowed for moderate views. A short way on three more **Black-bellied Sandgrouse** appeared some 10 meters from the car and at one point they were too close to see.

FRIDAY 16TH FEBRUARY 2018 –Tindaya, Barranco de lo Torra, Costa Calma, Pajara, Vega de Rio Palmas

Another dawn raid on Tindaya plains, a **Hoopoe** flew past lazily on arrival, but on this visit, there was not nearly as much action with only two **Houbara Bustards** noted, however one bird was doing a full-on display. Most notable birds on this visit were undoubtedly the **Cream-coloured Coursers**. A flock of 5 **Trumpeter Finches** added a nice dash of colour but had clearly upset a **Lesser Short-toed Lark** by their presence. Two **Ruddy Shelducks** which flew in from the north, landed for a minute or two and then flew off again back north. As we were leaving two obvious migrant **Swallows** shot through, a reminder that spring had arrived in a form on Fuerteventura. A **Stone Curlew** showed at point blank as we were leaving, a reminder of just how awesome these birds are at close range.

A venture to the southern half of the island had a much more touristy feel to it, Fuerteventura Golf Course had **Song Thrush**, singing **Spectacled Warbler**, **Spanish Sparrows**, **Chiffchaff**, **House Martins**, **Swallows**, and **Ruddy Shelduck** all in attendance. Next stop was Barranco de lo Torra, on arrival a raptor seen at mid distance turned out to be a pale phase **Booted Eagle**, it hung in the air for quite a bit before landing on a pylon distantly. The barranco itself was **Sardinian Warblers** galore, and the **Tristram's Warbler** showed well if not briefly before diving back into cover. Other birds noted include **Buzzard**, **Berthelot's Pipit**, **Raven**, **Egyptian Vultures**, **Spanish Sparrows**, **Spectacled Warbler**, and **House Martins** in or over the barranco itself. A visit to costa calma for Monk Parakeet was unsuccessful, but did have **Linnet**, **Goldfinch**, and **Spanish Sparrows** in this very green corner of the island.

The viewpoint at Sicasumbre on the west side of the island was fantastic for a view of the surrounding country and a pair of **Fuerteventura Stonechats** showed amazingly well here. A coffee down in Pajara village allowed for the only **Blackcap** and amazingly the only **African Blue Tit** of the trip! Other birds included **Spanish Sparrows**, **Egyptian Vulture**, and **Chiffchaff**. A short hop to Vega de Rio Palmas for dusk was worth it, the viewpoint had a ridiculously confiding **Raven**, **Berthelot's Pipits**, and **Spanish Sparrows**, whilst down in the bottom by the reeds the only two **Barbary Partridges** of the trip were seen at dusk, only located thanks to their calling. A peaceful evening dawned with **Southern Grey Shrike** showing point blank before going to roost and an **Egyptian Vulture** hurriedly flying to its evening roost, the latter to the backdrop of calls from an escaped Eagle Owl. On the outskirts of the village itself we also managed to see a **Stone Curlew** as it flew over the car calling.



SATURDAY 17TH FEBRUARY 2018 - Faro de El Toston and Llanos Pelodos

A look at the lighthouse at Faro de El Toston added some costal waders to the trip list, with two **Kentish Plovers**, a single **Whimbrel**, and **Turnstones** added to the trip list. Sadly, there was no sign of the Red-billed Tropicbirds, not that I knew at the time and I was a day too early at this location (it later transpired). As expected, there were plenty of **Yellow-legged Gulls** around but nothing else moving on the sea at all. The afternoon and later evening were spent at Llanos Pelodos hoping to see the **Dwarf Bittern** again, it is with regret that on both visits (totalling about 3 hours) I did not connect with the bird, so clearly an evening feed is not guaranteed. The drive into the site produced an **Egyptian Vulture** showing spectacularly well. The barranco itself is a lovely spot, and I added **Snipe** to the trip list, as usual the **Black-winged Stilts** made their presence ever known and **Ruddy Shelducks** flew over often. A **Kestrel** had a disagreement with the local **Ravens** whilst **Egyptian Vultures** and **Yellow-legged Gulls** were almost a constant feature in the airspace. **Trumpeter Finches** and **Fuerteventura Stonechat** were ever present on site going about their business, a **Spectacled Warbler** showed ridiculously well and the rockface roosting **Little Egrets** looked so out of place to be comical. A **Grey Heron** was once again a reminder of home, but a **Hoopoe** certainly wasn't and at least three birds were noted. As the light faded the **Spanish Sparrows** came into roost and we inadvertently flushed a **Collared Dove** and **Laughing Dove** on the way back to the car, the latter species being a trip tick having not really



Egyptian Vulture - February 2018 - ©Andrew Kinghorn



checked palms in built up areas of the island. Final birds of the day were **Berthelot's Pipits** and **Egyptian Vultures**, with two birds perched up on separate pylons before one of them flew off to roost elsewhere.

SUNDAY 18TH FEBRUARY 2018 - – Llanos Pelodos and Travel

Only half a day on the island as our flight back was at 14:35, we started out the day at Puerto Lajas, a surprise on the way came in the form of a **Greater Spotted Cuckoo!** It was joined by a harassing **Barbary Falcon**, initially seen in flight and then perched up obscured round the back of a pylon. Our final few hours were spent at Llanos Pelodos, no sign of the **Dwarf Bittern** for us, but I managed to add **Little Ringed Plover**, and **Green Sandpiper** to the trip list. The noisy **Black-winged Stilts** seemed emboldened and were feeding by the Dwarf Bitters favoured feeding area in the barranco. A **White Wagtail** provided as much entertainment as the pair of **Fuerteventura Stonechats**. A flyby **Laughing Dove** was followed by two **Collared Doves**, the **House Martins** were ever present, but **Egyptian Vultures** in much reduced supply, assumedly as the disposal plant was not in operation. This didn't put off the **Yellow-legged Gulls** or **Ravens** though, which were as present as ever. Three **Hoopoes** together was a treat and had some awesome views of **Trumpeter Finches** and **Spanish Sparrows** in and around the barranco. **Buzzard**, **Little Egret**, and **Spectacled Warbler** also featured. We closed the birding off with a few **Berthelot's Pipits** as we were driving off site.



Southern Grey Shrike - February 2018 - ©Andrew Kinghorn



COMPLETE TRIP LIST

SPECIES LIST	COMMENTS
Ruddy Shelduck	The species isn't difficult to see, a visit to any significant water bodies on the island should provide views of the species.
Mallard	Present.
Teal	Present.
Barbary Partridge	Surprisingly difficult to catch up with. Only two seen on a dusk trip to Vega de Rio Palmas.
Dwarf Bittern	This bird was a vagrant, so not to be expected on any trip.
Cattle Egret	We saw a bird walking around the edge of La Oliva village.
Little Egret	Fairly easy to see around wet areas.
Grey Heron	Fairly easy to see around wet areas.
Spoonbill	Four birds seen on reservoir on Los Molinos.
Egyptian Vulture	Quite a widespread bird, numerous around the rubbish dump.
Booted Eagle	A single bird seen at Barranco de lo Torra, seemingly not a common bird on the island.
Common Buzzard	Fairly easy to see on the island.
Kestrel	Scarce on the island, far more likely to encounter Egyptian Vulture or Buzzard.
Barbary Falcon	Only a single bird seen at Puerto Lajas.
Moorhen	Present.
Coot	Present.
Houbara Bustard	Spend enough time at Tindaya plains and you're almost certainly going to be successful. Mornings and evenings best, be careful when exiting your vehicle to not disturb displaying birds.
Stone Curlew	Due to the arid nature of most of the land, it's easy to see and/or hear this species.
Black-winged Stilt	Common in wetland areas.
Cream-coloured Courser	We saw this species on Tindaya plains, but not on every visit. Numerous visits may be required to connect with the species.
Little Ringed Plover	Seen at Llanos Pelodos.
Ringed Plover	Easy to see at costal locations with opportunities for foraging and roosting.
Kentish Plover	Easily one of the commonest waders to see, predominantly coastal.
Turnstone	Seen on the coast at Faro de El Toston.
Green Sandpiper	Seen at Llanos Pelodos.
Greenshank	A single at the reservoir at Los Molinos.



Whimbrel	Seen at Faro de El Toston.
Common Snipe	Seen on one visit go Llanos Pelodos.
Black-headed Gull	A single bird seen at the reservoir at Los Molinos was the only one of the trip.
Yellow-legged Gull	Present.
Black-bellied Sandgrouse	Several seen on the deck and in flight at Tindaya plains.
Rock Dove	Present.
Collared Dove	Present.
Laughing Dove	Only a single bird seen at Llanos Pelodos on an evening.
Plain Swift	Seen over the reservoir at Los Molinos briefly before they disappeared off.
Hoopoe	Widespread, likely to be seen readily.
Lesser Short-toed Lark	Seen around Llanos Pelodos and Tindaya plains, due to the time of year some birds were displaying.
Swallow	First returning migrants seen streaming through various sites.
House Martin	Present around most buildings.
Berthelot's Pipit	A very common and widespread species across the island.
Pied Wagtail	Present.
Fuerteventura Stonechat	Excellent views had at both Llanos Pelodos and the viewpoint at Sicasumbre, which is not a widely published site. We stopped to take in the scenery.
Song Thrush	Seen at the golf course.
Blackcap	Seen at Pajara village.
Spectacled Warbler	Not hard to see across the island, also birds singing.
Sardinian Warbler	Very numerous around Barranco de lo Torra.
Tristram's Warbler	A vagrant, not to be expected on a visit.
Chiffchaff	Quite a few heard singing across the island.
African Blue Tit	Only one bird seen in the trip, which is unusual! Seen at Pajara village.
Southern Grey Shrike	Not difficult to see, birds at Tindaya plains were particularly showy.
Raven	A common bird throughout the island.
Starling	Present.
Spanish Sparrow	Numerous, easy species to see.
Great Spotted Cuckoo	One at Puerto Lajas, the start of the species migration.
Linnet	Present.
Goldfinch	Present.

