

Madeira

31 July - 8 August 2020

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Zino's Petrel - Ruben Terlouw

INTRODUCTION

Madeira is a small remote Portuguese island in the Atlantic Ocean off the coast of Morocco. The biodiversity is extremely low, but nevertheless there are two endemic land birds in addition to a few semi-endemics that are only shared with other Atlantic archipelagos. The biggest attraction from a birdwatcher's point of view, however, is probably the many species of seabirds that can be seen during pelagic tours. Two of these seabirds are even endemic breeders of the Madeiran archipelago. The main reason for this trip was the fact that we found ourselves in the middle of the Covid-19 crisis and Madeira was one of the very few places that was open for tourists. For some of us it replaced planned trips to Indonesia and Belarus. However, this doesn't change the fact that we had an excellent time during this trip and we enjoyed ourselves very much with the birds and other wildlife. We did three 6-hour pelagic tours on subsequent days, which was arranged by Madeira Wind Birds. We also did a nocturnal excursion to the Zino's Petrel colony. On our final day we went on a sailing trip to the uninhabited Desertas Islands, which are located to the southeast of Madeira. The remaining days were spent looking for land birds together with some well-deserved holiday celebration, for which this island is also very well suited!

In total, we saw 39 species and did not miss any endemic land species. The biggest 'misser' was White-faced Storm Petrel. European Storm Petrel and Barolo Shearwater were also possible, but the chance for those was very small. Karel, Diedert and Lonnie all scored 12 lifers, followed by Lars and Sjoerd with a total of 6 new species.



The crew lunching at Funchal Botanical Gardens - Sjoerd Radstaak

From left to right: Sjoerd Radstaak, Diedert Koppenol, Karel Tjoelker, Lonnie Bregman & Lars Buckx

LOGISTICS

The reason that Madeira could be opened for tourists was the fact that everyone coming to Madeira had to do an obligatory corona test. This test was paid for by the Madeiran government. You would receive the result within 12 hours and if the result was negative, you were allowed to move freely across the island. The only restriction we experienced was that we had to wear our face masks on a few occasions, but that wasn't a big deal.

We flew from Amsterdam to Funchal, with a stopover in Prague, which took about 8 hours in total. On the way back from Amsterdam to Funchal we had a stopover in Lisbon, which shortened the travel time to about 6.5 hours.

Our accomodation was called City View Gardens, which we rented via AirBNB. We definitely recommend this place, for it was very fairly costed. The host was extremely nice to us and the view was spectacular. It was very comfortable and conveniently located in Funchal, the capital of the island. The only thing to consider is the fact that the road at which it is situated is extremely steep, which made for an interesting challenge every time we arrived back at the end of our day. There are quite a lot of very steep roads and small alleys in Madeira by the way, so keep that in mind while renting a car. The car we rented was a standard 5-seats car with a small trunk at Sixt Car Rental at the airport of Funchal, but we were offered and recommended an upgrade. We agreed with this and received a Ford Focus, which served our needs well, allowing for comfortable seating and enough trunk space. Also, the stronger motor was quite useful.



View over Funchal from our apartment - Sjoerd Radstaak

COSTS

The price for the three-day pelagic is a whopping €525,- per person. Normally the night excursion to the Zino's Petrel colony would cost €50,-, but we negotiated a discount and paid €30,- per person. Our flight tickets from Amsterdam cost us €445,- per person. If we had booked in a non-covid period, it would probably be quite cheaper. The cost of our apartment was €170 per person for the whole stay, making it €25 euro pp per night, which was totally worth it. For the rental car, we ended up paying €250 in total. Fuel wasn't expensive at all, when used to standard European prices. For daily stuff like restaurants, the prices are a bit lower than in the Netherlands.



Selfie during return trip to Machino - Ruben Terlouw

MADEIRA WIND BIRDS

Even though our experiences with Madeira Wind Birds left us with mixed feelings, it still appears to be the best choice if you want to see your target birds. The only package for pelagics they offer consists of going to sea on three subsequent days from 15:00 pm until dusk. There are two main areas they go to. One is to the north of Madeira, which seems to be the only place where Zino's Petrel can be regularly found. The other is to the south of Madeira, which is better for storm petrels. In our opinion the price of the three-day pelagic is extremely high, especially considering the fact that the food is very cheap and you don't get anything to drink. Moreover, most of the time Hugo and Catarina do not really seem to actively search for birds themselves (although they do pick up good birds occasionally).

They are not very talkative either. For example, the first time we met Hugo was when he picked us up to drive us to the Zino's Petrel colony and during the whole drive he practically didn't say a word. Finally, most of the time the ocean was pretty empty and we slightly got the feeling that they were a little too optimistic about the birds we would see in their contact with us.

That being said, we did see almost all of our targets, only missing out on White-faced Storm Petrel. However, if you want to do a pelagic trip on Madeira, we would still recommend them as they are the best company available, spending most time on sea and at the best spots possible. You can find their website at www.madeirawindbirds.com.

WHEN TO GO

All endemics and semi-endemics can be found throughout the year, although part of the Plain Swifts leave the island for the winter. The best time to go is therefore mostly determined by the seabirds. Madeira Wind Birds have a table which shows for every species in which months they see them and how often, which they will send you if you ask for it. According to this table, Zino's Petrel arrives in April and stays until the end of August and Desertas Petrel arrives in the second half of May and stays at least until September. Therefore, you probably want to plan your trip somewhere between the end of May and the end of August. White-faced Storm Petrel should be possible until early August, but we didn't see any so maybe it is better to go earlier. Band-rumped Storm Petrel should be possible during the entire period. Great Shearwater gets more common from the second half of August onward, so we didn't see any of those either. Barolo's Shearwater is rare here, but if you would like to increase your chances it seems best to go in April or May or in the second half of August.



Desertas Petrel - Lars Buckx

SOURCES

There are some trip reports available for planning your trip to Madeira, but you don't need much planning. Basically, make sure you visit Palheira Gardens and have enough time for a three day pelagic trip.

Some published literature that is of interest is **Wildlife of Madeira and the Canary Islands** by John Bowler, which Sjoerd had bought. This contains some nice information on wildlife apart from birds and also some information on occurrence of species and subspecies. Diedert bought the Lynx guide **Birds of Macaronesia** but this is quite outdated and has some really bad drawings. We recommend a hard pass on this. The book **Petrels - Night and Day** by The Sound Approach is another neat resource for this trip, especially the drawings of all the species are nice for ID-purposes. Lonnie brought a very nice guide for cetaceans, if you are interested in this, we recommend you buy the **Handbook of Whales, Dolphins and Porpoises**, and you will never need another book for these mammals.

A handy website is <http://madeira.seawatching.net/>, where you can find tips on locations of the different species on Madeira. Furthermore, all our sightings can be found on Observado. Go to observation.org => This Site => Users => Type 'Lonnie Bregman' and press enter => select Observations => adjust date from 2020-07-31 to 2020-08-08 and press enter. We all uploaded our sightings, so any name will do.

TARGET SPECIES

Here we briefly list the species to look for on Madeira and the circumstances under which we found them. If useful, we also added the coordinates of the observations. Species written in italics are endemic to the Madeiran archipelago (for seabirds they are endemic breeders).

Trocaz Pigeon

Endemic to Madeira. We easily found multiple birds in the garden of Casa Velha Do Palheiro on both our visits on August 1st and 2nd [32.658, -16.867].

Madeira Firecrest

Endemic to Madeira. Seems to be common in several forests across the island. We found them in the same spot where we saw the pigeons: the garden of Casa Velha Do Palheiro (see above). We also found them at the Faial parking spot along the road somewhere in the northwest of Madeira on August 5th [32.810, -17.143] and on the way back from Ribeiro Frio national park to Funchal in a pine forest along the road on August 6th [32.713, -16.885].

Atlantic Canary

Occurs only on the Azores, the Canary Islands, and Madeira. Very common. We also saw them on the Desertas Islands.

Plain Swift

Occurs only on the Canary Islands and Madeira. Very common, but be aware of the fact that Pallid Swift also occurs on the island and that Common Swift is possible during migration.

Berthelot's Pipit

Occurs only on the Canary Islands and Madeira. We found it on both days we went to Ponta de São Lourenço and walked along the route to the eastern tip of the island [32.749, -16.697], as well as at the viewpoint in the far west on August 5th [32.814, -17.263]. It was also common at the landing spot on Deserta Grande during our sailing trip to the Desertas Islands on August 7th.

Rock Sparrow

Rock Sparrow nowadays is mostly restricted to the far east of the island. We found a group of eight individuals in a large group of Atlantic Canaries on the final hill on the walk in the far east on August 6th, just beyond the Casa Do Sardinha cafe [32.741, -16.682].



Madeira Firecrest - Diedert Koppenol

Zino's Petrel

Or "Freira da Madeira" as it is locally called, only breeds above the clouds in the highest mountain peaks of Madeira. There only are an estimated 160 mature individuals in the world. We heard calls and saw flashes of several birds during a nightly excursion to the colony in the evening of August 1st. During the first two pelagic days we specifically visited an area to the north of Madeira to search for this species. The first day we didn't see any and on the second day we briefly saw one or two individuals at the chum at 19:30 pm, just before we would be leaving back for the shore.

Desertas Petrel

This species is recently split from Fea's Petrel and only breeds on Bugio, the most southern island of the Desertas Islands. It is more common than Zino's and it is more easily seen during pelagics. We saw single individuals just to the east of Madeira during the first and the third pelagic day. We also saw one close to the Desertas Islands during our sailing trip on August 7th.

Band-rumped Storm Petrel

We saw one during the third and final pelagic day, far south of Madeira. After a full day of waiting it turned up at the chum at 20:00 pm, literally minutes before we would head back.

Wilson's Storm Petrel

One was seen at the chum on the first pelagic day, to the north of Madeira, and another one on the third pelagic day, to the south of Madeira. Both turned up later in the day, at 20:00 pm and 18:00 pm respectively.

Bulwer's Petrel

Very common once you are out at open sea.



Zino's Petrel - Lars Buckx

ITINERARY

31th July Departure from Amsterdam. Early flight to Prague from where we took our flight to Funchal. Late arrival at our apartment, City View Gardens.

1th August Birding in Funchal to find all endemic land species. Visited Palheira Gardens which seemed to be closed. Drove to Funchal Botanical Gardens, but no targets present. Checked Levada dos Tornos, but also no pigeon or firecrest here. Visited Machino city in search of rarities. Found right entrance to Palheira Gardens and observed Trocaz Pigeon and Madeira Firecrest. Late night excursion to Zino's Petrel colony at 1800 m.

2th August Birding in Palheira Gardens again for better views and pics of endemics. First day of pelagic tour. Chumming in ocean north of Madeira in search of Zino's Petrel. At departure, enjoyed short but good views of Desertas Petrel. Saw plenty of Cory's Shearwater and Bulwer's Petrel, connected with Wilson's Storm Petrel. Missed Zino's.

3th August Walk on eastern edge of Madeira, at Ponta de São Lourenço for Berthelot's Pipit and Rock Sparrow. Saw Berthelot's Pipit, but missed Rock Sparrow. Second day of pelagic, chumming in the north again. Connected with two Zino's Petrels just before dark.

4th August Last day of pelagic. Chumming in the south this time, for storm petrels. A Desertas Petrel at the exit of the harbour gave good views. Saw another Wilson's Storm Petrel and scored Band-rumped Storm Petrel.

5th August Roadtrip across Madeira to western end and centre of island. Enjoyed many good views and visited interesting habitats. Ended day with search for Madeiran Barn Owl but only saw bats.

6th August Another visit to the eastern walkroute to find Rock Sparrow. Connected with them at the end of the route. Birded some more at Ribeiro Frio. Scored Madeiran Barn Owl during search this evening.

7th August Relaxed sailing trip to Desertas Islands. Enjoyed stellar views of Short-finned Pilot Whales and saw another Desertas Petrel. Scuba diving and tour on Deserta Grande.

8th August Early flight back to Amsterdam via Lisbon.



Atlantic Canary - Lars Buckx

Day 1 – 31th July

We got together at Schiphol Airport in the early morning and boarded our plane to Prague without any issues. Testing some new bins during our stop-over we added **Common Kestrels**, **Common Swifts** and **Common Buzzard** to our trip and Czech list. Some **Common House Martins** were also flying about. Upon arrival in Funchal, we had to do the obligatory corona test. This was very uncomfortable for everyone, except Sjoerd, who definitely is the coolest member of our group. While picking up the rental car at the parking lot of the airport, a **Yellow-legged Gull** flew past and while the others were busy packing the rental car, Lars had already scoped several **Cory's Shearwaters** out at sea. When everyone was ready, we drove into Funchal to our apartment. During check-in for our apartment, we could already tick **Plain Swift**. A pair of **Common Kestrels** were also flying about above our spacious lodging. This subspecies, *canariensis*, is found on Madeira and the western Canary Islands. Also, **Madeira Lizards** were roaming everywhere around our gardens, this endemic reptile seems to be even more numerous than any bird. An **American Monarch** flew past and as this was our first, we were all still very excited. However, this butterfly species also turned out to be really common. We ended the day with a lovely dinner at sea, where we all saw our first **Yellow-legged Gulls** and some **Common Terns**, scoped some **Cory' Shearwaters** so everyone could tick them. **Plain Swifts** were cheerfully roaming the skies.



Cory's Shearwater - Karel Tjoelker



Yellow-legged Gull - Lars Buckx

Day 2 – 1th August

Our first full day of birding was dedicated to finding the endemic land species. We didn't rush our morning and started our breakfast in the garden at around 8 AM. We had a **Common Blackbird** singing in the garden, some **Plain Swifts** overhead, an **Eurasian Blackcap** foraging in the bushes and we started our real birding around 9 AM. We first wanted to make our way to Palheira Gardens, where Madeira Goldcrest and Trocaz Pigeon should be present. While packing the car, two **European Goldfinch** flew past and several **Atlantic Canaries** were present on the many telephone lines crossing the city of Funchal. Our trip list was already growing quite rapidly, ticking all these common species. We drove towards the address that was listed on the website for Palheira Gardens,



Madeira Lizard - Sjoerd Radstaak

At a loss, since this was supposedly the place everyone ticked Trocaz Pigeon and Madeira Goldcrest, we looked up some sightings via observation.org and went towards the Funchal Botanical Gardens. We parked our car, we walked towards another closed gate... Thinking everything was apparently closed on Saturday for some unknown reason, someone spotted the entrance was further ahead. We were standing at the exit. The road was very steep and allowed for good sight on the ocean and during a quick scope session, we discovered a pod of dolphins quite far out, consisting of roughly 30 dolphins. We had some debate about the identification, but most likely they were Bottlenose Dolphins.

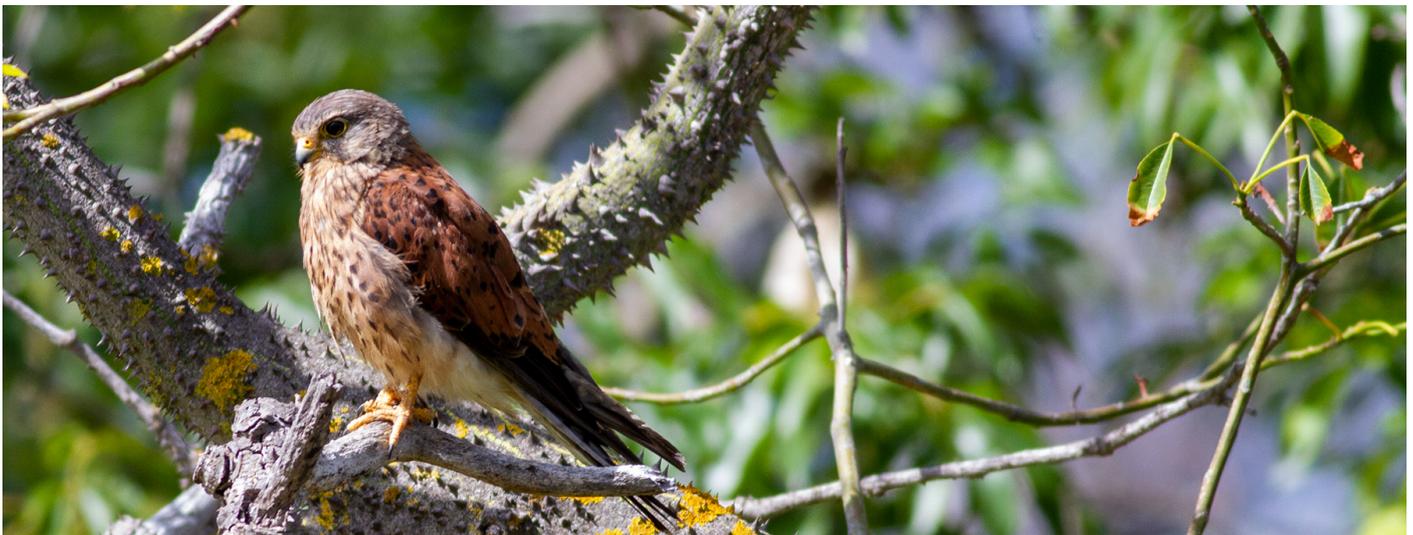


Atlantic Canaries - Diedert Koppenol

After this intermezzo, we made our way into the Botanical Gardens of Funchal, which was quite a letdown. At least concerning our target species. There were some cool butterflies present, including a **Lang's Short-tailed Blue** and a **Long-tailed Blue**. We saw several **Eurasian Blackcaps**, **Common Blackbirds**, **Atlantic Canaries** in the garden and a **Grey Wagtail** flew past. It quickly became quite clear that both the pigeon and firecrest were not present here, so we decided to take a lunch break here. **Clouded Yellow**, several **Monarchs** and a **Blue Emperor** were found around the lunch area. A **Common Kestrel** flew up and seated itself in a tree across our table and we had some fun photographing **Plain Swifts** that were doing fly-by's.



Plain Swift - Sjoerd Radstaak



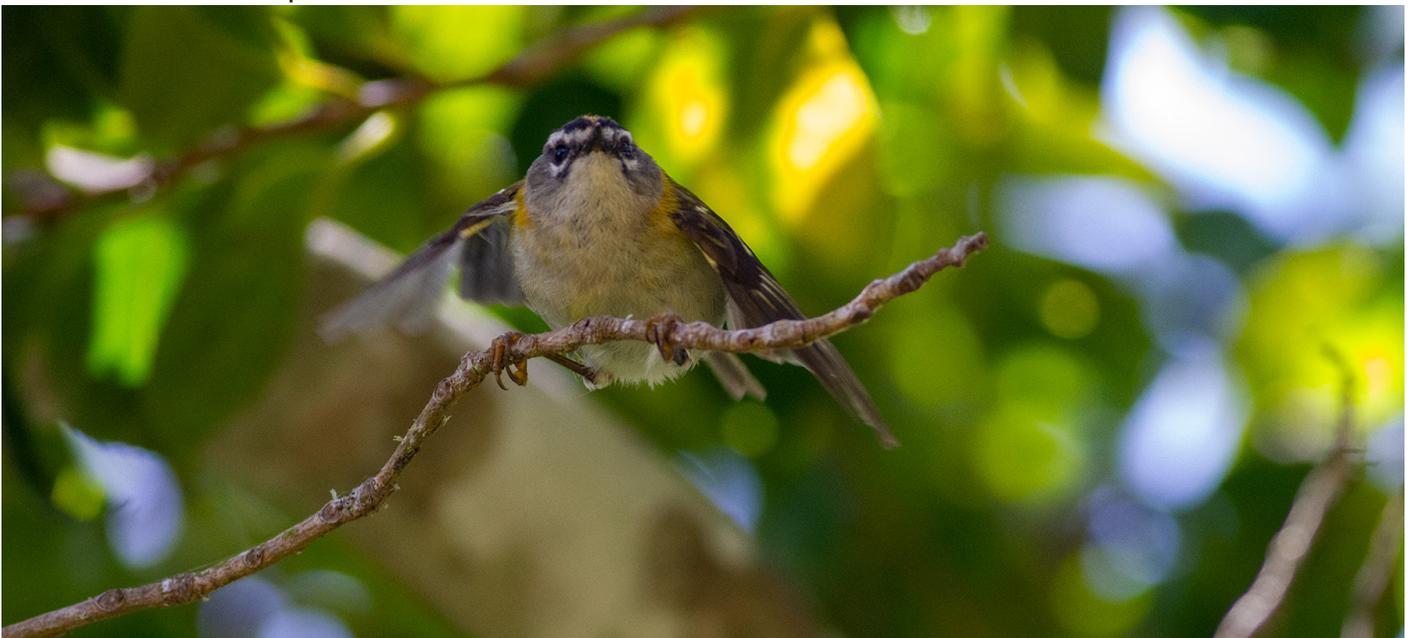
Common Kestrel - Diedert Koppenol

After our lunch, we continued our search for the pigeon and firecrest and went towards Levada dos Tornos, where Trocaz Pigeons are seen in the morning, flying across the valley. The Levada is actually a pathway along the mountainside. We walked down for about a kilometer, but decided it was already too hot and late for Trocaz to do their fly-by's. A **Common Buzzard** flew past, but that was about it. In preparation for this trip, a map had been made with locations of rarities that had shown up in the past years. Machino had some records of rare shorebirds, so we drove there and gave up on the pigeon for now. A small channel ends in the Atlantic Ocean here and we walked stream upwards along the channel, which was actually guiding a small river with some rocks and vegetation. Perhaps in spring there is more meltwater that fills the channel. Two **Common Terns** flew above the small beach and two **Grey Wagtails**, belonging to the subspecies *schmitzi*, were foraging between the rocks inside the channel. A **Common Moorhen** was also present in the three reed stems that grew in the channel.



Madeira Chaffinch - Diedert Koppenol

After this, we decided to give the Palheira Gardens another go, since we found a different place with the same name or at least a different entrance. We drove towards Casa Velha Do Palheiro, situated at one of the highest places of Funchal. Now we had scored the jackpot. Upon arrival at the parking lot, we were a bit confused as to where we needed to be, but fanned out in search of pigeons and firecrests, which should be present according to the staff of the hotel. After only a minute, Karel shouted he had a **Trocaz Pigeon** in sight! In quick succession all team members set their bins upon the beautiful blue coloured pigeons, which were feeding in the back of a garden. Some more **Trocaz Pigeons** were flying in the trees among the garden and it turned out there were quite a lot present. Suddenly, while observing the pigeons, we heard the sound of a goldcrest-like bird. We knew this had to be **Madeira Firecrest** and soon we discovered three in a big conifer closeby. We had great views here and after we had scored both Madeiran endemics, we decided to investigate the gardens more thoroughly. In total, we saw around ten **Trocaz Pigeons** and fifteen **Madeira Firecrests**, but suffice it to say that they were numerous. Other birds present were a singing **Eurasian Collared Dove**, a singing **European Goldfinch**, several **European Robins** and **Atlantic Canaries**. The skies were populated by **Plain Swifts** and a single **Barn Swallow** shortly flew past. Multiple **Madeira Chaffinches** were also foraging in the garden. This is the common name for the subspecies *maderensis* of Chaffinch, which is a very distinct subspecies of this species. Being very similar to the African subspecies, devoid of any bright red and brown, but instead having pink underparts and face, with a purple blue head and back, mixed with green patches on the shoulder and rump. The song is also distinctively different. After we had birded the gardens to the fullest extent, we returned to our apartment.



Madeira Firecrest - Diedert Koppenol

In the evening we had an excursion planned to visit the Zino's Petrel colony at night with Madeira Wind Birds. We were picked up by Hugo from Wind Birds in a minivan and he drove us up to the peak of Serra do Faial. Here we parked at a visiting centre and joined up with the group. Under the guidance of Hugo and Catarina, we walked up to an overhanging cliff site. This is where the magic happens. We heard several of the **Zino's Petrels** calling below and in front of us. Seeing them as very fast white flashes in the moonlight up in the mountains, at roughly 1800 meters high, certainly was a unique experience. Combined with the very special atmosphere and place, it is not something you will easily forget and we definitely recommend you go and do this excursion.



Trocaz Pigeon - Diedert Koppenol

Day 3 – 2th August

Since we returned quite late from our nightly adventure and had already scored all the endemic land species, we didn't rush our morning. Today would be the first day of our three-day pelagic tour. We would depart at 15:00, so we decided to visit the Palheiro Gardens again before that, to observe the stunning pigeons again, make some better pictures and see if anything else could be discovered. The **Trocaz Pigeons** were quite comfortably foraging on the terrace and showed themselves wonderfully. Multiple **Madeira Firecrests** were still foraging in the surrounding trees, a **Common Blackbird** was present and the **Plain Swifts** were still flying about. A **Common Buzzard** was gliding overhead downhill and some **Monarchs** were foraging on the flowers. After eating our heart out in the gardens, we drove towards Machino, since the boat of Madeira Wind Birds departs from the Machino harbour. We decided to get a good lunch before boarding, because this supposedly helps stabilize the stomach, which helps to prevent seasickness. We met the rest of the crew and were excited to learn another Dutchman, Ruben Terlouw, joined the pelagic. Two Frenchmen and one's daughter were also on board. With nine passengers and Hugo and Catarina on board, we departed for the northern part of the island. This is the area Zino's Petrels fly through when they return from their feeding grounds back to their nesting area up in the mountains. Since they were our main target, we would ride out there and deposit chum to lure in some Zino's on their way home. We had to ride the "Oceanodroma", as the 11 meters long RHIB is called, for several hours. Luckily, this wasn't boring but quite adventurous, with high waves and high speed. We hadn't even really exited the harbour or several Pterodroma were flying about like torpedoes in the sky. Two came close by enough for us to identify them as **Desertas Petrels** and we enjoyed some quite good views. However, these birds disappeared as quickly as we found them, so we continued the boat ride.

After a short while, we had our first **Bulwer's Petrel** showing up, but we soon realised they would be one of two species we would see all day. The other species is, of course, **Cory's Shearwater**, of which we also saw numerous amounts. We also had a **Manx Shearwater** fly past while riding to our chumming destination, which was quite a cool sighting for this time of year. Manx Shearwater is a scarce migrant in this area and this was one late individual. After a while we also noticed some dolphins in the water. Hugo steered the boat a bit closer to the pod so we would get better views, but after a short while the pod had located us and about twenty **Atlantic Spotted Dolphins** started to swim alongside the boat and jump out around us. This was a very cool experience and allowed us to really notice the spots and the variation between individuals. In particular, one individual was way more spotted and also seemed bluer in skin colour, which was perhaps the adult male of the group. At roughly 17:00 we arrived at the chumming area. Diedert instantly got seasick, but luckily for him it was quite boring out at sea. Except for a single **Yellow-legged Gull** and around fifteen **Bulwer's Petrels** nothing really took to the chum. A great amount, about a hundred, of **Cory's Shearwaters** was feeding on a shoal of fish in the distance. After three hours of chumming, finally a single **Wilson's Storm Petrel** took the bait! It didn't stay that long however, but at least a new species was seen. Several minutes later, another **Manx Shearwater** flew past and then the light was almost completely gone, so we had to return. No Zino's sadly, but we did get treated to a tense night ride, where we were smacked with waves we couldn't see coming. At around 23:00 we arrived back at the harbour completely soaked.



Wilson's Storm Petrel - Sjoerd Radstaak



Bulwer's Petrels - Karel Tjoelker

Day 4 – 3th August

Unlike the previous day, we were up and about quite early and decided to go for Berthelot's Pipit and Rock Sparrow on the eastern tip of the island. There is a large walkway at Ponta de São Lourenço, which you can follow all the way to the eastern end of Madeira. Due to time restraint, we decided not to walk the entirety of the walk, but we also didn't think it would be necessary to score our target species. During the walk, we found four **Whimbrel** foraging on the steep hillside. They were quite well hidden, but since we wanted to check if they weren't of an American origin, we kept following them. Some tourists flushed them and it turned out they were 'just' four **Eurasian Whimbrel**. A family of **Common Kestrel** was hunting between the rocky areas and several **Plain Swifts** were cheering through the sky here. At the halfway point, we turned around and decided to leave the path and climb the hillsides, to see if we could find any pipits hiding among the rocks. It turned out this was a good tactic, because we soon located a single **Berthelot's Pipit**. It showed fairly well, but there isn't really that much to see honestly. After this sighting, we spread out birding the general area around the parking spaces. Several **Atlantic Canaries** were seen, some **Common Blackbirds** and an **European Rabbit**, which wasn't all that exciting. Then, someone located a **Spectacled Warbler** in a bushy area down the main road. We all located around these bushes and managed to see two **Spectacled Warblers** here.



Berthelot's Pipit - Karel Tjoelker



Spectacled Warbler - Lars Buckx



Zino's Petrel - Sjoerd Radstaak

It was lunchtime again and we headed back to Machino for our pelagic trip. Since one of the Frenchmen and especially his daughter had been extremely seasick, our crew was reduced to 8 today. She was allowed to stay ashore after paying a hefty price yesterday as she only seemed excited about the dolphins...

Speaking of which, we had a pod of **Atlantic Spotted Dolphins** swimming with us again today, perhaps the same group. Our destination was the same chumming area as that of yesterday, since we still had to score Zino's Petrel. The standard **Bulwer's Petrels** were joining us again on the chum and many **Cory's Shearwaters** were seen. Today looked like it would turn out even worse, with almost no activity for several hours. At around 19:00, three **Long-tailed Jaegers** made us wake up from our slumber and shortly after that, three loud **Arctic Terns** had us hoping bird activity was rising. This even turned out to be true, since only half an hour later, a **Zino's Petrel** almost torpedoed our boat! It suddenly flashed up next to the boat and everyone scrambled to get views, let alone get some photos. Hugo told us that they perform this particular behaviour quite often and he called it 'stealth mode.' The Zino's close in on the boat while flying very fast and close to the water surface and then flash upwards near the boat to check it out and also investigate the chum. Since we were somewhat flustered by this first encounter, we were hoping for another encounter, but activity dropped enormously again. Not even a single storm petrel was showing up. We almost decided to call it quits when another **Zino's Petrel** was discovered. This time we all had better views as we had picked it up earlier and it showed longer. After this sighting at 20:45 we received our 'badges' of honour: a refrigerator magnet and a pin both featuring a picture of the Zino's. With this, we ended our day and headed back to the harbour, but not before we did a quick check of our neighbourhood for Madeira Barn Owl (ssp *schmitzi*). Sadly, no luck, so we celebrated our sightings of the Zino's Petrels (pictures show them to be two individuals).

Day 5 – 4th August

After seeing Berthelot's Pipit yesterday, there wasn't much left to do this day. We didn't have enough time to travel the island, so we decided to enjoy the beach today. Arriving at the beach at around midday, we spent some hours there and scoped the sea. Waves were pretty rough, so we were in for a treat on our last pelagic trip. From the beach we saw several **Cory's Shearwaters** out at sea. On the beach we saw several **Plain Swifts**, two **Common Kestrels** were hunting around and an **European Goldfinch** was present. A fun sighting was that of a **Ruddy Turnstone** that was present in the harbour. Apart from Lonnie ordering a gigantic pizza, oddly called 'family size', and him struggling to finish it, nothing of interest happened. Luckily Ruben came along and he rescued Lonnie by helping eat the pizza. Yesterday, Diedert received a bandage against seasickness from Ruben, so all boarded with high hopes. This time we would venture out south, visiting a chumming spot better for storm petrels and because of the heavy winds blasting from the north. As soon as we left the harbour a **Desertas Petrel** showed up again, but this time showing better and we could even take some nice shots. Half an hour in our ride, another **Manx Shearwater** flew past. We arrived at the chumming spot at around 16:30. After a short while of chumming, four **Common Terns** flew past. Then we noticed a large reddish block lying in the ocean closeby which turned out to be a **Loggerhead!** A pretty cool sighting of this aquatic reptile, which we first mistook for a jerry can (we also found plenty plastic).



Bulwer's Petrel - Lars Buckx



Loggerhead Turtle - Lars Buckx

This was at around 17:00, after which we saw nothing but some **Bulwer's Petrels** flying around for several hours. Then at 19:30, a storm petrel suddenly showed up at the chum! Everybody quickly scrambled on the bird, but 'sadly' it wasn't anything new, but another **Wilson's Storm Petrel**. Now, we started to get anxious, since this was our last day at sea and time was running out. We still had some species on our target list... Forty minutes later, suddenly someone spotted another storm petrel. Almost expecting it to be the Wilson's coming for a second time, Hugo shouted an ID across: "It's a Leach!", and we almost all fell back into our seats... We'd all seen Leach's in the Netherlands and it certainly wasn't the species we hoped to see. However, when it flew past the boat, we started to discuss and question Hugo's ID. It looked off for Leach's and more like Band-rumped Storm Petrel (aka Madeiran Storm Petrel)! We started firing our cameras at it and it became clear quite quickly it was nothing like a Leach and was a **Band-rumped Storm Petrel!**



Band-rumped Storm Petrel - Sjoerd Radstaak

So, our pelagic trip was saved at the last moment possible, having seen all important species. Sadly, we missed White-faced Storm Petrel or anything rarer, but we were at least content we didn't have to book another tour. We returned at around 23:00 at the harbour of Machino and said goodbye to Hugo and Catarina for the last time. Ruben returned to his work, but we agreed to meet up later. We returned back to the apartment and celebrated the end of the pelagics.



Crew on a roll - Lonnie Bregman



Long-tailed Jaegers - Ruben Terlouw

Day 6 – 5th August

We had only been on the eastern part of the island and in Funchal up until now, so we went for a tour around the rest of Madeira today. Especially the coast, the western point and the laurel forests had our interest. We first drove alongside the southern coast towards the west, meanwhile checking spots where rarities had been reported in recent history. At Lagoa do Lugar de Baixo, there is a small pond of freshwater, with the 'fresh' being questionable.

Some rare American ducks and stilts had been seen here before, so we checked the area. Apart from six **Eurasian Coot**, we couldn't locate anything and we quickly left. Next stop was Ponta do Pargo, which is the western tip of the island. We drove down to the lighthouse, which is a good place for rarities too. The common **Plain Swifts** were present here and quite some **Berthelot's Pipits** too. The bushes covering the grounds around the lighthouse seemed very promising but only held a single **Spectacled Warbler**. **Atlantic Canaries** were chilling in the garden and a **Common Kestrel** was sitting on the cliffs below. After we had cleared the entire area, we decided to find lunch at a local bar. A few **Eurasian Collared Doves** entertained us while we ate our sandwiches.



Madeira Chaffinch - Karel Tjoelker

We drove north to the coast to Ribeira da Janela. A river mounds into the Atlantic Ocean here, but except for a large swath of introduced Musky Ducks and some **Grey Wagtails** foraging between the rocky river, we did not see anything here. We headed up into the mountainous inland following the ER209. The road took us into the deep heart of the laurel forest and climbed through this stunning scenery. We came across Posto Florestal Fanal, which was the first clearing we found from Ribeira da Janela and we decided to stop here. A large parking area was mostly empty, probably due to the lack of tourists this year. A cute **Madeira Chaffinch** was foraging among the picnic tables and showed nicely. **Plain Swifts** were flying through the same clouds we were walking in and we heard quite a lot of **Madeira Firecrests** calling uphill, so we walked into this weird park-like area that was covered in the mist of the clouds. Some flocks were present in the many old, mossy trees and showed really well. A **Common Linnet** flew past and we also found several **Madeiran Graylings** here, an endemic butterfly species. After we had made a round across the grounds and checked every bird present, we continued along a scenic route to the middle of the island. We didn't really have a plan anymore and just started touring around, making our way to Funchal.



Forest at Fanal - Sjoerd Radstaak

A stop was made at Lombo do Mouro, a nice viewpoint from which you can see the large cliffs several hundred meters below you. It was also a nice place to photograph some kiting **Plain Swifts**. Nothing noteworthy happened anymore on this roadtrip and we had a nice dinner in Funchal. After dinner, we decided to go on owl hunting. There are also some endemic (sub)species of bat on the island of Madeira and Lars had brought his batdetector. We drove towards Ponta do Garajau, a nice cliff head pointing out to the sea. It seems a local lover's corner at night, but during daytime one can see far out to the Desertas Islands and the Atlantic Ocean. However, we came for the endemic subspecies of Barn Owl. This spot is on the edge of Funchal and has some abandoned buildings, so it seemed like a very good spot. Ruben also joined us for this night, before his departure the next day. The viewpoint allows for good sight on the cliffy hillsides, which also looked like good hunting grounds for a Barn Owl. We started scanning the area with our flashlights and debated where we should be looking. Meanwhile, several bats were foraging around the light of a streetlight and Lars turned on his batdetector. Two bats had a peak of 25 kHz in their echolocation and were also audible by ear. There are only three species of bat on Madeira and since this was clearly not a pipistrelle or plecotus, we were looking at two **Leisler's Bats** (ssp *verrucosus*). Some authorities split this species into Azorean Bat. There was also a **Madeira Pipistrelle** shortly foraging around the viewpoint. Another cool thing about this cliff is that some two hundred meters below, at sea level, Cory's Shearwaters and Band-rumped Storm Petrels breed. When looking over the edge, you could often see **Cory's Shearwaters** in the dim restaurant lighting. They were flying on and off to their nests and were calling to each other. If you haven't heard shearwaters before, these sounds are quite comical but cool at the same time. Sadly, no Barn Owls were seen or heard, not even a slight burst of tape had any effect. After roughly two hours and some driving around, we called it quits. We said goodbye to Ruben, our dear seabirding friend, and returned home to enjoy some Madeira wine.

Day 7 – 6th August

Since we had not yet scored Rock Sparrow and this being the last remaining lifer possible for Karel and Lonnie, we decided to go to Ponta de São Lourenço at the Caniçal Peninsula again. While we drove up to the parking area, a group of ten **Red-legged Partridges** got flushed by the car. This species was introduced some decades ago, for hunting purposes, and now a feral population on Madeira resides. We walked the entire trail this time as sightings of Rock Sparrow on the island are almost solely made here. During the walk, we saw several **Atlantic Canaries** and **Plain Swifts**. A handful of **Berthelot's Pipits** were also present. A cafe is situated near the end of the trail. We decided to check the cafe's area, maybe they would be present between the flock of **Atlantic Canaries** there. We scanned this group but didn't find any sparrows. Several **Plain Swifts** were flying overhead and a **Monarch** was present and we decided to split and scan the remaining area around the trail. Finally, Lars found a **Rock Sparrow** quite far off the road on the steep cliff. It turned out that a larger flock of **Rock Sparrows** was foraging here, a total of about eight showed really well. After enjoying these nice views of a remarkably tricky species in the WP, we finished the route and walked to the edge of the island, literally.



Ponta de São Lourenço - Sjoerd Radstaak

After bagging our final possible tick, we were at a bit of a loss. What to do next? We decided to drive inland from Machico and walk a classic 'levada' trail. Levada's are irrigation channels that cross the entire island and were designed to transport the moist, rain and meltwater from the lush northern side of Madeira to its dry southern regions. The well-maintained roads alongside these levada's were created so reparations could be performed if a levada was damaged. Nowadays, they are one of the main attractions for tourists, as these roads take you along beautiful scenery and deep into the heart of the island. We went to Ribeiro Frio and birded the surroundings here, but also wanted to see if we could locate some more endemic butterflies.



Ribeiro Frio - Sjoerd Radstaak

Again, quite some **Madeira Firecrests** were present here, a **Grey Wagtail** flew past, a **European Robin** was foraging between the leaves and some **European Goldfinches** were also seen in the bushes along the road. From Ribeiro Frio we made our way back to Funchal, with a stopover near Poiso. This looked quite promising for butterflies, with several groups of nice flowering plants in a park-like area. **Madeira Firecrests** were foraging in the trees and some **Monarchs** flapped past. At least five **Madeiran Graylings** were flying between the brambles and bathing in what few sunlight made it through the dense clouds. A bit further up the road, we scored a **Small Copper** and a flock of five **European Siskin** was feeding on the pinecones here. Back at the car, a **Red Admiral** flew by. Not the hoped-for species, but the endemic species we were searching for, Madeiran Speckled Wood and Madeira Brimstone, are both threatened. The Madeiran Speckled Wood can still be located fairly well in the north and centre of the island in the laurel forests, supposedly being disturbed by the invading Speckled Wood in the lower regions where it used to occur as well. Madeira Brimstone is extremely rare and encountered more due to luck than anything else.



Madeira Chaffinch - Lars Buckx



Madeira Firecrest - Sjoerd Radstaak

Madeira Grayling - Sjoerd Radstaak

We gave up on the hunt and returned to Funchal, preparing for another one, namely that for the Madeira Barn Owl. At around 21:00, we made for Ponta do Garajau again. It seemed like we would be treated to another empty evening, enjoying some **Cory's** flying about and screaming like beset devils. However, after some time, a screech was noticed. We started listening closely, but didn't hear a repeat for quite some time. Then, suddenly, another screech was emitted near the viewpoint. Flashlights were lit and two eyes stared back at us from the dark. It flew closer and we had nice views of a **Madeira Barn Owl**, hunting and screeching below us. After about ten minutes of hunting and flying, it decided to move on and leave us in the dark. This subspecies is endemic to Madeira and the Desertas Islands. There is no good recent estimate of the breeding population, but it seems fairly rare. In the recent work of the Sound Approach, a chapter is dedicated to this taxon. They bring it into full species status based on differences in sound, mainly having descending perennial screeches instead of ascending. "Considering how slowly vocalisations seem to evolve in barn owls, it is remarkable that an important, long distance signal of Madeira Barn Owl sounds different. Although a descending perennial screech occasionally occurs in Common Barn Owl too, on Madeira this is the most typical variant. It suggests Madeira Barn has been evolving along its own path, in isolation, for quite some time" (TSA, Undiscovered Owls). So, considering this, it might be a good idea to go and look for this subspecies, for it might be split in due time. Also, these Barn Owls have survived on an island that doesn't really feature much in the form of rodents and have fed themselves with a diet of crickets, wall lizards and birds. Pretty cool stuff.

Another **Leisler's Bat** was foraging at the same streetlight again, but other than that nothing noteworthy was seen. Back to camp to ready up for our last full day on Madeira.



Trocaz Pigeon - Sjoerd Radstaak
Day 8 – 7th August

A final 'pelagic' of sorts was planned for today. Instead of a dedicated birding ride on a small boat, we had booked passage on a larger sailing ship to the Desertas Islands with Ventura do Mar. They offer one or two day trips to Deserta Grande, the only island that has a small bay where one is allowed to go ashore. The two day trip includes an overnight stay, allowing you to sleep by the research centre, in the midst of breeding Cory's Shearwaters and Band-rumped Storm Petrels. However, since we didn't have enough time for this, we booked a one day trip, which leaves at around 09:00 and returns you at around 18:00. The Desertas Islands are home to the last remaining original colony of Mediterranean Monk Seal on any of the Atlantic islands (Azores, Canaries, Cape Verde, Madeira). In the 20th century, this species was almost hunted to extinction. It is slowly recovering from this persecution, but still only about forty individuals remain at the Desertas Islands. The island group is highly protected by law and one can only travel to the research centre and has to stay within very close proximity of the bay and has to stay at least 100 meters away from the coastline. Tourists have disturbed Monk Seals in the past, by diving into the underwater caves the seals use for shelter and farrowing and now strict rules have been put into place to prevent this. The chances of seeing a Monk Seal have been drastically reduced by this, since one cannot sail around the island to check for Monk Seals.

We were eager to see this species, but mainly just went and enjoyed the sailing trip, which was really nice. Ventura do Mar departs from the harbour of Funchal and we met up with the crew and other passengers at around 08:30. A **Lesser Black-backed Gull** was sitting between the many **Yellow-legged Gulls** in the harbour. There wasn't enough wind today to raise the sails, but this indicated our passage would be nice and easy in comparison to the pelagics we did. Another indication for this was the presence of a **Loggerhead** near the harbour mound. On calm days they can often be seen resting on the surface, taking in deep breaths before they plunge back into the deep. A sole dolphin was also swimming near the exit of the harbour, probably a Common Bottlenose Dolphin. We sailed for about an hour or two without anything meaningful happening. The obligatory mention of **Bulwer's Petrel** and **Cory's Shearwater** inserted here, which we saw plenty throughout the day. At about 11:00, a large pod of about 30 **Atlantic Spotted Dolphins** were noticed and we steered towards them. They started swimming around the boat fairly quickly, but also departed quite fast. However, another group of cetaceans were swimming up ahead and we sailed ahead. It turned out to be a pod of **Short-finned Pilot Whales**! Turning off the engine and gliding over the waves, we quietly approached them. They were a very curious group and several individuals swam up to check us out, giving us a great opportunity for observing and photographing them. At one moment, a female came a bit too close to us, at least to the liking of the male lead of the pod. He positioned himself between the female and the boat with quite some speed and nearly exited the water; a very cool sight! A juvenile also came close and uttered several cute calls.



Berthelot's Pipit - Sjoerd Radstaak



Atlantic Spotted Dolphin - Karel Tjoelker

We continued our journey towards Deserta Grande after the pod moved on. At around 12:00, a **Desertas Petrel** suddenly showed up near the boat, but it disappeared fairly quickly (as *Pterodroma*'s tend to do). We arrived at the bay of the research station of the Madeira Natural Park. This is the place where you have to watch for the Monk Seals, as this is the best (and virtually only) place to see them, but none were present. We anchored here and went scuba diving. The crew had prepared a very delicious lunch in the meantime and while some were swimming among shoals of very cool and beautiful fish, some were enjoying a nice cold beer. After an hour or two of relaxing, we went ashore at Deserta Grande. A landslide has created some form of a natural beach here, consisting of rocks and gravel, on which a research station is built. Island rangers reside here, keeping watch that nobody travels in forbidden areas or fishes too close to the islands and also guiding around tourists. The area you can walk around and visit is only about 40 square meters. The rest is off-limits due to the very sensitive vegetation growing here. Even if you wanted to, the rest of Deserta Grande lies several hundred of meters above the landing area and it felt somewhat like we were in Normandy, with steep cliffs rising from the beach. We had a small tour around the island and learned much about its history. **Atlantic Canaries** and **Berthelot's Pipits** are about the only species of birds you can see here during the day and they are fairly numerous. The endemic and critically endangered Deserta Grande Wolf Spider is sadly out of reach, for it lives only in the Vale de Castanheira, a valley in the northern part of Deserta Grande.



Desertas Petrel - Karel Tjoelker



Deserta Grande - Sjoerd Radstaak

At around 16:30 we sailed back to Madeira. On the return trip, we observed more pods of **Atlantic Spotted Dolphin** and two **Loggerheads**. Our final dinner would be at the restaurant at the bottom of the cliff at Ponta do Garajau, just below the breeding **Cory's Shearwaters**. We saw several flying above us in the restaurants' lights while enjoying a nice meal here, a cool experience to finish our Madeiran holiday.



Short-finned Pilot Whale - Sjoerd Radstaak

Day 9 – 8th August

This day we flew home at an inhumane time, around 5 AM, so there was no more time for birding. Near the airport, we did see another **Madeira Barn Owl** in the headlights, hunting around the highway.



Atlantic Spotted Dolphin - Lars Buckx

Total Triplist

Birds

	Name (EN)	<i>subspecies</i>
1.	Plain Swift	
2.	Pallid Swift	
3.	Trocaz Pigeon	
4.	Eurasian Collared Dove	
5.	Common Moorhen	
6.	Eurasian Coot	
7.	Eurasian Whimbrel	
8.	Ruddy Turnstone	
9.	Yellow-legged Gull	
10.	Lesser Black-backed Gull	
11.	Common Tern	
12.	Arctic Tern	
13.	Long-tailed Jaeger	
14.	Wilson's Storm Petrel	
15.	Band-rumped Storm Petrel	
16.	Zino's Petrel	
17.	Desertas Petrel	
18.	Cory's Shearwater	
19.	Manx Shearwater	
20.	Bulwer's Petrel	
21.	Common Buzzard	
22.	Western (Madeira) Barn Owl	<i>schmitzi</i>
23.	Common Kestrel	<i>canariensis</i>
24.	Barn Swallow	
25.	Eurasian Blackcap	<i>heineken</i>
26.	Spectacled Warbler	<i>orbitalis</i>
27.	Madeira Firecrest	
28.	Common Blackbird	
29.	European Robin	
30.	Rock Sparrow	
31.	Grey Wagtail	<i>schmitzi</i>
32.	Berthelot's Pipit	
33.	Common Chaffinch	<i>maderensis</i>
34.	Common Linnet	<i>guentheri</i>
35.	European Goldfinch	<i>parva</i>
36.	Atlantic Canary	
37.	Eurasian Siskin	



Rock Sparrow - Diedert Koppel

Mammals

Name (EN)

1. Short-finned Pilot Whale
2. Atlantic Spotted Dolphin
3. Common Bottlenose Dolphin
4. Leisler's Bat *azoreum*
5. Madeira Pipistrelle

Reptiles

Name (EN)

1. Madeira Lizard
2. Loggerhead

Butterflies

Name (EN)

1. Small White
2. Clouded Yellow
3. Small Copper
4. Long-tailed Blue
5. Lang's Short-tailed Blue
6. Red Admiral
7. American Monarch
8. Speckled Wood
9. Madeira Grayling

Printable version (without pictures) is available per request.

A thank you to Ruben Terlouw for sharing his pictures to be used in this report and his company during this trip.



American Monarch - Lars Buckx



Cory's Shearwater - Sjoerd Radstaak