

Tenerife birding, botany and geocaching trip
5th to 10th March 2022
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Background: After two Covid-marred years with no travel, and six months of Long Covid symptoms in 2020, I wanted a birding holiday that was straightforward but very different to my familiar home patch. In addition, I had developed an addiction to geocaching, so hoped to combine finding some good geocaches with seeing some good birds. I had minor unfinished business after my previous visit to Tenerife in March 2019, as I had missed the endemic *meadewaldoi* subspecies of Linnet (!) and my last views of **White-tailed Laurel Pigeon** were distant and murky. Other 2019 misses, such as *canariensis* Long-eared Owl and **Di Barolo's Shearwater** seemed unlikely, but I wanted to give them a shot with some night drives and seawatching. Finally, I hoped to have enough time to enjoy some Tenerife botany on a five-day visit rather than my hurried 3 days in 2019.

The trip was exactly what I had hoped for! I saw/heard 45 bird species, including 6 Canary ticks and 4 Tenerife ticks including Linnet, and had much better views of **White-tailed Laurel Pigeon** than before. **Blue Chaffinch** also showed really well at a couple of geocache sites in the Corona Forestal, and another geocache site produced **Bolle's Pigeon**. The botany was excellent, with spectacular species such as *Canaria canariensis* (Canary Bellflower), *Dracunculus canariensis* (Canary Dragon Arum), *Isoplexis canariensis* (Canary Foxglove) and *Semele androgyna* (Canary Butcher's-broom). Geocaching took me to places that I had not visited on my bird-focused 2019 trip, many of which were enjoyably birdy. I found 114 geocaches, many with high Difficulty and/or Terrain ratings, including four in caves, several in abandoned buildings, and a suite up the Pico Viejo volcano.

References: Garcia-del-Rey, E. 2018. *Birds of the Canary Islands*. Christopher Helm, London; Gosney, D. 2013. *Finding Birds in The Canaries*. Easybirder, Sheffield; Hilbers, D. & Woutersen, K. 2015. *Crossbill Guide to Canary Islands – II Tenerife and La Gomera - Spain*. Crossbill Guides, Arnhem.

Trip highlights: Bolle's Pigeon, Laurel Pigeon, *koenigi* Southern Grey Shrike, African Blue Tit, *teneriffae* Goldcrest, *superbus* Robin, Tenerife Blue Chaffinch, *meadewaldoi* Linnet.

Itinerary:

5th March 2022: flight Bristol to Tenerife Sur;

6th March 2022: Buenavista del Norte, Garachico, Barranco de Ruiz, El Gordo, Esperanza Road;

7th March 2022: Costa Adeje, Palm Mar, Roque del Condo, Caldera;

8th March 2022: Tejina Pools, Valle Molina Reservoir, Los Rodeos, Afur, Chamorga;

9th March 2022: Pico Viejo, Esperanza;

10th March 2022: Abades, El Medano; flight Tenerife Sur to Bristol.

Day by day:

5th March 2022. I decided to travel with Easyjet from Bristol to Tenerife Sur. I travelled at just the right time – resurgent Covid had not yet decimated airline staff and masks were still compulsory on the flight, so everything went very smoothly. A tail-wind meant we arrived ahead of schedule, and I had up-front seats and no hold luggage so was off the aeroplane and queueing for a hire car in very little time. Autoreisen were much busier than they had been on my last visit, although they still didn't hassle me for extra insurance or anything, so I left the airport after dark. There was just time to stop for my first Tenerife geocache before driving around to La Orotava on the north coast where I was staying.

6th March 2022. Birding started shortly after dawn at Buenavista del Norte, where a short seawatch produced 20 rather distant Cory's Shearwater. A cross-country clamber up the nearby Montaña del Taco via a couple of high T geocaches produced most of the common landbirds of the coastal zone, including Spanish Sparrow, Sardinian Warbler, Grey Wagtail, Blackbird, Kestrel and Canaries Chiffchaff, and I heard Barn Owl calling from some sheds in the banana plantations. Having lugged my 'scope up the hill I was disappointed that the reservoir held just a single Yellow-legged Gull.

After visiting Garachico, where I saw my only Ring-necked Parakeet of the trip, and the Dragon Tree in Icod de los Vinos (photo below), I spent an hour exploring the Cueva San Felipe lava tube. This involved crawling in through a small hole by a busy road, then following directions to a geocache deep underground. After emerging I headed further east along the coast, stopping next at Barranco de Ruiz. Tenerife Blue Tits, Canaries, a circling Barbary Falcon and a Buzzard were eclipsed by two phenomenal White-tailed Laurel Pigeons circling overhead. These were seen over the path up the west side of the Barranco, just a few hundred metres from the parking area.

After a final coastal stop in the El Gordo - Los Roques area, which held at least 4 Monarchs and a few other butterflies, I headed for the hills. The Area Recreativo Ramon Caminero provided excellent views of 3 male and 1 female Tenerife Blue Chaffinches, both in the pine trees and on picnic tables, as well as a Tenerife Goldcrest and a heard only Great Spotted Woodpecker. A few geocaches near the Izana Observatory included one of my all-time favourites, 'Walking on the Moon', where the given coordinates on Earth needed to be used as Northings and Westings on the Moon to get a crater name that was the key to the puzzle. My first Southern Grey Shrike on Tenerife was singing

nearby, and another male Tenerife Blue Chaffinch brightened up a geocaching stop at Mirador Chipeque.



7th March 2022. This was my day for exploring the south-west, starting at Costa Adeje for another high Terrain geocache and a walk along the beach. A *tenerifae* African Blue Tit in a shallow barranco was slightly surprising, as I thought they preferred laurel forests. I relocated to the Palm Mar coast (photo below), where two flyover Ruddy Shelduck, 4 circling Plain Swift, 3 Whimbrel, a very close Osprey, and the strange, stick-like *Ceropegia fusca* were highlights. There were also plenty of Cory's Shearwater and a pod of 10+ Bottlenose Dolphin offshore.



After enjoying the early morning quiet (!) in the resorts, I headed inland to Roque de Conde for an excellent loop walk gathering a series of geocaches. The views and wildflowers were superb, with *Asparagus umbellatus*, *Monanthes pallens* and plenty of *Euphorbia canariensis* among the highlights, and there were 3 Raven near the summit. A couple of Hoopoe flew over the road near Vento, and 2 Barbary Partridge wandered along the road in the Barranco de Tragatrapos where I stopped for another cave geocache. A drive through the caldera back to the north coast produced another singing Southern Grey Shrike on the Llano de Ucanca (photo above).

8th March 2022. I got a bit muddled about access to Tejina Pools (photo below) on my 2019 visit, but Google Earth and the Crossbill Guide told me where to go this time. To be honest, I'm not convinced that the pool near the *El Puente* bar is actually accessible for birding because I swung/clambered around a barbed wire fence to access it from the road. My reward was at least 30 Cattle Egret – my first on Tenerife – 5 Black-crowned Night Heron, 2 Coot and a few Moorhen. Next stop was the Valle

Molina Reservoir (photo below), which is easily 'scoped from the south-east (conveniently close to a geocache) and held 16 Teal, 14 Ruddy Shelduck, 2 Grey Heron and a Little Egret.



The Los Rodeos area was my next target, with *meadewaldoi* Linnet top of the 'must see' list. Fortunately, they were pretty common along the Camino el Matadero south of the runway, along with Corn Buntings, Spanish Sparrows, Canaries, several singing (but not seen) Quail, and 4 Barbary Partridge. A yomp up El Pulpito for a high Difficulty geocache produced 3 Canary Red Admiral and 1 Red Admiral 'hill-topping' as well as *superbus* Robin, several *canariensis* Chaffinch, another 2 Barbary Partridge, and the unusual climbing plant *Semele androgyna* which has small flowers on its 'leaves'.

The spectacular Anaga Peninsula (photos below) occupied most of the day. Barranco de Afur is recommended by the Crossbill Guide as a site teeming with dragonflies, but none were on the wing in March and I had to make do with several Canary Cleopatras and 1 Long-tailed Blue. The flowers were good though, and included flattened patches of *Aeonium tabulaeforme* and the small succulent *Monanthes praegeri*. A walk north-east from Chamorga produced an Emperor Dragonfly, 3 Red Admiral, 5+ Painted Lady and 10+ Small Copper, along with 2 Raven, spectacular *Canaria canariensis* (Canary Bellflower), *Dracunculus canariensis* (Canary Dragon Arum) and *Isoplexis canariensis* (Canary Foxglove), and a couple of 20-year-old geocaches. The day finished in the graffiti-covered ruin of a club at Mesa Mota, where 2 circling Plain Swift briefly distracted me from a very tricky geocache hunt.



9th March 2022. This was my Volcano day, but frustratingly El Teide was still closed because of ice and snow on some of the summit paths so I trekked up Pico Viejo instead (photos below). I followed

Sendero 9 on the way up – branching off for some geocaches on Pico Sur and following an obliterated path that was incredibly difficult to walk on – and Sendero 42 on the way down. The prospect of geocaches at over 3000m altitude was the main draw here, because wildlife on the volcanoes was almost non-existent in March. I saw 2 Southern Grey Shrike and heard 2 more during the walk, and that was the sum total of animals seen! The geology, scenery and views were phenomenal though. A 3km trudge along the road was an unwelcome result of taking the two different paths up and down the mountain.



Once I had returned to the car, I had time to mop up a few more geocaches in the Esperanza area. A Bolle's Pigeon on a forest track about 2 km NE of Esperanza (in forest NW of the Pista el Rayo) was my only sighting of the week.

10th March 2022. An afternoon flight from Tenerife Sur meant that I had enough time to make some birding and geocaching stops on the east and south-east coasts of the island. A Common Sandpiper was noted on coastal rocks near Abades, a Little Ringed Plover flew over the TF1 near Jardin del Atlantico, and the El Medano coast near Montaña Roja produced Sandwich Tern, 1 Grey Plover and 2 Whimbrel. My return flight to Bristol was straightforward.

Trip list: based on Gill, F and D Donsker (Eds). 2014. IOC World Bird List (v 4.4). Doi 10.14344/IOC.ML.4.4. <http://www.worldbirdnames.org/> with updates to 2018. Total: **45** species plus 2 Category C (Barbary Partridge & Ring-necked Parakeet). Subspecies identification was based on Garcia-del-Rey (2018). Macaronesian endemics are highlighted in **bold red** text.

Ducks, Geese & Swans Family Anatidae

Ruddy Shelduck *Tadorna ferruginea* – 2 flew south over Palm Mar 7/3; 14 on the bank of Valle Molina Reservoir 8/3.

Eurasian Teal *Anas crecca* – 16 on Valle Molina Reservoir 8/3.

Pheasants and allies Family Phasianidae

C Barbary Partridge *Alectoris barbara koenigi* – 2 on the road in Barranco de Tragatrapos 7/3; 2 El Pulpito, 4 Los Rodeos 8/3.

Common Quail *Coturnix coturnix* – 2 heard singing Los Rodeos 8/3.

Petrels & Shearwaters Family Procellariidae

Cory's Shearwater *Calonectris borealis* – 20+ off Buenavista del Norte 6/3; 50+ off Palm Mar 7/3.

Hérons & Bitterns Family Ardeidae

Black-crowned Night Heron *Nycticorax nycticorax nycticorax* – 2 ad & 1 young at Tejina Pools 8/3.

Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea cinerea* – 2 at Valle Molina Reservoir 8/3.

Western Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis ibis* – 30+ at Tejina Pools 8/3.

Little Egret *Egretta garzetta garzetta* – 1 at Valle Molina Reservoir 8/3.

Osprey Family Pandionidae

Osprey *Pandion haliaetus* – 1 flew north along the coast at Palm Mar 7/3

Kites, Hawks & Eagles Family Accipitridae

Common Buzzard *Buteo buteo insularum* – 1 Barranco de Ruiz 6/3; 1 El Pulpito 8/3.

Rails, Crakes & Coots Family Rallidae

Common Moorhen *Gallinula chloropus chloropus* – several at Tejina Pools 8/3.

Eurasian Coot *Fulica atra atra* – 2 at Tejina Pools 8/3.

Plovers Family Charadriidae

Grey Plover *Pluvialis squatarola* – 1 on the coast by Montaña Roja 10/3

Little Ringed Plover *Charadrius dubius curonicus* – 1 flew over the TF1 near Jardin del Atlantico 10/3.

Sandpipers & Snipes Family Scolopacidae

Whimbrel *Numenius phaeopus* – 3 on the coast south of Palm Mar 7/3; 2 on the coast by Montaña Roja 10/3.

Common Sandpiper *Actitis hypoleucos* – 1 on the coast near Abades 10/3.

Gulls, Terns & Skimmers Family Laridae

Yellow-legged Gull *Larus michahellis atlantis* – Buenavista del Norte, Montana del Taco reservoir and elsewhere along the north coast 6/3.

Sandwich Tern *Thalasseus sandvicensis* – heard at El Medano 10/3.

Pigeons & Doves Family Columbidae

Rock Dove *Columba livia* – feral at Montana del Taco and various towns, perhaps wild in Barranco de Ruiz 6/3; feral in Costa Adeje and other urban areas 7/3.

Bolle's Pigeon *Columba bollii* – 1 flew up from a forest track NW of Pista el Rayo, Esperanza and then perched in a tree 9/3.

Laurel Pigeon *Columba junoniae* – 2 circling overhead and two more distant fly-bys in Barranco de Ruiz, late am on 6/3.

Eurasian Collared Dove *Streptopelia decaocto* – Garachico 6/3; Costa Adeje 7/3.

Barn Owls Family Tytonidae

Western Barn Owl *Tyto alba alba* – heard calling near Montana del Taco 6/3

Swifts Family Apodidae

Plain Swift *Apus unicolor* – 4 circling over Palm Mar 7/3; 2 circling over Mesa Mota 8/3.

Hoopoes Family Upupidae

Eurasian Hoopoe *Upupa epops epops* – 2 flew over the road near Vento 7/3.

Woodpeckers Family Picidae

Great Spotted Woodpecker *Dendrocopos major canariensis* – heard at Area Recreativo Ramon Caminero 6/3.

Caracaras & Falcons Family Falconidae

Common Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus canariensis* – 1 Montana del Taco, 2 Barranco de Ruiz 6/3; 2 in Barranco de Tragatrapos, 1 in the Caldera near Roques de Garcia 7/3; 1 Barranco de Afur 8/3.

Barbary Falcon *Falco pelegrinoides pelegrinoides* – 1 high over Barranco de Ruiz 6/3; 1 heard in the Caldera near Boca de Tauce 7/3.

Lories Family Psittaculidae

C Rose-ringed Parakeet *Psittacula krameri* – 1 in a park in Garachico 6/3.

Shrikes Family Laniidae

Southern Grey Shrike *Lanius meridionalis* **koenigi** – 1 singing by the approach road to the Observatorio de Izaña 6/3, 1 singing below the mirador in the Caldera at Llanos de Ucanca 7/3; 2 seen and 2 more heard on Pico Viejo 9/3.

Crows & Jays Family Corvidae

Northern Raven *Corvus corax* **canariensis** – 3 on Roque del Conde 7/3, 2 NE of Chamorga 8/3.

Tits & Chickadees Family Paridae

African Blue Tit *Cyanistes teneriffae* **teneriffae** – Barranco de Ruiz, Area Recreativo Ramon Caminero 6/3; 1 in a barranco in Costa Adeje, 1 in the barranco east of Roque del Conde 7/3; El Pulpito, Barranco de Afur, NE of Chamorga 8/3.

Leaf Warblers Family Phylloscopidae

Canary Islands Chiffchaff *Phylloscopus canariensis* – Buenavista del Norte, Montana del Taco, Barranco de Ruiz 6/3; Costa Adeje, Palm Mar, Roque del Conde 7/3; Tejina Pools, El Pulpito, Barranco de Afur, NE of Chamorga 8/3.

Sylviid Babblers Family Sylviidae

Eurasian Blackcap *Sylvia atricapilla* **heineken** – 1 El Gordo 6/3; Costa Adeje 7/3; Los Rodeos, Barranco de Afur 8/3.

Sardinian Warbler *Sylvia melanocephala melanocephala* – Buenavista del Norte 6/3; Los Rodeos, Barranco de Afur 8/3.

Goldcrests & Kinglets Family Regulidae

Goldcrest *Regulus regulus* **teneriffae** – 1 in pines above the road at Area Recreativo Ramon Caminero 6/3; 1 heard at Mesa Mota 8/3, but surprisingly not encountered in several stands of Tree Heath that I visited on the Anaga Peninsula.

Thrushes Family Turdidae

Common Blackbird *Turdus merula* **cabreræ** – Buenavista del Norte and many other places 6/3; Costa Adeje, Palm Mar 7/3; El Pulpito, NE of Chamorga 8/3.

Chats & Flycatchers Family Muscipidae

European Robin *Erithacus rubecula* **superbus** – 1 El Pulpito, 1 at a mirador on the Anaga ridge road 8/3.

Old World Sparrows & Snowfinches Family Passeridae

Spanish Sparrow *Passer hispaniolensis hispaniolensis* – Buenavista del Norte 6/3; Costa Adeje, Palm Mar 7/3; Los Rodeos 8/3.

Wagtails & Pipits Family Motacillidae

Grey Wagtail *Motacilla cinerea cinerea* – Buenavista del Norte, Montana del Taco 6/3; Costa Adeje 7/3; Barranco de Afur 8/3.

Berthelot's Pipit *Anthus berthelotii* – in a layby at Montaña Limon 6/3; several Palm Mar, several Roque del Conde 7/3.

Finches Family Fringillidae

Common Chaffinch *Fringilla coelebs* **canariensis** – several at El Pulpito, NE of Chamorga, Mesa Mota 8/3.

Tenerife Blue Chaffinch *Fringilla teydea* – 3 male & 1 female in pines and on picnic benches above the road at Area Recreativo Ramon Caminero, and 1 male in pines above the carpark at Mirador Chipeque 6/3.

Common Linnet *Linaria cannabina* **meadewaldoi** – 10+ at Los Rodeos 8/3.

Atlantic Canary *Serinus canaria* – Montana del Taco, Barranco de Ruiz 6/3; 2 in the Caldera near Boca de Tauce 7/3; El Pulpito, Los Rodeos, NE of Chamorga 8/3.

Buntings Family Emberizidae

Corn Bunting *Emberiza calandra calandra* – several singing at Los Rodeos 8/3.

Bad misses: di Barolo's Shearwater (very difficult at this time of year and I didn't try a ferry crossing), Long-eared Owl (I did several drives after dark including along forest roads near Esperanza but neither saw nor heard a Long-eared Owl), Rock Sparrow (Punta de Teno is only accessible on tours so I didn't bother going, having failed to see Rock Sparrow both there and at Teno Alto in 2019; the Crossbill Guide claims they are at Chamorga, but there was no sign on my visit).

Mammals: based on Mammal Watching Master List (www.mammalwatching.com). Total: 1 species, plus 1 Category C species.

Dolphin Family Delphinidae

Atlantic Bottlenose Dolphin *Tursiops truncatus* – a pod of 10+ quite close inshore off Palm Mar 7/3

Rabbit Family Leporidae

C European Rabbit *Oryctolagus cuniculus* – one near Esperanza 9/3.

Butterflies

Small White *Artogeia rapae* – Barranco de Ruiz, El Gordo 6/3; El Pulpito 8/3 and widely elsewhere in the lowlands.

Canary Islands Cleopatra *Gonepteryx cleobule* – 1 Barranco de Ruiz 6/3; 3 Barranco de Afur, 1 NE of Chamorga 8/3.

Monarch *Danaus plexippus* – 1 El Gordo, 3 Los Roques 6/3.

Red Admiral *Vanessa atalanta* – 1 El Pulpito, 3 NE of Chamorga 8/3.

Canary Red Admiral *Vanessa vulcania* – 3 El Pulpito 8/3.

Painted Lady *Vanessa cardui* – 5 NE of Chamorga 8/3.

Canary Speckled Wood *Pararge xiphioides* – 2 Los Roques 6/3; 1 El Pulpito, several Barranco de Afur, several NE of Chamorga 8/3.

Small Copper *Lycaena phlaeas* – 1 El Gordo 6/3; 10+ NE of Chamorga 8/3

Long-tailed Blue *Lampides boeticus* – 1 Barranco de Afur 8/3.

Moths

Family Geometridae

Traveller *Costaconvexa centrostrigaria* – to light in El Sauce 5/3.

Scopula guancharia (photo below) – to light in El Sauce 9/3.

Family Erebidae

Eilema albicosta – to light in El Sauce 5/3 and 9/3.

Family Noctuidae

Wedgeling *Galgula partita* (photo below) – to light in El Sauce 9/3.



Dragonflies

Emperor *Anax imperator* – 1 Barranco de Ruiz 6/3, 1 NE of Chamorga 8/3.

Selected Flowers



Aeonium tabulaeforme - Barranco de Afur



Asparagus umbellatus - Roque del Conde



Canaria canariensis - Chamorga



Ceropegia fusca - south of Palm Mar



Dracunculus canariensis - Chamorga



Echium strictum - Chamorga



Globularia salicina - Barranco de Afur



Isoplexis canariensis - Chamorga



Juniperus canariensis - Montaña del Taco



Monanthes pallens - Roque del Conde



Monanthes praegeri - Barranco de Afur



Pericallis tussilaginis - Barranco de Afur



Schizogyne sericea - Montaña del Taco



Semele androgyna - El Pulpito



Sonchus congestus - El Pulpito