

**Fuerteventura and Lanzarote**  
**August 2021**



*Fuerteventura – there's a lot of this...*

1. Travelling and car hire

While this was never going to be “the trip of a lifetime”, the Canaries offer some really good birding and endemic species and subspecies. What had been planned as a short trip with visits to three or maybe four of the islands – Fuerteventura, Gran Canaria, Tenerife and Lanzarote – turned into eleven days spent almost entirely on Fuerteventura. **This is much more than you need.** Even if you are interested in taking things slowly and not just “ticking” lifers, **this is more than you need.** All the endemic species and subspecies on that island can be done in a day or two for life-listers, and the photographer's interest is sustained at best only for limited parts of a limited number of days.

Travelling was stressful – the COVID age and the varying international attitudes made for a complex matrix of forms and form-filling and the anxiety of just not knowing whether you have the right documentation *until they are actually checking it*. However, Neil and I cross-checked often and thoroughly so if one of us were refused entry, then surely the other would be too.

As it turned out, if you *do* have the right documentation, passage is quite easy. Once we were in the air (Ryanair, Stansted to Fuerteventura) we could breathe (through a face-covering) and looked forward to collecting the car, driving to Morro Jable (pronounced “Morrrow Hablay”, Neil...) and getting the ferry to Tenerife, via Gran Canaria. The single biggest disaster of the trip befell us at this very point – it turns out that you cannot take a hire car on any ferry. The logic is beyond me – same country, same islands, you're insured etc... why impose such a daft restriction? Yes, the cars risk being

scratched on the parking deck but it's low risk with everyone being shepherded in carefully by the ferry staff. If I hadn't indicated that our first night on the islands wasn't actually going to be on Fuerteventura, we could very well have gone to Tenerife and come back and no one would have been any the wiser. However, we just couldn't risk it now that we knew.

Worse, the option of flying to Tenerife (having now lost the £370 already on the ferry) was, while possible, a cause of anxiety first – could we get flights in time? what do we do with the car we have in Fuerteventura? – and then abject frustration, as it turned out that there had been a run on hire cars on the Canaries and the net effect of this was that there were, literally, *no cars for hire*. Perhaps less commercial outfits than the usual airport car hire crowd might have had availability, but we had slept for only about an hour each and intellectually we just weren't up to it.

The sole consolation was that the car we were given, presumably because of the general local shortage, was a considerable upgrade on what we had actually booked – we were given a Toyota Proace City; a bit like a van, really, but with handy sliding rear doors and a large boot.

So we lost some more money on the Tenerife Hotel, obliged to cancel with too little notice to avoid a penalty, but managed to organise a booking in Costa Calma for those nights, in the same hotel as the Fuerteventura part of our stay had originally been organised for.

## 2. Accommodation

The KN Matas Blancas hotel was affordable, very comfortable and the staff were friendly and helpful. There was a good food offering, although my vegetarian expectations, already low, were all too easily met as largely it seemed that the vegetarian options were simply the steamed vegetables and fresh salads that the carnivores also had. But it was cheap, and better than cheerful.

There was even a nice pool, and the rooms were spacious, cool when necessary with nice little areas behind in which to sit and have a drink or a bite to eat.

## 3. Fuerteventura

It is worth noting that even a rudimentary understanding of Spanish will lead you to understand that “fuerte” means “strong” and “ventura” has something to do with “wind”. Yes, the island is windy. I don't know if it is like that all the time, or whether it's an August thing, or whether we were just unlucky, but there was perhaps only one day when you would describe the wind situation as truly “calm”. That said, it didn't, thankfully, hurt the birding so much.

## 4. The birds

### *5 August*

Much of this date was taken up with travelling to the Canaries, worrying about car hire and accommodation, ferry issues and the like. However, once we had accepted our fate, we set about getting to Costa Calma, settling into our rooms, and then heading out to try and rearrange or cancel our ferry at Morro Jable itself.

The first bird I saw on heading to pick up the car opposite the terminal was a lifer – a **Plain Swift**, darting and swooping quite madly about in a much less deliberate way than one might see a Common Swift do. A couple of individual **Collared Doves** made an appearance (little did I then know that this

species would appear to outnumber humans on the island quite considerably!) and a flock of **Feral Pigeons** shot by.

Having left the car hire area, we headed directly for our hotel in Costa Calma, about 50 minutes' drive away. We scoured the roadside landscapes for birds. The other desert-like areas Neil and I had visited were in Morocco and Israel, and I guess we just assumed that Fuerteventura would be similar and that there would be larks and shrikes and finches and all sorts as we went along. It soon became clear that the island is, literally, something of a birding desert, and while there are decent concentrations of very good species, you shouldn't expect many bonuses as you drive along.

That said, along the route we saw one **Desert Grey Shrike** (hard to know what to call it as authorities differ) and some distant **Egyptian Vultures**, mostly circling the mountain tops. One or two **Common Ravens** also started to show, these being apparently of the North African subspecies. I don't know what the diagnostic differences are.

We ploughed determinedly on and as we neared Costa Calma, we could see **Yellow-legged Gulls** over and by the glistening sea. The best bird en route, however, was certainly a low-flying adult Egyptian Vulture over the Oasis Wildlife park, quite near to our destination. Sadly, there was no safe place to stop to get what would undoubtedly have been extraordinary photos. We checked in, dropped our stuff off and headed a little way around the southern coast.

Having failed to persuade the ferry company to refund us at the Morro Jable port, we headed somewhat dejectedly back to Costa Calma. On the way, I noticed a **Cattle Egret**, incongruously standing on the roof of a parked car and we decided to stop at the Playa del Matorral de Morro Jable when we saw Plain Swifts flying about. We spent thirty or forty over-dressed minutes in the southern heat, failing to land a decent photograph of the swifts, even though at times they flew within a couple of metres of us. The "marshland" over which they flew was completely dried up, but held a couple of **Berthelot's Pipit**, the second full-species lifer of the trip. Four **Monk Parakeets** also flew over the main road. At a greater distance, near a children's playground, I could see a small number of **House Martins** and I think it was here that I saw our only **Barn Swallow** of the trip. A subspecies lifer, **Common Kestrel** (dacotiae) also showed.



*Plain Swift, El Matorral de Morro Jable*

As the day drew on, Neil and I decided to head to La Pared, which had come highly recommended by Dave Gosney in his somewhat outdated but still mostly supremely useful “Finding Birds...” book. We headed to a spot known to be a drinking spot for one of our future targets, but we knew that this was not the right time to catch them – this little visit was more about staking out the territory and seeing what else was about. We walked into the Barranco that led to the sea at La Pared. In there, we could hear the rattling call of at least one **Spectacled Warbler**, and the pepper-shaker call of **Sardinian Warbler** too. At a shallow pool of rather unappetising water, we saw our first **Trumpeter Finches**, which showed very nicely, but the revelation was the Desert Grey Shrike there, which allowed us to get within maybe only 10 or so feet before deciding we were too close. It was nice to see a **Grey Heron** there too, hinting that there was in fact plenty of life in what superficially appeared to be a dried-up desert. Our first **Spanish Sparrows** also put in an appearance, eventually rivalling Collared Doves for commonest birds on the island.



*Desert Grey Shrike, Barranco de la Pared*

Having had our fill of the barranco, we decided to take a somewhat hair-raising trip over the dusty and stony tracks of the plains that lay between La Pared and Costa Calma, in the hope of seeing two of our other target species. While we didn't lay eyes on them this particular evening, we did spot a handful of **Stone-Curlews** looking, as they always do, less than impressed with us. This is another endemic subspecies “insularum”.





*Stone-curlew, insularum race, Costa Calma*

*6 August*

After a breakfast which comprised, for me, a coffee and a water, and for Neil the equivalent of a “surfeit of lampreys”, we noted the ever-present Collared Doves in the hotel area, and also **Red-vented Bulbuls** which have started to breed on Fuerteventura, originally in Costa Calma itself. What we would call “Category C”, I think, but a lifer nonetheless.

We headed to the Barranco de la Pared again, parked and unwittingly flushed a **Hoopoe** over towards the restaurant by the car park. We looked around and saw pretty much the same species as the previous evening, though a closer observation of the little stream down to the sea was rewarded with views of two **Little Ringed Plovers**. A look out over the sea revealed a small number of **Cory’s Shearwater**, close enough to identify but far too far to photograph.

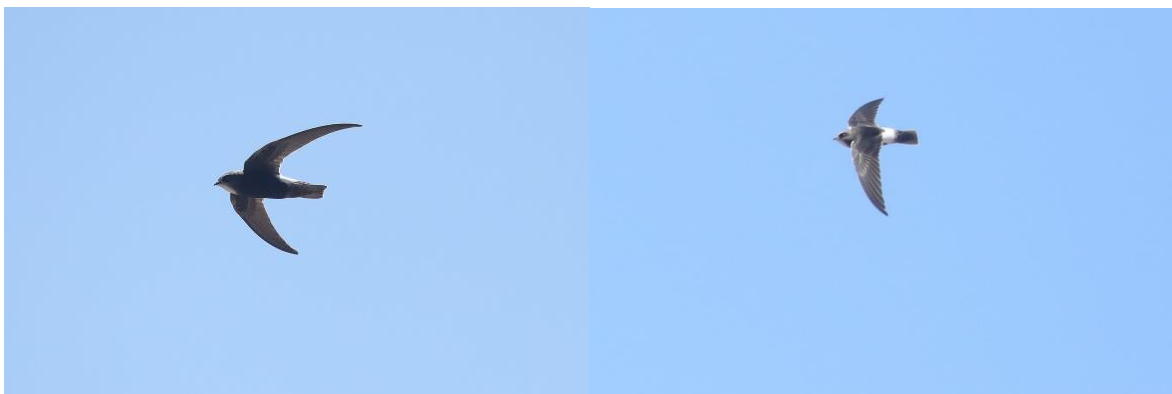
At around 9.30, the unmistakable bubbling call of **Black-bellied Sandgrouse** could be heard and over the course of the next couple of hours several parties came, landed on the hillsides, flew up and over us and seemingly off, only to return. Eventually, they disappeared, having presumably drunk their fill of what water there was. One rude interruption to their habits was a low-flying **Barbary Falcon**, which seemed oddly pale (was it the bright sunshine?). The other species of note and perhaps of greater interest to the falcon, were some what looked like authentic **Rock Doves** that clearly occupied the sea cliffs just out of view.



*Black-bellied Sandgrouse, La Pared*

We took the same route back to Costa Calma as we had the previous evening but this time we were rewarded not just with more fly-by Black-bellied Sandgrouse but our first **Cream-coloured Coursers**. Neil did well to spot them against the very similar-coloured landscape. This turned out to be the only location where we did in fact see them (very well, subsequently).

Once we got back to the main road, we decided to head to the more northerly plains of Tindaya. On the way, we got our best “vagrant” of the trip, at Tuineje, where we saw a swift flying among a small number of House Martins. I excitedly noticed that it had a white rump, and briefly wondered about White-rumped Swift, but the size and lack of noticeable fork in the tail brought us to the conclusion that it was a **Little Swift**. I think these are a relative rarity, or at least not a breeding species, on the island.



*Little Swift, Tuineje*

The Barranco de Río Cabras came highly recommended by various sources so on the way to Tindaya we decided to stop there and look for another island endemic. It wasn't abundantly clear where it

would be best to park, and after a number of quite hairy manoeuvres we eventually found a decent spot, but it seemed a little barren but for some Rock Doves, Spanish Sparrow and Spectacled Warbler. We gave it a lot of time, though, because the place's reputation was quite considerable and were rewarded with good views of more Plain Swifts as well as of our first **Common Buzzard** – another subspecies. We could hear but didn't see a **Turtle Dove** and in the very isolated puddles of water I noted a **Green Sandpiper** which helpfully called to give its identification away. A call/song we didn't recognise but eventually attributed to a Desert Grey Shrike intrigued us for a while, and we were delighted to see our first Barbary Ground Squirrels of the trip.



*Common Buzzard, insularum race, Barranco de Río Cabras*

We still had time to investigate another Barranco, at the Puertito de los Molinos, which if we had been sun-seeking tourists would have been a brilliant place to stop and have a coffee and ice-cream, by the sea. However, we were on a mission to find the island's eponymous endemic – a mission that we failed to achieve, as at the Barranco de Río Cabras. We did get very good views of Berthelot's Pipits and of **Muscovy Duck** which might be a Cat C equivalent on the island. Back at the top of the valley, we briefly investigated the Presa de los Molinos, a reservoir which stank and had hardly any water in it. We could see four **Ruddy Shelduck** in the distance and an adult Egyptian Vulture.



*Berthelot's Pipit, Puertito de los Molinos*

As the heat of the day cooled a little (but not much) we reached the Tindaya Plains. A little more wondering if we were in the right place, and then we found a goatpen with loads of Trumpeter Finches in it. Finally, we found our way onto the tracks leading north out of the village. A lot of stopping and scanning revealed very little until, somehow, Neil picked out, by a distant bush, our first **Houbara Bustard** of the trip. All the subsequent ones were far easier, so he did a grand job in finding it.

We were thrilled to have seen it, but eventually moved on, hoping in the coming days to get one a little closer to us – little did we know...

#### *7 August*

The following morning, after breakfast, we headed towards Antigua in the hope of another good bustard site. On the way, as we passed the Oasis Wildlife Park on the FV-2, very near where the low-flying Egyptian Vulture had been a couple of days before, Neil saw a swift which a closer observation revealed to have large white belly and we knew we had our first **Alpine Swift** of the trip.

We got to Antigua at around 8.45am, having seen a small number of Black-bellied Sandgrouse in flight near the town, and headed for a spot that Dave Gosney had “never failed” to see bustards from. I think more information on time of day and time of year would be helpful as we arrived at a very unpromising-looking spot just off the main road. It did turn out that a German birder we met later had indeed seen bustards the previous day, but across the road from where the Gosney book implies you should look.

I then endured a fairly lengthy and largely one-sided conversation with the man who owned the isolated house at the end of the track who mistook my attempts to glean bird information from him as a sign that I could speak his largely consonant- and inflection-free version of Spanish. I did gather that at 6pm, some birds visited this area and that they were very tasty. This didn't sound good. All the while, Neil was enjoying car-window-side views of **Lesser Short-toed Larks** which were in a large flock



of perhaps seventy birds. Once I had confusedly said goodbye to the landowner, who was probably also trying to assure himself that I had no nefarious motives there, I spotted our first **Barbary Partridge** in one of the cultivated fields and it was at this point that it clicked what he was rattling on about – “come here at 6, there are loads of partridges...”. Somehow, we also observed a **Little Egret** in flight.

We returned to Barranco de Río Cabras, because all trip reports and Gosney say that our target species is easy there. Again, we failed, and were starting to believe we wouldn’t see it... we added **Pallid Swift** to the trip list, very much more obviously Pallid seen in good light but a long wait didn’t bring about our quarry.

Rosa del Taro? Nada of interest – dried up, almost bird-free.

Another apparently sure-fire site for our target was the Barranco de la Torre. It was easy to find, but the Gosney guide does not mention, presumably because it mightn’t have been there at time of publication, that the track that one walks down is now perfectly driveable. This might account for the almost total lack of bird life that our two-hour walk uncovered. Three distant Egyptian Vultures were the best we had for our draining walk in the sun. I admit, we did quite a lot of birding at very unpromising times of day – once we had seen our target, we happily abandoned this practice.

We had read in Gosney that Betancuria offered a chance of two more lifers, so we duly headed there, somewhat exhausted by our sun-drenched walk in the Barranco de la Torre. The car’s air-conditioning was very welcome and we arrived in the pretty town in somewhat better spirits. These were lifted still further when, after a short while of wondering what we could hear, we laid eyes on some **African Blue Tits**. This species was never difficult here, nor were Sardinian Warblers, which eschewed their reputation for skulking by showing very, very well at times. Another Kestrel hunted around this spot (in the trees on the southern edge of the town) while many Ravens enjoyed the surrounding mountains. Substantial flocks of Spanish Sparrows also abounded. But the other, other target eluded us here (and on all subsequent returns to Betancuria).



*African Blue Tit, Betancuria*

Our last, purely speculative, stop of the day was at a place known both as Las Peñitas and as Vega de Rio Palmas. We parked by the bridge and could hear large numbers of sparrows. We also thought we might get our first and best views of Spectacled Warbler here, very close to where we parked, in among a number of cactus plants just below someone's private garden. They never sat still and at one point flew up into a tree just by the garden fence/wall; in there we saw more African Blue Tits and Sardinian Warblers, but, amazingly, on a wooden pole just to the left, I saw our much sought-after target, the **Fuerteventura Stonechat**. A handsome male that Neil at first missed, but as I predicted, it came back to that perch and we eventually enjoyed decent views. Although Common Stonechat was a (rare) possibility, I couldn't be absolutely sure of the ID so I would want to revisit at some point, but we had to head back to the hotel. As we returned to the car, we saw the small and distinctive **Laughing Dove** in flight.

*8 August*

Buoyed by our near total belief that we were on some kind of roll, we headed back to Tindaya. We went straight onto the plains, enjoying exception views, again, of a Desert Grey Shrike as we began on the track through the plains. This time, we stuck more assiduously to the practice of stopping and looking, with Neil in the back able to look at both sides. Not far in and I saw what we wanted – “Houbara Bustard! And it's mega-close!” I whispered to Neil. Sure enough, one was up ahead and in perfect light for watching and photographing. Not quite right up to the car, but not far off. I eventually picked out another one and we watched in awe for a good while.



*Houbara Bustard, Tindaya Plains*

We returned to the village of Tindaya to look at the goatpen again, where the Trumpeter Finches continued to be helpful and numerous, alongside a small number of Berthelot's Pipits. Itchy for more views of desert birds, though, we soon headed back out over the plains, with the eventual destination of El Cotillo in mind. We knew that Red-billed Tropicbirds were breeding nearby and gave it some time

at a handful of watchpoints before giving up. The windy weather did not help. Only Yellow-legged Gulls and Cory's Shearwaters really showed.



*Trumpeter Finch, Tindaya village*

In the afternoon, I wanted to satisfy my curiosity about the stonechat and indeed about the Barranco de Río Cabras – if the stonechat was so easy there, how come we hadn't seen one? We had our theories but one was simply that we were at the wrong end, so we parked in another spot. This proved to be a good decision – as we peered over the cliff near the end with the dams, I could see a pallid, grey and white bird forty feet below. Perched in a small tree, it didn't seem like it could be a pipit, and sure enough, when it flitted out into an easier spot to see, it was another Fuerteventura Stonechat. We scrambled down the side away from the bird and then followed it as it headed up the barranco. Just after the dam wall we could see it fly higher up the cliff side and lo and behold it joined a probably family party of them – maybe five or six birds, including a handsome adult male.

A brief return to Betancuria revealed no new species for the trip, but better views of African Blue Tit.

In the hope of getting better photos of the Spectacled Warbler we then went again to Las Peñitas/Vega de Río Palmas and stalked the little vegetated hillside. We were rewarded with exceptional views of at least seven Fuerteventura Stonechats and many other good views of the other local birds – this proved to be one of the more consistently rewarding spots on the island as birds flitted onto the higher hill sides for safety and shelter and back to our side for food.





*Fuerteventura Stonechat, Las Peñitas/Vega de Rio Palmas*

*9 August*

Breakfast was followed by a trip out to the plains between Costa Calma and La Pared. After all, Gosney's guide raved about this being perhaps the best spot on the island for the desert species. We didn't yet have the supporting evidence of this claim for ourselves! After picking out at least two, if not three Desert Grey Shrikes, we headed down into the dip and more deeply onto the plains. Moments after I had said, "we don't want to be the only people to come here and not see the bustards" I caught sight of one close to the track – closer, perhaps even than the ones at Tindaya. It was in beautiful light, with its tail fanned out showing itself off in all its glory. We had stumbled upon the views to end all views. As I scanned a little further round I noticed not just this, but two others. Eventually, at least two of them crossed the track behind the car.



*Cream-coloured Courser, Costa Calma/La Pared*



We turned right and down the slope and again, Neil's nicely attuned eyes caught sight of a handful of Cream-coloured Courser; this time the group was more settled than a couple of days before and we watched them fairly close.

A little further along and we also caught up with four Black-bellied Sandgrouse close to the track. While they didn't fly off, they were clearly nervous and waddled progressively away from us as we drew nearer.

Our main mission of the morning was, however, to try to get the best photos of the Sandgrouse that we could, so we got to La Pared for about 9.14 and positioned the car just off the road by the Barranco. We stood outside the car but in its lee, with cameras on tripods at the ready. Sure enough a good number, maybe more than 50, sandgrouse came in, but they either remained very cautiously away from the drinking pools or came flying over, seeming to inspect us, before heading to the other end of the barranco. We got amazing views but not quite the photos we wanted, and after about two hours we gave up, not without adding **Linnet** to our list – another subspecies, I believe.



*Black-bellied Sandgrouse, La Pared*

We took it easy for the rest of the day, given that we accepted that the high heat of the middle of the afternoon made birds scarce and birding less than pleasant. A late afternoon trip to Vega de Rio Palmas brought no new species but it was a pleasant walk further down towards the reservoir (though where the water was, who knows?).

### *10 August*

This morning, we went for a repeat of the previous day and were again rewarded with bustards and coursers. The bustards crossed the road in front of us, so we didn't dwell on them too long, but the coursers proved extremely obliging. We sat in awe and wonderment as they came so close to the car that it became almost impossible to see them without actually leaning out of the window. What a

beautiful species. We later tried at the Barranco de la Pared, this time remaining in the car – the birds still flew close by overhead as if checking us out, but this time we did get to see them come to the water. We could only see one of them actually take a drink but it was worth the effort.



*Cream-coloured Courser, Costa Calma/La Pared (juvenile above)*





*Houbara Bustard, two of three at Costa Calma/La Pared plains*

By now I was getting desperate to see the eponymous finch of the islands so we headed to Vega de Rio Palmas and Betancuria, but again, no luck. We did have more great views of the stonechats.



*Fuerteventura Stonechat, Las Peñitas/Vega de Rio Palmas*

As the evening began to draw in, we did head to Antigua again, partly hoping for the bustard – though we were relaxed about it, having seen them as well as it's almost possible to see them – but partly too because we wanted to see more Barbary Partridge and perhaps get better photos of these and Lesser Short-toed Larks. Neither proved particularly compliant, but we enjoyed good fews of about five or six partridges scurrying away.

As I locked the car at the hotel at the end of the day in Costa Calma, the familiar chattering calls of **Goldfinch** came into earshot and the small flock of about eight birds flew over the hotel.

### *11 August*

We hadn't quite understood when we hired the car that we couldn't even take it on the ferry to nearby Lanzarote – the guy at the desk had implied that we might be able to, but we might need special permission. Anyway, we didn't try to get it, and just booked ourselves on the ferry anyway. The crossing was almost totally devoid of birds – just one or two Cory's Shearwaters in the distance to break the horizon, but we did see hosts of Tropical (?) Flying Fish shoot out from the side of the boat – they were an amazing, amazing sight.

Once on Lanzarote, we took the very slow route to Haría, where our last hopes of one of our few remaining unseen targets was a decent bet. The Gosney guide indicated that the scrubby area behind the Cesar Manrique museum was a good place, and I could well see how. But we didn't see them there. We walked around other reasonably promising areas of the town before stopping at some trees where there was the constant chattering of dozens of Spanish Sparrows. I thought I could hear something different in there too. It was amazing how well hidden these noisy sparrows could be in the foliage. My instincts were correct when I noticed that one of the few birds I could actually see was in fact yellow, and indeed, an **Atlantic Canary**! Finally. We watched them flit in and out of a fruit tree after that and got brilliant views before moving on to other spots.





*Atlantic Canary, Haría, Lanzarote*

Our hopes had been to see Barbary Falcons from one of the miradores on the north-west side of the island, but we drew something of a blank. There was some haze caused by the sea and the vast cliffsides seemed so dark in it. Having missed out on a Tenerife pelagic, we decided to ask a water taxi if they would take us over the sea around the various islands off the shores of Lanzarote. While Neil was doing the negotiating, I spotted two **Common Sandpipers** foraging around the rocks of the harbour. It was expensive (€250 between us) but worth it for brilliant views of close-by Cory's Shearwaters and, as we got to Montaña Clara, numerous and spectacular **Eleonora's Falcons**. We stopped the boat and looked up at the cliffs where they soared and dived and occasionally landed. We were awestruck.



*Eleonora's Falcon, Montaña Clara, off Lanzarote*



*Cory's Shearwater, Lanzarote*

*12 August*

Our stay on Lanzarote was never more than brief, but we could not leave without visiting the plains around Teguise. However, we did realise we had a puncture – not a fully flat tyre, but something we didn't want to risk too much on dirt tracks. The ones around Teguise were not nearly as rough as the ones around Costa Calma but it still felt risky and we lost our nerve a bit. Nonetheless, we found at least two more Houbara Bustards, some Lesser Short-toed Larks and Desert Grey Shrikes there before heading back onto better paved roads.



*Desert Grey Shrike, Órzola, Lanzarote*

We decided to head back one more time to Haría, but the weather got increasingly murky and foggy as we ascended the road above the town. Neil spotted what looked like a kestrel near to a military observatory point (two domes) – the Mirador del Baranco de Chafarís. There is a large lay-by on the northbound side of the road and even in the fog, which was beginning to clear, we could detect maybe as many as nine Eleonora's Falcons and two Barbary Falcons in conflict with a number of Ravens. We walked towards the cliff edge, flushing Spectacled Warblers, Desert Grey Shrikes, Berthelot's Pipits and Barbary Falcons and far down below we could see a large basin of some sort and numerous Eleonora's Falcons perched beside and above it. The little water in there was being used by them for drinking and bathing, it seemed, given that the nearby reservoir mentioned in Gosney was totally dry. On the way back to the car, we stumbled on a Stone-curlew too.





*Eleonora's Falcons, Barranco*

We tried the Mirador de los Riscos de Famara very nearby in the hope of seeing more falcons in better light, but there was an off-putting hunt going on and views were fairly limited too – a Hoopoe proved the biggest surprise of what was a pretty quiet spot.

Before returning to the ferry, we had a relaxing sea-watch at the Faro Pechiguera – partly relaxing because it was a nice spot, partly because there was nothing but a good number of Cory's Shearwaters to observe.

### *13 and 14 August*

We had decided to dedicate the remaining mornings to trying to get better pictures of the Sandgrouse, which by trial and error we managed.

The afternoons were spent respectively at the Oasis Wildlife park, or rather in the areas outside it. We could hear one exotic species – unidentified by us! – but apart from another Laughing Dove, which confirmed my suspicions of having seen them fly across the FV-2 nearby earlier in the trip, the most unusual birds we saw were a few Linnets.





*Red-vented Bulbul, KN Matas Blancas Hotel, Costa Calma*

Our final afternoon of the trip was spent at the beach at Jandía / Playa de la Barca lagoons. Typically, given our general luck on the trip, the tide was out, meaning a wider search was necessary. It did, though, provide us with a relative bounty of trip ticks – **Kentish Plover**, **Dunlin**, **Sanderling**, **Common Ringed Plover**, Little Ringed Plover and three **Spoonbills**. This edged the trip list to over 50, but even this included two Cat C species.



*Sanderling, Jandía beach; Little Ringed Plover, Barranco de la Pared*



*Kentish Plover and Dunlin, Jandía beach*

In conclusion, slim pickings on the species front, though fantastic views of pretty much every one of them. We learned a few lessons – about car hire and about travelling in COVID times, about the futility of birding in the afternoon in the desert, but also good lessons, like how hard you need to work to conceal yourself from the gaze of a Black-bellied Sandgrouse. As a consequence, we were rewarded with thousands of good photos to edit, good memories to bring back, eight full species life birds and seven subspecies. Great stuff.

MM

20/8/2021

Species list ( \* represents Canary Island race/subspecies; L = Lanzarote)

1. Ruddy Shelduck – Los Molinos Reservoir
2. Muscovy Duck – very tame population at Puertito de los Molinos
3. Barbary Partridge – Antigua, Barranco del Mirador de Chafarís (L)



4. Cory's Shearwater – visible from almost any area of coastline, best seen around Lanzarote
5. Grey Heron – Barranco de la Pared
6. Little Egret – Antigua
7. Cattle Egret – widespread, a lot seen in flight from the car; lots at El Matorral de Morro Jable



8. Spoonbill – three on the beach at Jandía
9. Egyptian Vulture – seen in many places, three at Barranco de la Torre, several near Los Molinos



10. Common Buzzard\* – several places, most seen at Barranco de Río Cabras and Betancuria
11. Common Kestrel – widespread



12. Barbary Falcon – Barranco de la Pared; Mirador del Barranco de Chafarís (L)
13. Eleonora's Falcon – Montaña Clara; Mirador del Barranco de Chafarís (L)
14. Houbara Bustard\* – Tindaya plains; Costa Calma plains; Teguiise plains; best seen before 9.30
15. Stone-curlew\* – Costa Calma; Betancuria; Haría (L); Mirador del Barranco de Chafarís (L)
16. Cream-coloured Courser – Costa Calma plains
17. Little Ringed Plover – Barranco de la Pared; Barranco de Río Cabras; Jandía beach
18. Common Ringed Plover – Jandía beach
19. Kentish Plover – Jandía beach
20. Dunlin – Jandía beach
21. Sanderling – Jandía beach
22. Common Sandpiper – Órzola harbour
23. Green Sandpiper – Barranco de Río Cabras
24. Yellow-legged Gull – widespread, especially but not exclusively at the coast
25. Black-bellied Sandgrouse – best views at Barranco de la Pared, around 10-11am; also Costa Calma plains; Antigua

26. Rock Dove – if these were the pure form, they tended to be on sea-side cliffs
27. Feral Pigeon – widespread in small towns often
28. Collared Dove – widespread in almost all locations where life could exist
29. Laughing Dove – Oasis Wildlife Park; Las Peñitas / Vega de Rio Palmas
30. Turtle Dove – one heard at Barranco de Río Cabras
31. Pallid Swift – Barranco de Río Cabras
32. Alpine Swift – one seen two consecutive mornings around Oasis Wildlife park, near Costa Calma
33. Plain Swift – widespread, especially around small towns and villages, also Fuerteventura airport
34. Little Swift – vagrant seen at Tuineje
35. Hoopoe – individuals seen at La Pared, Costa Calma



36. Monk Parakeet – El Matorral de Morro Jable
37. Lesser Short-toed (Mediterranean) Lark – seen best at Antigua, but plenty around the plains of Costa Calma, Tindaya and Teguisse (L)



38. House Martin – two or three seen at El Matorral de Morro Jable
39. Barn Swallow – one seen at El Matorral de Morro Jable
40. Berthelot's Pipit – widespread and common in most habitats
41. Fuerteventura Stonechat – best views were had at Vega de Rio Palmas, but also seen eventually at Barranco de Río Cabras
42. Sardinian Warbler – widespread in appropriate habitat, less skulky than in mainland Europe, abundant around Betancuria





43. Spectacled Warbler – widespread in appropriate habitat, pretty much anywhere there might be small bushes and/or trees



44. African Blue Tit – Betancuria; Vega de Rio Palmas; Haría (L)  
45. Iberian/Desert Grey Shrike\* – surprisingly confiding birds in many areas including on edges of towns and villages  
46. Red-vented Bulbul – Costa Calma  
47. Raven\* – widespread in most habitats



48. Spanish Sparrow – widespread and common, especially around towns and villages



49. Trumpeter Finch – widespread especially on the edges of villages, best found near pools of water or the goatpen at Tindaya  
50. Linnet – Barranco de la Pared; Oasis Wildlife Park  
51. Goldfinch – Costa Calma  
52. Atlantic Canary – Haría

## Top Locations

We were mostly guided by others' trip reports and the 2013 Dave Gosney "Finding Birds in the Canaries" plus updates from his website to which I hope to contribute soon.

### *Playa del Matorral de Morro Jable*

1. 28.048445, -14.334834 – Plain Swift, Collared Dove, Spectacled Warbler, Berthelot's Pipit, Monk Parakeet, Yellow-legged Gull, Common Kestrel, Cattle Egret, Barn Swallow, House Martin

### *Oasis Wildlife centre*

1. Easy to find, the best birds here were a low flying Egyptian Vulture, Laughing Doves, Linnets and an Alpine Swift

### *Costa Calma*

1. Hotel KN Matas Blancas, Calle Punta Pesebre – Collared Dove; Goldfinch, Red-vented Bulbul
2. Woodland at 28.1672, -14.2229 – Collared Dove, Spanish Sparrow, Hoopoe, Red-vented Bulbul

### *Plains between Costa Calma and La Pared*

1. These can be entered either from the edges of Costa Calma and heading generally northerly towards La Pared aiming for 28.1785, -14.2490, or just south of La Pared turning left off the FV-605, then left again onto a track at 28.2032, -14.2208 drive the length of that in a generally southerly direction scanning frequently – Collared Dove, Desert Grey Shrike, Lesser Short-toed Lark, Stone-curlew, Houbara Bustard, Cream-coloured Courser, Raven, Yellow-legged Gull

### *La Pared*

1. Barranco de la Pared (28.2172, -14.2200) – Black-bellied Sandgrouse, Collared Dove, Hoopoe, Barbary Falcon, Cory's Shearwater, Little Ringed Plover, Grey Heron, Berthelot's Pipit, Spanish Sparrow, Trumpeter Finch, Sardinian Warbler, Spectacled Warbler, Desert Grey Shrike, Raven, Yellow-legged Gull, Rock Dove, Feral Pigeon

### *Jandía beach*

1. The lagoon here (28.131237, -14.248738) was productive for several wader species and spoonbills. At a better migratory time of year this could be even more so – we also visited at low tide: the sea was a long way out and apparently when the tide is high the birds are pushed closer to the car parks area and roost on the tops of the low cliffs. Here we saw Kentish Plover, Common Ringed Plover, Little Ringed Plover, Sanderling, Dunlin, Spoonbills.

### *Tuineje area*

1. 28.2532, -14.1079 – Little Swift, House Martin

### *Barranco de Río Cabras*

A very long Barranco

1. We initially made the mistake of going in at the western end (28.4887, -13.9265) which didn't provide much hope for new species. Walking west from there, we saw – Spanish Sparrow, Spectacled Warbler, Raven, Kestrel, Pallid Swift, Plain Swift, Green Sandpiper, Feral Pigeon, Turtle Dove
2. A productive end was the more easterly end parking in the small spot here (28.481129, -13.916444) or the track nearby. This produced the promised – Fuerteventura Stonechat, Plain Swift, Raven, Kestrel, Desert Grey Shrike, Berthelot's Pipit

#### *Los Molinos*

1. The car park area at the Puertito produced no Fuerteventura Stonechat, but many confiding Berthelot's Pipits, Muscovy Duck, Ravens and Yellow-legged Gulls, with Egyptian Vultures about
2. Presa (reservoir) de los Molinos – Ruddy Shelduck; I presume with more water in it, it would hold more wildfowl

#### *Las Peñitas / Vega de Rio Palmas*

1. The best area was in among the vegetation / cactus plants quite close to the car park by the bridge (28.3941, -14.0885). Birds seen there – Fuerteventura Stonechat, Sardinian Warbler, Spectacled Warbler, Spanish Sparrow, African Blue Tit, Raven, Buzzard. Best and easiest place for the stonechat.

#### *Betancuria*

1. The trees at the southern end of the village (28.4230, -14.0586) promise much and delivered – African Blue Tit, Sardinian Warbler, Kestrel, Feral Pigeon, Spanish Sparrow, Ravens; no sign of the canaries that were suggested should be there

#### *Tindaya*

1. The goatpen at 28.5939, -13.9917 is great for good views of Trumpeter Finch, plus Spanish Sparrow and Berthelot's Pipit
2. The plains as described in Gosney's book proved good for Houbara Bustard, but we didn't get to see Cream-coloured Courser here, nor Sandgrouse.

#### *Antigua*

1. There is a good spot about 2km north of the town at 28.441965, -14.006567, where you come off the FV-20 by a crash barrier. You can park near to that "junction" and look east across the road towards the plains – we didn't see bustards there, but I assume this is where Gosney did, and a German birder we met also saw them there. Continue down the track and it's a good site for Barbary Partridge, especially around 6pm, and, in August at least, large numbers of Lesser Short-toed Larks.

#### *Lanzarote – Haría*

1. The village/town is central to the island, nestled down at the foot of some mountains. It proved to be the only place we saw Atlantic Canary (in good numbers), but it supported Stone-curlew, many Spanish Sparrows and Berthelot's Pipits too. We found the canaries here (29.144142, -13.505519).

#### *Lanzarote – Montaña Clara*

1. We saw plenty of Eleonora's Falcons from a boat we hired from the harbour at Órzola one evening. Large numbers of Cory's Shearwaters around it too – at different times of year, or even day, I could well imagine other seabirds being present.

#### *Lanzarote – Mirador del Barranco de Chafarís*

1. This was a great spot one morning for seeing Eleonora's Falcons in good numbers, Barbary Falcons, Barbary Partridge, Desert Grey Shrike, Spectacled Warbler, Stone-curlew, Raven, Kestrel. Walk east onto the rough land from the lay-by and you can look down from the clifftop to a large basin around which the Eleonora's Falcons could be seen perched, presumably washing and drinking. The basin is here: 29.123105, -13.508393