

Fuerteventura : 23 February -2 March 2022



Tindaya Plain

Foreword:

Report compiled by Ed.O'Hara, with images by Comghal McQuillan and Ed.O'Hara

This was initially to be a family holiday with an element of birdwatching for a few hours in the mornings and evenings. The only concession to this was, I had booked [Derek Bradbury](#) of [Fuerteventura Birdwatch](#) for a full days birding in the north of the Island around Tindaya. I was joined by Comghal McQuillan and his wife Caroline at the last moment, Comghal only deciding a few weeks beforehand to make the trip.

Derek had warned us that after four years of drought conditions, birding the Island of Fuerteventura had got a lot more difficult and this indeed was the case. Therefore having studied numerous bird trip reports before arriving, we decided to concentrate on four main areas:-

[1] Barranco de la Torre / Museo de las Salinas del Carmen :[2] Barranco de Rio Cabras: [3] Tindaya [4] Betancuria

As we were staying in Caleta de Fuste on the north east of the island the first two areas were within a 20 minute drive from our hotel. The other areas were about an hours drive away.

The following is a brief report on our birding exploits.

Wednesday 23rd February 2022 : Arrival

After a four and a half hour flight from Belfast with Jet2.com we arrived in the early afternoon in Fuerteventura (FV). Due to only one passport control officer on duty, it took ages to get to the hotel, which was only a few miles away. So around 17:00 Comghal and I went for a walk along the coastal promenade towards the harbour. Several birds were noted along the shoreline, [Grey Plover](#), [Whimbrel](#), [Ringed Plover](#), [Lesser blacked-backed Gulls](#), [Yellow legged Gull](#), [Spanish Sparrows](#) and the ubiquitous [Collared Dove](#), also present were three [Common Sandpiper](#). Offshore were hundreds of [Cory's Shearwaters](#) passing along with [Sandwich Terns](#) and small numbers of [Gannets](#).



[Yellow-legged Gull](#) [*Larus michahellis atlantis*]

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Barranco de la Torre / Museo del las Salinas del Carmen

Due to its proximity to our hotel in Caleta de Fuste, we visited this area the most. Three mornings and an afternoon were spent in the barranco looking for birds. The bottom end of the barranco had a lot of scattered bushes and some Palm trees and was by far the best area for birding. The upper area was completely dry and held very few birds, although it was here we got our only view of [Barbary Partridge](#). [Spanish Sparrows](#) were seen close to an old ruin at the entrance to the barranco. The bushes nearby gave us our best views of [Spectacled Warbler](#), along with several [Sardinian Warblers](#) and [Common Chiffchaff](#). [Berthelot's Pipits](#) were easily seen in the area.



[Berthelot's Pipit](#) [*Anthus berthelotti*]



[Kestrel](#) [*Falco tinnunculus dacotiae*]

The upper end of the barranco was partially closed due to breeding [Egyptian Vultures](#) on the valley walls. On the hill opposite the cliffs was a farm that was constantly frequented by the vultures along with scores of [Rock Doves](#). On one occasion we observed a [Booted Eagle](#) attack the doves and almost caught one but dropped it for some reason. [Ravens](#) and [Kestrels](#) also inhabited the cliffs but we failed to see [Barbary Falcon](#) which was supposed to be in this area. We failed to find [Fuerteventura Chat](#) or [Cream-coloured Courser](#) that were said to be here. Three [Common Buzzards](#) were noted during our time in the area.

The Museo de las Salinas del Carmen is approximately 1 km from Barranco de la Torre , you pass it on the way to the barranco. We visited the salinas twice and only a few birds were seen, [Greenshank](#), [Ringed Plover](#), [Whimbrel](#), [Dunlin](#) and [Common Redshank](#).



[Whimbrel](#) [*Numenius phaeopus*]



[Little Ringed Plover](#) [*Charadrius dubius*]

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Barranco de Rio Cabras

We visited this site three times before we eventually walked the dried-up river bed. On paper this was one of the best areas on the island, however access proved to be tricky from the middle section due to the steep valley walls but on the third attempt we entered the barranco from roughly the original suggestion from the earlier printed guides, near the airport. Over the three visits we managed to see, [Little Ringed Plover](#), [Green Sandpiper](#), [Fuerteventura Chat](#), [Plain Swift](#), [House Martin](#), [Barn Swallow](#), [Common Buzzard](#), [Egyptian Vulture](#), [Kestrel](#), [Common Sandpiper](#), [Glossy Ibis](#), [Hoopoe](#), [Eurasian Spoonbill](#), [Grey Heron](#) and [Berthelot's Pipit](#).

It was nice to see the much maligned Feral Pigeon's ancestor namely the [Rock Dove](#) in it's natural home on the cliff face.



[Rock Dove](#) [*Columba livia*]



[Fuerteventura Chat](#) [*Saxicola dacotiae*]

The [Fuerteventura Chat](#) proved to be more difficult than we thought it would be, but it was here that we got our closest views of this iconic bird of the island.



[Egyptian Vulture](#) [*Neophron percnopterus majorensis*]

Close by the barranco is the municipal rubbish tip which was a magnet for all the gulls in the area, in addition to several [Egyptian Vultures](#), [Common Buzzards](#) and the local [Ravens](#)



[Northern Raven](#) [*Corvus corax canariensis*]

Apparently due to their feeding habits of turning over stones and rocks for food, the [Ravens](#) have evolved larger, stronger bills and thus an endemic to the canaries.



[Egyptian Vulture juv.](#) [*Neophron percnopterus majorensis*]

We saw several juvenile [Egyptian Vultures](#) juveniles, which hopefully is a good sign for this endemic species. Also seen at the dump were hundreds of [Lesser black-backed Gulls](#) and [Yellow legged Gulls](#).

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Tindaya Plain

Friday 25 February we went on a day tour with **Derek Bradbury** of **Fuerteventura Birdwatch**. We headed in the direction of the famous Tindaya plain to get the 'big five', however as stated earlier, a prolonged drought on the island made birding for them much harder. In fact we missed two of our target birds Cream-coloured Courser and Stone Curlew but did get some cracking views of the others, thanks to Derek's knowledge of the area.

We did see seven in total of seven **Houbara Bustards** at two locations and **Black-bellied Sandgrouse** only a few metres from our vehicle.

Other birds of note near Tindaya were , **Trumpeter Finches**, **Kestrel**, **Hoopoe**, **Lesser Short-toed Larks**, **Grey Shrike**, **Spanish Sparrows**, **Collared Doves**, **Linnets**, **Corn Buntings** and **Ravens**.



Houbara Bustard [*Chlamydotis undulata*]



Black-bellied Sandgrouse [*Pterocoles orientalis*] Female



Southern Grey Shrike [*Lanus excubitor koenigi*]



Black-bellied Sandgrouse [*Pterocoles orientalis*] Male



Kestrel [*Falco tinnunculus dacotiae*] Female

Derek then took us an **Egyptian Vulture** feeding site and here we saw several species of hirundines along with the Vultures , Gulls and Ravens. Birds of note were **Plain Swift**, **Pallid Swift** , **House Martins** and **Barn Swallows**.

Finally Derek knew a good site for **Black-bellied Sandgrouse**, a bird we were struggling to see at several stops, but what a brilliant end to the day for at this final stop, we found three birds who walked right up to the vehicle.

Our thanks to **Derek Bradbury** of **Fuerteventura Birdwatch** for a brilliant days birding.

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Betancuria Mountain Village

Comghal, Caroline and I went sightseeing on one afternoon to this beautiful mountain village and indeed it was everything we expected. However we also had two birds in mind as well, [Atlantic Canary](#) and [African Blue Tit](#). We met an american birder who had been there for a fortnight and only saw the Canary once, so it was no surprise that after a search of two hours we could not find the bird. We did however find the [African Blue Tit](#). A fantastic little bird !

In the evening we went for a walk around the resort and at the pond in the town centre we found some new birds for the trip, [Muscovy Duck](#), [Blackcap](#) and [Song Thrush](#) in full voice.

On the last morning of the holiday we went for a quick walk around the local golf course . We managed to add [Common Starling](#), [Northern Shoveler](#) plus [White Wagtail](#) to our trip list.



[African Blue Tit](#) [*Cyanistes teneriffae denegeri*]



[Spectacled Warbler](#) [*Sylvia conspicillata orbitalis*]

Species List

Birds noted in [red](#) are assumed full species and those in [purple](#) are *ssp's* but these things are always changing so who knows in future this could change.

English name	Latin Name
1 Duck, Muscovy	Cairina moschata

Observed in a pond in the centre of Caleta de Fuste, not sure about this one but it is on the list

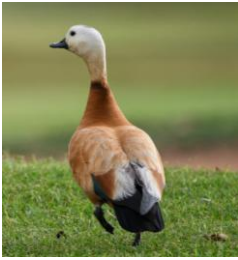
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English name

Latin Name

2 **Shelduck, Ruddy**

Tadorna ferrugina



Seen almost daily in several locations

3 **Shoveler**

Anas clypeata

Saw one bird on pond at the Caleta de Fuste Golf Course

4 **Wigeon, Eurasian**

Mareca penelope

Seen one bird on pond at the Caleta de Fuste Golf Course

5 **Partridge, Barbary**

Alectoris barbara koenigi

Seen one bird at Barranco de Rio Torre, expected to see a lot more.

6 **Shearwater, Cory's**

Calonectris diomedea borealis



Hundreds offshore every day in the strong north-easterlies that were constant throughout the trip

7 **Gannet**

Morus bassanus

At least 50+ birds seen over the week

8 **Egret, Little**

Egretta garzetta

Seen almost daily in several locations

9 **Heron, Grey**

Ardea cinerea

Two birds in Barranco de Rio Cabras

10 **Ibis, Glossy**

Plegadis falcinellus

One bird in Barranco de Rio Cabras

11 **Spoonbill, Eurasian**

Platalea leucorodia

Saw several birds in Barranco de Rio Cabras

12 **Vulture, Egyptian**

Neophron perc. gingianus

Seen almost daily in several locations

13 **Buzzard, Common**

Buteo buteo insularum



Seen almost daily in several locations

14 **Eagle, Booted**

Aquila pennata

Saw one bird in Barranco de Rio Torre

15 **Common Kestrel**

Falco tinn. dacotiae

Seen almost daily in several locations

16 **Bustard, Houbara**

Chlamydotis undulata

Six birds seen in the Tindaya Plains area

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- | | English name | Latin Name |
|--|------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 17 | Coot, Eurasian | <i>Fulica atra</i> |
| Saw several birds on pond at the Caleta de Fuste Golf Course | | |
| 18 | Plover, Grey | <i>Pluvialis squatarola</i> |
| Observed one almost daily outside hotel in Caleta de Fuste and one in Barranco de Rio Cabras | | |
| 19 | Plover, Ringed | <i>Charadrius hiaticula</i> |
| Saw almost daily in several locations | | |
| 20 | Plover, Ringed Little | <i>Charadrius dubius</i> |
| Observed several birds in Barranco de Rio Cabras | | |
| 21 | Dunlin | <i>Calidris alpina</i> |
| Saw several birds near Caleta de Fuste | | |
| 22 | Greenshank | <i>Tringa nebularia</i> |
| Seen almost daily in several different locations | | |
| 23 | Redshank, Common | <i>Tringa totanus</i> |
| Saw three birds at Museo de Sal | | |
| 24 | Sanderling | <i>Calidris alba</i> |
| Two birds at Museo de Sal and several near Caleta de Fuste | | |
| 25 | Sandpiper, Common | <i>Actitis hypoleucos</i> |



Two birds in pond area in Caleta de Fuste

- | | | |
|--|-------------------------|---------------------------|
| 26 | Sandpiper, Green | <i>Tringa ochropus</i> |
| Six birds in Barranco de Rio Cabras | | |
| 27 | Turnstone | <i>Arenaria interpres</i> |
| Seen almost daily in several different locations | | |
| 28 | Whimbrel | <i>Numenius phaeopus</i> |
| Two birds seen during the week's stay | | |
| 29 | Skua, Arctic | |



One bird seen in Caleta de Fuste [CDF] harbour chasing Sandwich Terns

- | | | |
|---|----------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| 30 | Gull, Lesser Black-backed | |
| Seen almost daily in several different locations | | |
| 31 | Gull, Yellow-legged | <i>Larus michahellis atlantis</i> |
| Seen almost daily in several different locations | | |
| 32 | Tern, Sandwich | <i>Sterna sandvicensis</i> |
| Daily in and around CDF, at least 100+ | | |
| 33 | Sandgrouse, Bl.-bellied | <i>Pterocles orientalis aragonica</i> |
| Another difficult bird to find and seen only once but thankfully at very close range. | | |
| 34 | Dove, Collared | <i>Streptopelia decaocto</i> |
| Possibly the commonest bird of the trip, everyday and everywhere we went. | | |
| 35 | Dove, Rock | <i>Columbia livia</i> |
| Seen daily in several areas | | |
| 36 | Dove, Collared African | <i>Streptopelia roseogrisea</i> |
| A few birds seen around CDF | | |

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English name **Latin Name**

- 37 **Swift, Pallid** *Apus pallidus brehmorum*
Saw several birds at the vulture feeding site, looking for insects attracted by the dead meat.
- 38 **Swift, Plain** *Apus unicolor*
Three birds in Barranco de Rio Cabras and four at the vulture feeding site near Tindaya
- 39 **Hoopoe, Eurasian** *Upupa epops*
Seen at several locations
- 40 **Lark, Lesser short-toed** *Aldadala rufescens polatzeki*
Another unexpectedly difficult bird to find and seen only once, near Tindaya
- 41 **Martin, House** *Delichon urbicum*
Two migrating flocks seen , in Barranco de Rio Cabras and at the pond in CDF
- 42 **Swallow, Barn** *Hirundo rustica*
Saw several birds at the vulture feeding site near Tindaya
- 43 **Pipit, Berthelot's** *Anthus berthelotii*



Very common, seen daily in almost any habitat.

- 44 **Wagtail, White** *Motacilla alba*
One bird seen on CDF golf course
- 45 **Stonechat Fuerteventura** *Saxicola dacotiae*



An unexpectedly harder bird to find than we had thought , Rio Cabras being best site.

- 46 **Thrush, Song** *Turdus philomelos*
One male at the commercial centre in CDF, beside the pond.
- 47 **Blackcap** *Sylvia atricapilla*
One male at the commercial centre in CDF, beside the pond.
- 48 **Chiffchaff, Common** *Phylloscopus collybita*
One male at the commercial centre in CDF, beside the pond and one at Barranco de la Torre
- 49 **Warbler, Sardinian** *Sylvia melanocephala leucogastra*



Several birds seen over the week in suitable habitat

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English name

Latin Name

50 **Warbler, Spectacled**

Sylvia conspicillata orbitalis



Several birds seen over the week in suitable habitat.

51 **Tit, Blue African**

Cyanistes teneriffae degener

One bird seen in Betancuria

52 **Shrike, Southern Grey**

Lanius excubitor koenigi



Three birds seen at different locations

53 **Raven**

Corvus corax jordansi

Common, can be seen almost anywhere.

54 **Starling, Common**

Sturnus vulgaris

A flock of birds were on the CDF golf course

55 **Sparrow, Spanish**

Passer hispaniolensis

Common, can be seen almost anywhere.

56 **Finch, Trumpeter**

Bucanetes githagineus amantum



57 **Linnet, Common**

Carduelis cannabina harterti

Saw birds in various locations

58 **Bunting, Corn**

Emberiza calandra thanneri

Only two birds seen near Tindaya

Conclusion: Our trip was reasonably successful, although we missed several endemics on the island but that was due more to the prolonged drought than anything else. We enjoyed our stay on the Island and would like to thank Derek especially.

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09/03/2022

