

Trip report of a week to Gran Canaria in December 2021

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Itinerary

20 December. Departure from Eindhoven at 11:55 and arrival in the early evening at apartment/hotel RioSol in Puerto Rico on the southwestern coast of Gran Canaria

21 December. In the morning I visited the field opposite RioSol in the hope of finding the first endemic taxa of Gran Canaria. Quite nice with, among other things, Gran Canaria Blue Tit. Arranged rental car for the next two days, from c. 11:00 in the morning.

22 December. After picking up the car directly into the mountains via roads GC-1, GC-200 and GC-606. East of Cruz de San Antonio, I passed the well-known gravel road towards Pajonales (El Juncal), the spot of the blue chaffinch. I had decided to reach the site from the north, via an asphalt road that could be reached through the GC-60 and GC-661. Unfortunately, however, the GC-60 appeared closed for the whole week. I chose not to drive back immediately for the blue chaffinch but to visit Bailico camping site (signposted) first from 13:15, reached via the GC-600. Lucky with the Gran Canaria Common Chaffinch and the Gran Canaria Robin. After this I drove back to the entrance of the gravel road, and drove to the spot of the blue chaffinch near the well-known house from 14:30 (not the forest house at the entrance of the main house but the white house at several km away). This distance was 5 km and this took c. 15-20 minutes by car. Found the local Great Spotted Woodpeckers fast and in the end also a male Gran Canaria Blue Chaffinch. In the evening we had a nice dinner in restaurant I love Mogan in Puerto de Mogan.

23 December. All day in the north. Through ebird, I had found two sites where Eurasian Stone-curlew and Long-eared Owl had recently been seen. First tried the site of Eurasian Stone-curlew at Charcas de los Alemanes near Arucas (accessible via the GC-3, GC-20 and GC-300) but without success even though we walked along the entire terrain. After that we went to the nearby site of the Long-eared Owls (the village square of Banaderos) but unfortunately also without success. We had lunch and shopped in Las Palmas de Gran Canaria afterwards. On the way back we bought sushi at the Carrefour in Vecindario.

24 December. Refueled the car, but before returning, I looked for birds along the edges of the Tauro golf course. Some species were seen that I did not see before during the trip such as Ruddy Shelduck. Arranged for an all-inclusive arrangement for the coming days: quite useful during Christmas.

25 December. The whole day around the hotel.

26 December. A morning of dolphin watching fell through because the organisers were too early at our hotel and drove away... While waiting, I did see a falcon that looked like a typical Barbary.

27 December. In the early afternoon to the airport and at 16:25 back to Eindhoven. Home by car.

Species list

*List of selected bird species (endemic taxa with scientific name; * denotes lifer species)*

1. Ruddy Shelduck: on 24 December, two at Tauro golf course.
2. Red-legged Partridge: on 22 December, two at Bailico and two at Pajonales. On 23 December, also heard at Charcas de los Alemanes.
3. Common Moorhen: on 23 December, many at Charcas de los Alemanes and on 24 December, at Tauro golf course.
4. Eurasian Coot: on 24 December, two at Tauro golf course.
5. Grey Heron: on 21 December, one in the field before RioSol, and on 22 December, one at Pajonales.
6. Common Sandpiper: on 24 December, one at Tauro golf course.
7. Eurasian Hoopoe: on 24 December, five at Tauro golf course.
8. Great Spotted Woodpecker *Dendrocopos major thanneri*: on 22 December, several at Pajonales.

9. Peregrine / Barbary Falcon: on 21 December, an adult with very white underparts; and on 26 December, plumagewise a typical Barbary, both at the hotel RioSol. Ruben Barone pointed out to me later that all such falcons may be in fact Barbary according to Beneharo Rodríguez et al. in Bull Br Ornithol Club 131: 140-153, 2011.
10. Common Raven: on 22 December, one in full song at Bailico and one flying past at Pajonales.
11. Gran Canaria Blue Tit *Cyanistes teneriffae hedwigae*: the only single-island endemic that could be seen daily.
12. Gran Canaria Robin *Erithacus superbis marionae*: on 22 December, two singing at Bailico and several heard at Pajonales.
13. Grey Wagtail: on 24 December, one at Tauro golf course.
14. White Wagtail: on 24 December, one at Tauro golf course.
15. Berthelot's Pipit: on 22 December, two at Pajonales.
16. Gran Canaria Chaffinch *Fringilla canariensis bakeri*: on 22 December, one female calling and seen at Bailico.
17. * Gran Canarian Blue Chaffinch *Fringilla polatzeki*: on 22 December, a male singing at Pajonales.

Other species observed (all observed on more than one day): 18. Collared Dove, 19. Yellow-legged Gull, 20. Common Kestrel, 21. Canary Islands Chiffchaff, 22. Eurasian Blackcap, 23. Sardinian Warbler, 24. Eurasian Blackbird, 25. Spanish Sparrow, 26. European Goldfinch, and 27. Atlantic Canary.