Report of a birding trip to

Cabo Verde

22 February - 7 March 2017

by

Peter van Scheepen and Dick Meijer

Thick-billed Lark ♂, Espargos, Sal - Black-crowned Sparrow-Lark, Cidade Velha, Santiago

Greater Hoopoe-Lark, Espargos, Sal
**Introduction**

Although Cabo Verde, the archipelago of the Cape Verde islands, does not abound in birds we (Peter and Juke van Scheepen and Inge and Dick Meijer) decided to visit the area from 22 February to 6 March 2017 to enjoy its few endemics and a short holiday alike. IM and DM stayed from 22 February to 5 March on the islands and JvS and PvS from 26 February to 7 March. The authorities of Cabo Verde use ‘Cabo Verde, no stress’ as a unique selling point of their islands and that’s exactly what we experienced: a perfect place to relax.

Birdwise we easily found four endemic species (Cape Verde Buzzard, Alexander’s Swift, Cape Verde Swamp-Warbler and Cape Verde Sparrow) and three endemic subspecies which are potential splits (Purple Heron *bournei*, Eurasian Kestrel *alexandri* and Barn Owl *detorta*) on Santiago. Cabo Verde also holds a few species which are difficult to see elsewhere in the Western Palearctic region, such as Red-billed Tropicbird and Gray-headed Kingfisher. In total we recorded 53 species of bird. We saw only one species of mammal: a bat at Porto Gouveia. We might have seen more endemic species of bird (Razo Skylark) and near-endemic species (Cape Verde Shearwater, Boyd’s Shearwater and Cape Verde Storm-Petrel) as well as some other target species (Fea’s Petrel and White-faced Storm-Petrel), if our flight from Sal to São Nicolau had not been canceled. The enforced longer stay on kitesurf hot spot Sal enabled us to study and photograph the desert species occurring there (Cream-colored Courser, Greater Hoopoe-Lark and Bar-tailed Lark) more profoundly. To our surprise we found - while birding the desert around Terra Boa north of Espargos - a flock of eight Thick-billed Larks, a new species for Cabo Verde and Macaronesia.

On Santiago we were guided by Herbert Bödenforfer ([geovision.boedendorfer@aon.at](mailto:geovision.boedendorfer@aon.at)) and his assistant Freddy on the 27th of February which resulted in a day with very good views of relatively many species, three Cabo Verde rarities (Jack Snipe, Namaqua Dove and Spotted Crake), good photographic opportunities and a delicious traditional cachupa soup. Though with some perseverance all target species could be found without help once you have found the locations.
Sites visited and noteworthy species

Santiago

The cliffs east of the Shell terminal, east of Praia: Red-billed Tropicbird and Alexander’s Swift; we also had Common Quail and Pallid Swift here.

The lake at Barragem de Poilão, west of Pedra Badejo and east of São Lorenço dos Orgãos: Purple Heron bournei, Barn Owl detorta and Cape Verde Swamp-Warbler; we also had Spotted Crake, Eurasian Spoonbill and Glossy Ibis here. Allen’s Gallinule and Intermediate Egret were seen here by other birders recently, Black Heron and Black-headed Heron were recorded here in the past.

The lagoon and creek just south of Pedra Badejo: Cape Verde Swamp-Warbler, Black-crowned Sparrow-Lark and Spectacled Warbler; we also had Jack Snipe and Namaqua Dove here.

The stony desert and rock faces west of Cidade Velha: Cream-colored Courser, Alexander’s Swift, Barn Owl detorta, Cape Verde Sparrow, Bar-tailed Lark and Black-crowned Sparrow-Lark; we also had Red-billed Tropicbird and Brown Booby in this area.

The mountains between Rui Vaz and Assomado: Cape Verde Buzzard.

Barragem de Poilão, Santiago
**Sal**

The dunes northeast of Santa Maria: Greater Hoopoe-Lark.

The lagoon between the dunes northwest of Santa Maria: waders.

The flat desert north of Espargos: Cream-colored Courser, Greater Hoopoe-Lark and Bar-tailed Lark. We found a flock of eight Thick-billed Larks in the sparsely vegetated stony and sandy desert around the Terra Boa signposts. These birds were moving from west to east, leisurely feeding on the vegetation and loosely associating with the other larks and coursers.

The salinas near Pedra Lume: Black-winged Stilt (breeding) and waders.
## Itinerary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Activities and transport</th>
<th>Accommodation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>22-2</td>
<td>IM and DM by plane from Amsterdam via Lisbon to Praia and by car from Praia to Rui Vaz.</td>
<td><strong>Quinta de Montagna, Rui Vaz on Santiago</strong> (<a href="mailto:quintamontanha@cvtelecom.cv">quintamontanha@cvtelecom.cv</a>).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23-2</td>
<td>By car to Boa Entrada and to cliffs east of Praia.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24-2</td>
<td>By car to Tarrafal and through Rui Vaz to Cidade Velha; in pool of hotel in the afternoon.</td>
<td><strong>Pôr do Sol, Cidade Velha on Santiago</strong> (<a href="mailto:axa@cvtelecom.cv">axa@cvtelecom.cv</a> or +2389912136).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-2</td>
<td>By car to Porto Mosquito; in pool of hotel in the afternoon.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26-2</td>
<td>By car to Pedra Badejo and San Francisco, JvS and PvS by plane from Amsterdam via Lisbon, met each other at airport and by car to Cidade Velha via cliffs east of Praia.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27-2</td>
<td>By minibus to Pedra Badejo, on foot to trail around lagoon and by minibus to Barragem de Poilão and via cliffs east of Praia to Cidade Velha.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28-2</td>
<td>By car to Rui Vaz and via Cidade Velha to airport, by plane from Santiago to Sal and by car to Murdeira Village Resort.</td>
<td><strong>Murdirea Village Resort, Murdeira on Sal</strong> (<a href="http://www.murdeiravillageresort.com">www.murdeiravillageresort.com</a>).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-3</td>
<td>By car to airport and after hearing news of canceled flight to Santa Maria and dunes northeast of town (kite beach).</td>
<td><strong>Aparthotel Santa Maria Beach, Santa Maria on Sal</strong> (<a href="http://www.belavista.net/Aparthotel-Santa-Maria-Beach-Sal.aspx">www.belavista.net/Aparthotel-Santa-Maria-Beach-Sal.aspx</a>).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-3</td>
<td>By car to Terra Boa, Buracona, Ponta Norte and Salinas near Pedra Lume in north of Sal.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-3</td>
<td>On foot in Santa Maria, by car to dunes northeast of Santa Maria (kite beach) and at Ponta Preta and to airport, by plane from Sal to Santiago and by car from airport to Cidade Velha.</td>
<td><strong>Pôr do Sol, Cidade Velha on Santiago.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-3</td>
<td>By car to Porto Mosquito, Tarrafal and Pedra Badejo via east coast, owled at Barragem de Poilão and back to Cidade Velha.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-3</td>
<td>By car to Porto Mosquito and to airport, IM and DM by plane from Praia via Lisbon to Amsterdam, by car to cliffs east of Praia and road west of Cidade Velha.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-3</td>
<td>By car to Quinta de Montagna, Barragem de Poilão, Picos and Porto Mosquito.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7-3</td>
<td>JvS and PvS by plane from Praia via Lisbon to Amsterdam.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Weather

The weather was truly perfect in Cabo Verde: around 25 ° at sea level during the day, a bit cooler in the evenings depending on wind.

Annoyances and dangers

We found Cabo Verde very safe throughout though we were advised not to leave valuables in our car. A flight being canceled is of course very annoying, it is even worse to get this news after having waited for six hours at the airport. The unreliability of inter-island flights in Cabo Verde makes planning a bird watching trip quite a challenge. You have to take into account that your flight will be on another day than planned. In our case the canceled flight compelled us to skip the trip to São Nicolau and to Razo because of time pressure which was a shame. Credit cards are not widely used in Cabo Verde and if so there is preference for Visa-cards. In all major towns and even villages ATM’s might help you to solve this problem.

References

In the field we used:


While preparing and digesting we also used:

- **Richard Bonser**, *Cape Verdes, late April/early May 2011.*


José Goulão, *Cabo Verde, Guia Turistico 2017*. Directel Cabo Verde *(In English and Portuguese)* The simple maps of the various islands turned out to be quite practical.


**Cornelis J. Hazevoet**, *Aves de Cabo Verde*, Bird Life International 1993 *(in Portuguese)* *A simple booklet apparently meant to draw the attention of the local people to their ornithological treasures.*

**Cornelis J. Hazevoet**, *Cape Verde Islands*, January 2013. In African Bird Club *(www.africanbirdclub.org/content/cape-verde-islands)* *With a link to a checklist of the birds of Cape Verde.*

**Henk Hendriks**, *Cabo Verde, 21-12-2006 to 4-1-2007.*

**Nick Watmough**, *Birding Santiago Cape Verde March 20th - 22nd 2015*

**Gerry West Dean**, *Cape Verde Islands: Sal, Boavista, São Nicolau, Santiago March 14 – 23 2011.*

**Acknowledgments**

We are grateful to Eldert Groenewoud who advised us to work with Herbert Bödendorfer during our stay on Santiago and we thank Kees Verburg for his comments on an earlier version of this report. We are also grateful to Lindorfo Olivio Marques Ortet, the owner of Quinta da Montanha, who gave us 'Aves de Cabo Verde'.

Dick Meijer dfmeijer@hotmail.com

Peter van Scheepen p.van.scheepen@casema.nl
Systematic list of birds

Sequence and taxonomy follow Clements 2016.


E = Endemic

I = Introduced

1. Helmeted Guineafowl (*Numida meleagris galeatus*) I

   **Santiago:** 2 seen at the stony desert and rock faces west of Cidade Velha; 4 there on 26 February; 12 there on 27 February; 4 on 28 February; 20 on 4 March and 8 on 6 March.

2. Common Quail (*Coturnix coturnix*)

   **Santiago:** 2 seen at Quinta de Montagna, Rui Vaz on 23 February; 3 at the cliffs east of the Shell terminal, east of Praia on 26 February and 1 there on 27 February.

3. Cape Verde Shearwater (*Calonectris edwardsii*)

   **Santiago:** 1 shearwater seen at Pôr do Sol on 24 February was most likely this species.

4. Red-billed Tropicbird (*Phaethon aethereus mesonauta*)

   **Santiago:** 20 seen at the cliffs east of the Shell terminal, east of Praia on 23 February; 1 there on 26 February; 2 there on 27 February; 1 at Porto Gouvea and 6 east of Cidade Velha on 4 March and 9 at the cliffs east of the Shell terminal, east of Praia on 5 March.

   ![Red-billed Tropicbird, Praia, Santiago](image-url)
5. Brown Booby (*Sula leucogaster leucogaster*)

*Santiago*: 1 seen at Pôr do Sol, Cidade Velha on 25 February.

6. Gray Heron (*Ardea cinerea cinerea*)

*Santiago*: 2 seen at the lagoon just south of Pedra Badejo and 7 at Barragem de Poilão on 27 February and 8 at Barragem de Poilão on 4 March.

---

7. Purple Heron (Bourne's) (*Ardea purpurea bournei*)

*Santiago*: 1 seen en route to Pedra Badejo and 3 at Barragem de Poilão on 27 February; 1 flying by at Quinta de Montagna, Rui Vaz on 28 February and 5 at Barragem de Poilão on 4 March.

---

8. Little Egret (*Egretta garzetta garzetta*)

*Santiago*: 1 seen at Pôr do Sol on 23 February; 2 seen at beach of San Francisco on 25 February; 10 at Barragem de Poilão on 27 February and 4 March; 1 at Pôr do Sol, Cidade Velha on 5 March and 15 at Barragem de Poilão on 6 March.
9. **Western Reef-Heron** (*Egretta gularis gularis*)

   **Santiago:** 2 seen at the lagoon just south of Pedra Badejo on 27 February.

10. **Cattle Egret** (*Bubulcus ibis ibis*)

    **Santiago:** Common.

    **Sal:** Common
11. **Glossy Ibis** (*Plegadis falcinellus*)

*Santiago:* 2 seen at the lagoon just south of Pedra Badejo and 3 at Barragem de Poilão on 27 February and 1 at Barragem de Poilão on 4 March.

12. **Eurasian Spoonbill** (*Platalea leucorodia leucorodia*)

*Santiago:* 1 seen flying by at Pôr do Sol, Cidade Velha on 3 March and 4 at Barragem de Poilão on 4 March.

![Eurasian Spoonbill](image)

**Eurasian Spoonbill, Barragem de Poilão, Santiago**

13. **Cape Verde Buzzard** (*Buteo bannermani*)

*Santiago:* 1 seen in the mountains between Rui Vaz and Assomado on 24 February and 2 there on 28 February.

14. **Spotted Crake** (*Porzana porzana*)

*Santiago:* 1 seen at Barragem de Poilão on 27 February.

15. **Eurasian Moorhen** (*Gallinula chloropus chloropus*)

*Santiago:* 4 seen at Barragem de Poilão on 27 February and 3 there on 4 March.
16. **Black-winged Stilt** (*Himantopus himantopus*)

*Santiago:* 20 seen at Barragem de Poilão on 27 February and 2 there on 4 March.

*Sal:* 8 seen at the salinas near Pedra Lume on 2 March and 7 at the lagoon between the dunes northwest of Santa Maria on 3 March.

![Black-winged Stilt, Barragem de Poilão, Santiago](image)

17. **Black-bellied Plover** (*Pluvialis squatarola*)

*Santiago:* 1 seen at the lagoon just south of Pedra Badejo on 27 February and 1 flying by at Pôr do Sol, Cidade Velha on 5 March.

18. **Kentish Plover** (*Charadrius alexandrinus alexandrinus*)

*Santiago:* 2 seen at the lagoon just south of Pedra Badejo on 27 February.

*Sal:* 3 seen at Murdeira Village Resort, Murdeira on 1 March; 4 at the salinas near Pedra Lume on 2 March and 3 at the lagoon between the dunes northwest of Santa Maria on 3 March.

![Kentish Plover, Murdeira, Sal](image)
19. Common Ringed Plover (*Charadrius hiaticula hiaticula*)

*Santiago:* 5 seen at the lagoon just south of Pedra Badejo on 27 February.

*Sal:* 2 at the dunes northeast of Santa Maria on 1 March and 1 at the salinas near Pedra Lume on 2 March.

20. Whimbrel (*Numenius phaeopus phaeopus*)

*Santiago:* Up to 50 seen almost daily.

*Sal:* 1 seen at Murdeira Village Resort, Murdeira on 1 March, 1 in Santa Maria on 2 and 3 March and 1 at the salinas near Pedra Lume on 2 March.

21. Ruddy Turnstone (*Arenaria interpres interpres*)

*Santiago:* 3 seen at Pôr do Sol on 24 February.

*Sal:* 5 seen at Murdeira Village Resort, Murdeira and 7 at the salinas near Pedra Lume on 2 March.

22. Sanderling (*Calidris alba*)

*Sal:* 15 seen at the dunes northeast of Santa Maria on 1 March; 1 at the salinas near Pedra Lume on 2 March and 10 at the lagoon between the dunes northwest of Santa Maria on 3 March.

23. Little Stint (*Calidris minutia*)

*Sal:* 1 seen at the salinas near Pedra Lume on 2 March.

24. Jack Snipe (*Lymnocryptes minimus*)

*Santiago:* 1 seen at the lagoon just south of Pedra Badejo on 27 February.
25. **Common Snipe** (*Gallinago gallinago gallinago*)

   **Santiago:** 1 seen at the lagoon just south of Pedra Badejo on 27 February.

26. **Common Sandpiper** (*Actitis hypoleucos*)

   **Santiago:** 1 seen at the lagoon just south of Pedra Badejo and 3 at Barragem de Poilão on 27 February; 1 west of Cidade Velha and 4 at Barragem de Poilão on 4 March.

27. **Green Sandpiper** (*Tringa ochropus*)

   **Santiago:** 2 seen at the lagoon just south of Pedra Badejo on 27 February.
28. Common Greenshank (*Tringa nebularia*)

*Santiago:* 3 seen at the lagoon just south of Pedra Badejo and 5 at Barragem de Poilão on 27 February and 3 at Barragem de Poilão on 4 March.

29. Wood Sandpiper (*Tringa glareola*)

*Santiago:* 3 seen at the lagoon just south of Pedra Badejo and 5 at Barragem de Poilão on 27 February and 3 at Barragem de Poilão on 4 March.

30. Common Redshank (*Tringa tetanus totanus*)

*Santiago:* 3 seen at the stony desert and rock faces west of Cidade Velha on 2 February.

*Sal:* 2 seen at the salinas near Pedra Lume on 2 March.

31. Cream-colored Courser (*Cursorius cursor exsul*)

*Santiago:* 3 seen at the stony desert and rock faces west of Cidade Velha on 2 February.

*Sal:* 10 seen at the flat desert north of Espargos at on 2 March.
32. **Lesser Black-backed Gull** *(Larus fuscus)*

*Sal:* 1 seen at Buracona on 2 March.

33. **Rock Pigeon** *(Columba livia)*

*Santiago:* Common.

*Sal:* Common.

*Most if not all are probably feral birds. Wild birds belong to subspecies ‘atlantis’*

34. **Eurasian Collared-Dove** *(Streptopelia decaocto decaocto)*

*Santiago:* Common.

35. **Namaqua Dove** *(Oena capensis capensis)*

*Santiago:* 3 seen at the lagoon just south of Pedra Badejo on 27 February.
Namaqua Dove, Pedra Badejo, Santiago

**36. Barn Owl (Cape Verde) (Tyto alba detorta)**

*Santiago*: 2 briefly seen and heard at Barragem de Poilão on 27 February; 1 seen at Porto Gouveia on 5 March and 1 heard there on 6 March.

**37. Alexander's Swift (Apus alexandri)**

*Santiago*: Up to 15 seen almost daily.

**38. Pallid Swift (Apus pallidus brehmorum)**

*Santiago*: 2 seen at the cliffs east of the Shell terminal, east of Praia on 23 February.

**39. Gray-headed Kingfisher (Halcyon leucocephala acteon)**

*Santiago*: Common.
40. **Eurasian Kestrel (Alexander's Kestrel)** (*Falco tinnunculus alexandri*)

   **Santiago:** Up to 20 seen daily.

   **Sal:** Up to 8 seen almost daily.

![Eurasian Kestrel (Alexander's Kestrel), Praia, Santiago](image1)

41. **Brown-necked Raven** (*Corvus ruficollis*)

   **Santiago:** Up to 14 seen almost daily.

   **Sal:** Up to 14 seen almost daily.

![Brown-necked Raven, Porto Gouveia, Santiago](image2)
42. **Greater Hoopoe-Lark** (*Alaemon alaudipes boavistae*)

*Sal:* 1 seen on the dunes northeast of Santa Maria on 1 March and 14 at the flat desert north of Espargos on 2 March.

![Greater Hoopoe-Lark, Espargos, Sal](image)

43. **Thick-billed Lark** (*Ramphocoris clotbey*)

*Sal:* 8 seen at the flat desert north of Espargos at on 2 March.

![Thick-billed Lark ♀, Espargos, Sal](image) ![Bar-tailed Lark, Espargos, Sal](image)
44. **Bar-tailed Lark** *(Ammomanes cincture cinctura)*

*Santiago:* 6 seen at the stony desert and rock faces west of Cidade Velha on 25 February; 15 there on 26 February; 10 on 27 February; 5 on 28 February; 4 on 4 March and 3 on 5 March.

*Sal:* 1 seen in the dunes northeast of Santa Maria on 1 March and 40 at the flat desert north of Espargos at on 2 March.

45. **Black-crowned Sparrow-Lark** *(Eremopterix nigriceps nigriceps)*

*Santiago:* 5 seen at the stony desert and rock faces west of Cidade Velha on 25 and 26 February; 25 at the lagoon just south of Pedra Badejo on 27 February; 6 at the stony desert and rock faces west of Cidade Velha on 28 February, 8 there on 4 March; 10 on 5 March and 3 on 6 March.

*Sal:* 15 seen at the flat desert north of Espargos at on 2 March.

46. **Common Chiffchaff** *(Phylloscopus collybita collybita)*

*Santiago:* 1 seen near the kapok-tree of Boa Entrada on 23 February.

47. **Cape Verde Swamp-Warbler** *(Acrocephalus brevipes)*

*Santiago:* 2 seen and heard near the kapok-tree of Boa Entrada on 23 February; 4 seen and 2 heard at the lagoon just south of Pedra Badejo and 1 seen and 1 heard at Barragem de Poilão on 27 February; 1 heard at Rui Vaz on 28 February; 1 heard at Barragem de Poilão on 4 March and 1 at Picos on 6 March.
48. **Eurasian Blackcap** (*Sylvia atricapilla gularis*)

    *Santiago:* Common.

49. **Spectacled Warbler** (*Sylvia conspicillata orbitalis*)

    *Santiago:* Common.
50. **White Wagtail** (*Motacilla alba alba*)

*Santiago:* 1 seen at Barragem de Poilão on 4 March.

51. **Spanish Sparrow** (*Passer hispaniolensis hispaniolensis*)

*Santiago:* Up to 30 seen daily.
52. Cape Verde Sparrow (*Passer iagoensis*)

* Santiago: Common.  
  
* Sal: Common.  

53. Common Waxbill (*Estrilda astrild jagoensis*)

* Santiago: Common.  

---

*Cape Verde Sparrow, Cidade Velha, Santiago*

*Common Waxbill, Barragem de Poilão Santiago*
Other animals

1. Green Sea Turtle (*Chelonia mydas*)
   
   **Sal:** 1 seen in the sea at Buracona on 2 March was most likely this species.

2. Kuhl's Pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus kuhlii*)
   
   **Santiago:** 1 seen at Buracona on 6 March was most likely this species.