

Report of a birdwatching trip to

TENERIFE

25th September - 2nd October 2012



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INTRODUCTION

This trip was planned around seeing the resident Tenerife, Canary Island and Macronesian endemic bird species on the island of Tenerife, together with endemic sub-species and other resident birds. Further interest was provided by a few butterfly and dragonfly species, and other wildlife.

To keep the trip affordable, we booked a package on-line through “On The Beach”. There were, of course, some additions to the starting price, but we were disappointed at the sheer size of some of these additions. The blurb said “no frills flight”, which turned out to be Ryanair. With Ryanair’s 10kg restriction on cabin baggage, we had to pay for a hold bag to accommodate our optics and tripods etc. A 15kg bag cost us £45 each way with Ryanair, and On The Beach charged us an additional £30 each way “administration fee”. We tried to go straight to Ryanair ourselves to avoid this, but the IT systems defeated us and we had to pay the fee, adding a total of £150 to the cost of our holiday.

Having said that, the flights (Stansted to Tenerife South) were efficient and on time, with no problems.

The package included a week self-catering in a studio apartment at the “Pez Azul” hotel in Puerto de la Cruz on the North West coast of the Island. This was a straightforward budget hotel. Our room was clean and quite spacious, and facilities included a pool (very pleasant) and in-house restaurant (which we never used). The staff were always helpful and we had a very pleasant stay.

We hired a car through Goldcar. The “Renault Clio or similar” turned out to be a Peugeot 307 diesel (close enough). This was a pay for fuel, return empty deal which would have been fine except we were charged 82 euros for a full tank of diesel (which we reckon was about 30 euros over the odds). We also paid an additional 42 euros to upgrade the insurance (to avoid a 600 euros block on the credit card pending the car’s return undamaged). All this seems to be standard behaviour, so it’s a pity it’s not just included in the original price so that customers know where they stand. The car was fine, except that on the last two days the brakes began to make various grinding noises. We phoned the Goldcar helpline, and they convinced us that it was probably a stone caught in the brake pads, so on their advice we carried on (the alternative seemed to be a 30 minute drive to the north airport for a replacement car, and paying for another full tank of fuel..).

We used supermarkets to buy bread, cheese, chorizo etc. for breakfasts and lunches, and mostly ate evening meals in a local restaurant across the road from our hotel which had a three course menu del dia with beer or wine, for 8 euros (except on a couple of occasions when we ate in MacDonaldis to use the free wi-fi).

Weather:

For such a small island, weather patterns were quite complex. Temperatures reached the low to mid 30s every day, although one early morning at altitude required an extra layer, as did one late afternoon seawatching after the sun had gone. On most days, cloud seemed to build up off the Atlantic to form a layer just inland of the coastal strip (where it remained sunny). Driving up into the mountains quickly took us above the cloud and into the sun. We drove through a couple of rain showers during the week, but overall the weather caused us no problems. We spent the entire week in tee shirts and shorts.



Information:

Although published in 1996, Tony Clarke and David Collins' "A Birdwatchers' Guide to The Canary Islands" is still a good guide, with most of the directions for Tenerife sites remaining reasonably accurate. We were able to supplement this with various reports from the internet - with Steve Webb's proving especially useful.

We took a Collins Bird Guide with us and extracts from trip reports. Given our flight weight restrictions we scanned relevant pages from Dijkstra and Lewington's Dragonflies of Britain and Europe, and put together an illustrated butterfly list gleaned from various internet sites, which we copied onto an iPhone.

We bought a copy of the 1:100,000 Tenerife Bus and Touring Map from Amazon, which was up to date and excellent for our purposes.

Getting around:

With the exception of the part heading north from the holiday centres at Playa las Americas in the far south toward the western end of the TF42, the main roads around the coast are fine and generally easy travelling. The TF1 motorway journey clockwise from Puerto de la Cruz via Santa Cruz and down the east coast to the airport took about an hour. We did make the mistake of heading north on the TF1 at rush-hour time on Friday morning and found ourselves in a traffic jam for about 20 minutes, but otherwise encountered no problems.

The roads across the centre of the island are generally typical mountain roads, with fairly steep gradients and hairpins etc. With tourists, buses and occasional lorries it is impossible to think of hurrying on these roads.

The roads in the mountain-side towns and villages behind Puerto de la Cruz are especially tortuous, not helped by locals executing three-point turns etc. on some precipitous slopes!

Birding:

Generally speaking, locations for target species are well documented and the species relatively straight-forward to find. Beyond that, there are very few resident species, and things can become hard work! Our total of 63 bird species seems fairly typical. This isn't the place for a relentless pursuit of a trip list – but in many ways that's part of the attraction!

With time and distance not an issue, we revisited many of the best sites, and spent time looking at birds that we will probably never see again. We did become a bit obsessed with trying to find rock sparrow, but even at sites with apparently recent records we were unsuccessful. Most open fields and agricultural areas seemed quite barren of birds, the lack of water meant that waders were few and far between, and other than fantastic numbers of Cory's shearwaters, seawatching was pretty unproductive.

That said, there were distractions available in the shape of a few interesting butterflies and dragonflies, some of the mountain scenery was indeed spectacular and the weather was pretty good! All this combined to make this a very successful trip!

Tenerife – Itinerary:

Tuesday 25th September:

Arrived Tenerife South Airport approx. 11.30am local time. Collected hire-car and drove to Golf del Sur to bird around northern end of the golf complex and nearby scrub. Called at a supermarket for food and water, then drove into mountains to Las Lajas picnic site. Picnic lunch and then explored the extensive picnic grounds and woods. Arrived at Pez Azul hotel, Puerto de la Cruz mid evening.

Wednesday 26th September:

Early morning visit to La Grimonas viewpoint for pigeons, then onward for morning at Erjos Pools. After lunch, explored fields south of Santiago del Teide before driving the spectacular route via Masca back to the north coast and spending a couple of hours sea-watching at Punta del Teno. Stopped to view Teno cliffs for Barbary Falcon on return journey to Puerto de la Cruz.

Thursday 27th September:

Early morning on Los Cristianos beach before booking afternoon ferry tickets and driving for a morning birding at El Fraille. Afternoon on the 2pm sailing from Los Cristianos (Tenerife) to San Sebastian (La Gomera) ferry, a couple of beers in San Sebastian then returned on the 5pm sailing. Early evening birding the northern end of Amarilla Golf before returning to Puerto de la Cruz.

Friday 28th September:

Started at Las Lugunelas for woodland birding, then to Los Rodeos to bird fields south of Tenerife North Airport. Late morning / early afternoon birding gardens and small park at La Laguna, followed by the wooded slopes and picnic area at El Llano de los Viejos. Drove via the Val Molino reservoir to Tejina Ponds and then on to end the day at Punta del Hidalgo.

Saturday 29th September:

Began with a couple of hours sea-watching at Punta del Teno. Drove via Teno Cliffs (for more Barbary Falcon views) through the narrow, twisting mountain roads to Teno Alta for a long morning birding around the high-altitude fields. Late afternoon we explored Buenavista Golf, before ending the day with another sea-watch, this time opposite the rock at Garrachica.

Sunday 30th September:

Began the day with another visit to La Grimonas for more pigeon views, before heading back to the north of the island via Val Molina Reservoir. A return visit to La Laguna was followed by more time at the productive Tejina Ponds. The early afternoon was spent in the Botanical Gardens in Puerto de la Cruz before going on a (successful) search for Los Realejos reservoir. We drove the picturesque (if scary) road via the Los Lances viewpoint and the top of the Ruiz Gorge for more sea watching at Punta Teno, which we quickly abandoned because of difficult light in favour of a return to the rock at Garrachica.

Monday 1st October:

We drove into the mountains to visit Vilaflor before making a return visit to Las Lajas to eat lunch in the picnic area. We then returned to Puerto de la Cruz via the Mount Teide visitor centre and the picnic area of La Caldera.

Tuesday 2nd October:

We left our hotel very early in order to drive to El Medano in the south of the island to bird the rocky foreshore for waders. We then revisited Amarilla Golf (including the small reservoir about a kilometre north of the complex) and the northern end of Golf del Sur, before returning our hire-car and catching our late morning flight back to the UK.

Tenerife: Sites visited

The Mountains:

There were many signs of the effects of recent forest fires, particularly along the TF21 across the mountains. Fortunately, the fires seem to have been reasonably well contained, and much of the pine forest remains intact. Even where the earth had been scorched there were signs of plants and shrubs regenerating.



Las Lajas: This extensive area of picnic tables and barbeque facilities set among pine trees off the TF21 is a prime site for blue chaffinch. We took the TF21 as our route to Puerto de la Cruz after arriving in Tenerife late morning on 25th September, and arrived at Las Lajas mid-afternoon. We returned to the site on 1st October for more views of the blue chaffinches.

Although blue chaffinches can be seen anywhere on the site, there is a small concrete drinking pool at the base of a large pine, close to a small building near the back edge of the picnic areas which proved excellent. The pool is fed by a trickle of water and attracts birds throughout the day. We saw up to five blue chaffinches at a time here. Great spotted woodpeckers of the endemic sub-species "*canariensis*" showed especially well, as did blue tits of the sub-species "*teneriffae*". Also in the area were Atlantic canaries, Canary Island chiffchaff and kestrel.



Las Lagunelas: We made a visit to this site on 28th September at the beginning of a day in the north, as our first attempt to find Tenerife kinglet. The site is at k14 on the TF24 heading south from La Esperanza, with parking available in the trees on the right just past the roadside restaurant. We had success with the kinglets in the parking area, although good views were difficult to get because the birds stuck to the tops of the tall pines. Also here we had "*teneriffae*" blue tits, plain swifts, robin and grey wagtail.



Early morning at 1380m altitude was a bit chilly – one of only a couple of occasions when an extra layer was needed on top of a tee-shirt.

Vilaflor: We returned to Vilaflor (the highest village on Tenerife) on October 1st, having driven through on our way to La Lajas on the TF21 on 25th September. This was one of several failed efforts to find rock sparrow, which Clark and Collins and some trip reports allege can be seen on wires around the village. We wandered around the village, and spent some time sitting on a wall at the southern end looking over fields and scrub. We had one of only two sparrowhawks here, a couple of “*insular*” buzzards, and the expected collared doves, Atlantic canaries, grey wagtails and Canary Island chiffchaffs.

La Caldera: We stopped at this site on a return drive to Puerto de la Cruz on the TF21 on October 1st. Another area of picnic tables and barbecue facilities set in fairly dense trees and bushes, birds seemed hard to find here. We heard both blue chaffinch and “*tintillon*” chaffinch here, but were unable to get views of either. We did get really good views of 3+ Tenerife kinglets here, as well as “*teneriffae*” blue tits and Atlantic canaries. We also had our only Canary red admiral butterfly here, and saw two unidentified large parrots overhead calling.

The Northwest:

Our base in Puerto de la Cruz was well situated in easy reach of sites along the coast to the west of the town and the area as far south as Santiago del Teide.

La Grimonas: Heading west from Puerto de la Cruz, just west of Los Realejos the dual-carriageway T5 becomes the single carriageway TF42. The road enters a series of short tunnels, after the second of which on the right-hand side is the pull-off for the viewpoint at La Grimonas. From the viewpoint, looking across the road and up the steep slope are remnant patches of laurel forest, home to the endemic laurel pigeon. We made two stops at this site, both relatively early at around 8am (26th and 30th September), and on both occasions had no difficulty in seeing up to five laurel pigeons perched in trees and flying around. We did notice that once the sun got on to the slopes (after 8.30) pigeon activity dropped off quickly. On 26th September we also had one Bolle’s pigeon perched up fairly close to a laurel pigeon, but we only had laurel pigeons on the 30th.

As we sat on the cliff-top wall on 26th we looked over to see over 20 West Canaries Lizards of all sizes and colours basking in the sun on the rock terrace.



Teno Cliffs: Travelling further west, the TF42 becomes the TF445 at Buenavista. A few kilometres west of Buenavista a rock arch over the road is a good place to stop to scan the cliffs for Barbary falcon. On 26th September the afternoon direct sun made conditions too bad for viewing from here, so we followed directions from other trip reports to stop about 400m beyond the next tunnel and look back. Here we had two falcons perched high up on the cliff-tops. On 29th of September we stopped at the rock arch at 11.30am, and in good light we were able to see a Barbary falcon perched on a high outcrop.

Punta Teno: This site has a reputation as the best sea-watching site on the island. Certainly, the constant views of Cory's shearwater were excellent and close, but despite spending several hours on three visits we were unable to identify any other sea-bird species except the resident yellow-legged gulls. The site is very popular, with people bathing, body-boarding and fishing along the rocky shores. On Sunday 30th September there was a shooting party operating from a brick "hide" at the bottom of a slope to the south east of the lighthouse. We couldn't make out what was the quarry, but the men involved were clearly having fun, drinking and losing off shots!

The site is at the end of the TF445, where there are areas for parking just before the lighthouse, which is on the extremity of the point itself. We walked off to the right to find positions on the low cliff-top which allowed views across to La Gomera and into the open ocean to the north. We visited on 26th, 29th and 30th of September but despite putting in up to a couple of hours or so each time we didn't add any sea birds to our trip list. There were Berthelot's pipits in the scrub around the point, and on the 30th we watched an angler catch and land a very large barracuda.

Buenavista Golf: We made a speculative visit here on 29th September. We had seen the lush colours of the complex looking back from the rock arch on the TF445, and so followed signs in Buenavista itself to the car park at the beach end of the course. A well-made path skirts the edge of the course along the foreshore, through areas of tamarisk, scrub and plants.

Although the site looks excellent, we saw very little, although we did get some of our best views of Berthelot's pipit on the greens and fairways. On the way out we stopped at the clubhouse car park and looked back down to the sea. Here we could see a large pond which certainly looks to be worth checking – we had a single common sandpiper on the pond edge.

Garachico: A couple of trip reports make reference to little shearwater nesting on the large rock which is just offshore at Garachico on the TF42, with one report stating that they had seen several birds late one afternoon. The rock is very obvious, and there are plenty of parking places along the roadside opposite. We spent an hour or so here during the evenings of 29th and 30th of September, but to no avail. On the 30th there were large numbers of Cory's shearwaters feeding offshore, with a continuous circulation of birds, many of which came close in to the shore.

Erjos Pools: This is a much-visited site, well described in Clarke and Collins. We visited on the morning of 26th September. Display boards around the area indicate that the pools are the result of human excavation, collecting rainwater and run-off. Unfortunately during the year the water gradually dries up, and when we visited not a drop could be found! However, we were able to wander around the dry pools and the



surrounding fields and view the nearby hillsides. Here we saw our first “*tintillon*” chaffinch, with other species including Atlantic canaries, blue tits and grey wagtail. We saw our first “*insular*” buzzards – two were in view constantly flying around and perching on agave flower stems, and our only ravens here. We had a small flock of 20+ plain swifts with one bird having a completely white body – causing a little initial excitement and confusion!

Santiago del Teide: After having a picnic lunch in the town itself on 26th September, we drove a few miles south to explore fields and scrub in another vain search for rock sparrow (a species which completely eluded us on the trip). We added linnet to our trip list here, but otherwise the main attraction proved to be a roadside concrete irrigation reservoir. Here we found a large number of red-veined darters (mainly males holding territory), an ovipositing female emperor dragonfly, and two male epaulet skimmers (*Orthetrum chrysostigma*). One was an immature male – which caused a lot of confusion with its yellow triangles on the top of the abdomen – something which we were unaware of, and not expecting!

The TF436 via Masca: We drove to Punta Teno from Santiago del Teide on the spectacular TF436, via Masca and Buenavista. A couple of stops gave us Atlantic canaries and Sardinian warbler, but we enjoyed the route most for its breath-taking scenery – considered the most spectacular on Tenerife.

Don't expect to make any speed – if the winding ascents and descents were not enough, this is a popular route for tourist traffic, with slow (perhaps nervous) drivers everywhere, and coaches struggling to negotiate the tight turns.



Teno Alta: Set at high altitude inland from Buenavista, we visited this tiny village on 29th September. Taking the TF346 south from Buenavista, the right turn to Teno Alta is well marked. The road from here to the village is tortuous – very narrow and steeply winding, with many un-barriered hairpins complete with sheer drops! However, once arrived, we parked the car and wandered the tracks through scrub and terraced fields on the seaward side of the village.

This was a most enjoyable few hours, with the usual suspects (Atlantic canaries, Canary Island chiffchaffs, Berthelot's pipits etc) supplemented with Sardinian warbler, buzzards, kestrels and, around a small goat compound, four corn buntings (with more corn buntings in the scrub on our walk back to the village). The pigeons on the wires and flying around in groups looked good for genuine rock doves. After lunch we walked the track leading north from the village. The track-side bushes provided some excellent views of a group of Tenerife kinglets, and we added Canary speckled wood to our butterfly list, as well as seeing more Canary blues. Of course, the reputed resident rock sparrows failed to make an appearance!

The North:

The sites that we visited in the northern part of the island were easily covered in a day. Our first visit was on 28th September (having started at Las Lugunelas), and we returned to visit a selection of the sites on the 30th.

Los Rodeos: Like many of the sites we visited in search of passerines, Los Rodeos (an area of fields with scrubby edges along the southern perimeter fence of the Tenerife North airport), proved to be hard work. We walked along the edge of the busy road which follows the perimeter fence, viewing the fields on the upward slope, with occasional forays up into scrub and bushes.



We saw our only greenfinch of the trip here – perched in a bush on the edge of a field at the beginning of the perimeter road. Linnets were fairly common, and we had a single kestrel, and that was it! We only visited this site on 28th September.

La Laguna: this site is described in Clarke and Collins, and was well worth a visit. However, initially we were unable to fathom the directions and got hopelessly lost in La Laguna centre.

The site is in the northern suburbs of La Laguna. Eventually we found the road junction at La Canteras where the TF121 heads south from the junction of the TF12 and the TF13, and from here Clarke and Collins' directions fit fairly well.

We visited this site on the 28th, and returned on the 30th for a second go!

The road described by Clarke and Collins has parallel service roads on either side which seem to form part of a measured jogging route, and consequently we were entertained by a variety of running styles and fitness levels. We wandered up and down the road viewing the roadside trees and gardens, and visiting a small park at the western end. The main attraction here is serin – a difficult bird on Tenerife. We kept hearing snatches of serin song, but dense foliage meant that on the 28th we had to settle for flight views. On the 30th we had good views of an apparent family party with a singing male in a roadside tree. Otherwise there were no great surprises – just Atlantic canaries and blue-tits. There was a sparrowhawk over the small park on the 28th. The area was pretty good for butterflies, with a few monarchs on flowering trees and shrubs, and a good number of long-tailed blues on a roadside hedge.

El Llano de los Viejos: Another picnic site, this time in dense woodland. The site is well marked on the left as you head north on the TF12, north of Las Mercedes. Several reports record Bolle's pigeon on the ground here – with up to six birds concerned. We visited on 25th September in the early afternoon, and even though there were very few people around birds were, literally, thin on the ground. However, we did disturb one Bolle's, which flew up from the ground under the trees on the northern slope away from the picnic tables. The bird perched up for several minutes, giving us good views. Also here were lots of "*tintillon*" chaffinches, along with Canary Island chiffchaffs, blue tits and robins. A pair of Tenerife kinglets were good value, behaving almost tree-creeper-like on tree trunks!

Valle Molino Reservoir: We called here as we were passing on both 28th and 30th September. There was very little water in the large concrete reservoir. Looking through the gates at the end of the entrance track there was little to see, other than 6+ grey herons on the 28th, with the addition of grey wagtail, plain swifts robin etc. on the 30th. However, on the 28th we had a peregrine tearing through the site and spooking the herons! The site is on the left (west) of the road as you travel through El Socorro.

Tejina Ponds: This was one of the more productive sites for us, and we visited on both 28th and 30th of September. The site is well covered in Clarke and Collins, but there has been significant road improvement on the TF13, effectively by-passing the town of Tejina as you approach from Tegueste. Keep a sharp look-out for the Bar El Puente down and to the right as you travel across a relatively new “fly-over” and turn right at the end of the fly-over to park on the roadside opposite the bar itself. From there, the directions in Clarke and Collins work for this first pond, and for the two others which are further along the TF13 towards Punta del Hidalgo.

Pond A: On both visits we had a spoonbill, which was festooned with colour rings and a flag. Using <http://www.cr-birding.org/> when we got back to the UK, a swift response from the ringer revealed that it was a female ringed as a fledgling in northern Germany in September 2010, and present on Tenerife since December 2011. Here on the 28th we also had a greenshank, 2 common sandpipers, 10+ moorhens, 3 coot, 2 grey herons and a grey wagtail. Similar birds were present on the 30th, but a little egret on the 30th gave us a bit of a shock, with bright yellow “boots” all the way up to its knees!

Pond B: This second pond gave us greenshank, common sandpiper, 5 little ringed plovers, moorhens and grey wagtail, with Berthelot’s pipits and Atlantic canaries in the vicinity.

Pond C: Having struggled up the slope in hot conditions on 28th, we found this pond completely dry. Other than a few Atlantic canaries in the scrub and a calling Sardinian warbler on the way up, there were no birds – a feral cat which we startled in the dry bed perhaps being part of the explanation! We didn’t bother to make the effort on the 30th.



Punta del Hidalgo: Because we were already on the TF13 visiting the Tejina Ponds on the 28th September, we continued to this site, which is at the very end of the road. We spent a pleasant hour standing around watching Cory’s shearwaters offshore and almost tripping over Berthelot’s pipits near the car. Other than yet more joggers running along coastal tracks, there was little else to entertain us.

Botanical Gardens (Puerto de la Cruz): The Botanical gardens are a lush tropical oasis in the northern part of Puerto de la Cruz – marked on any map of the town. On 30th September we paid the 3 euro entrance fee and spent an hour or so wandering around the gardens and formal pools. We had hoped to pick up some of the escaped resident parrot species, but apart from one rather raucous call we had no trace of any parrots, although we did see grey wagtail, blue tits, blackcap and blackbird.

Other interest was provided with brief views of two monarchs, several long-tailed blues, an ovipositing female emperor dragonfly and plenty of scarlet darters. There were also lots of terrapins in the pools which we presume to have been red-eared (although they had the requisite yellow stripes on the head, none seemed to have red “ears”).

Los Realejos Reservoir: On the 30th of September we drove along the TF342, which gives views down to the coastal plain. We managed to find Los Realejos reservoir, which had 54 coot covering its surface! There were also 4 moorhens, little egret and grey heron here.

Further west, we stopped at viewpoints at Los Lances, where we were able to look down on plain swifts, and then at the viewpoint at the top of the Ruiz Gorge, where we enjoyed prolonged views of a hunting Barbary falcon.

The South:

Golf del Sur: We made this our first stop after escaping from the airport on our arrival on the 25th September, and it was our last stop before returning our hire car and catching our homeward flight on 2nd October.



On both visits we concentrated our effort at the north end of the golf course, where there is a large area of waste-ground/scrub alongside the perimeter fence of the course. We tried walking along the roadside south of here to view fairways etc., and on the 2nd October we drove round the complex, stopping occasionally to view likely looking habitat. We probably didn't do the rest of the course justice, but certainly the area to the north was by far the most productive.

We parked in an obvious pull-in opposite the end of the course and walked along the fence away from the road. There are trees and shrubs along the fence itself, and a couple of large water-feature ponds a couple of hundred meters or so away. Outside the fence the waste-ground/scrub was bone-dry and about knee-high.

On both visits we found Barbary partridges in this scrub. We walked toward three obvious circular water tanks about 500m or so from the road. On 25th September we started disturbing partridges when we reached an obvious depression in the ground, and by the time we reached the water tanks we had put up at least 30 birds! On 2nd October there were far fewer birds, but none-the-less we totalled at least 7.

Viewing the ponds through the fence we were able to see little and cattle egrets (good numbers of the latter), moorhens and ducks – mainly exotics and Muscovies, but at least one mallard!

Along the fence we saw blackcaps, Canary Island chiffchaffs, and on both visits what was presumably the same pied flycatcher. On the 2nd October we had two *colybita* chiffchaffs, which were calling and singing, whilst scrabbling around in the bushes. On 2nd October we had our last trip-tick here when a flock (“charm”?) of 7 goldfinches flew out of the hedge and across the wasteland.

Amarilla Golf: Situated to the west of Golf del Sur, Amarilla Golf is a slightly more rough and ready course. Again, on our visits on 27th September and 2nd October, we concentrated our efforts on the holes at the northern end of the course. In particular we spent time working a dry baranco parallel to the fairway of the northernmost hole. Here on the 27th we had a southern grey shrike and a spectacled warbler, with plain swifts overhead. On 2nd October the shrike was still present and was singing, and on the fairway itself we had a northern wheatear and a juvenile white wagtail.

Heading north for two or three kilometres from here on the road leaving Amarilla Golf, as the road enters an industrial area there is a small roadside reservoir which is well worth a look. We stopped here on the 27th September and 2nd October. On 27th we had a juvenile little ringed plover, common sandpiper and greenshank. 16 little egrets stood around the concrete edges, with a moorhen and a grey heron. A female wood duck was with a motley selection of wildfowl near the inlet. On 2nd October we had two dunlin here, and also added grey wagtail, and a small flock of six or so Spanish sparrows which flew off from the surrounding vegetation.

El Fraile: This site is a large area of scrub behind the shore just east of the TF66 – which is signed to Las Galletas from the TF1 motorway. We spent the morning of September 27th here, prior to going on the ferry trip to La Gomera.

Heading south on the TF66, El Fraile is a small development on the right about 1k before you reach Las Galletas itself. We drove to the south west corner of the development (past the football ground) and then followed a rough track a short way into the scrub. The area is criss-crossed with tracks, and it would be possible to drive around most of them. However, we heeded a warning from other reports regarding the high risk of punctures, and parked early on!



We wandered around the tracks, old agricultural walls and scrub. As ever, it was fairly hard work, but we saw our only stone curlews of the trip here (two groups of four), our first southern grey shrike and our first spectacled warblers. The spectacled warblers were best near to a very large covered banana plantation – so large that it marked the limit of progress westward. Here we had at least three males, and on our return to the car we had another male in a tree right next to where we had parked!

On leaving the scrub, as we reached the tarmac road by the football ground a sparrow flew across the road, causing us to stop and investigate. A small fenced area of plants and shelters for vehicles was on the edge of the scrub, from which we could hear sparrows calling. As we struggled to get views of the small flock of Spanish sparrows, we picked up two birds in small trees within the fence. One was a wood warbler, and the other clearly a *hippolais* warbler – which we concluded was western olivaceous. While all this was going on, we were also able to identify the large dragonfly which was hunting along the fences as a female vagrant emperor (*Hemianex ephippiger*).

El Medano: We left Puerto de la Cruz very early on 2nd October so that we could spend time at El Medano in search of waders on our way to catch our homeward flights. This proved to be a good move.

Heading south on the TF1 motorway, El Medano is signed off to the left at the last junction before Tenerife South airport. The road takes you south to the town and through to the seafront. We arrived for first light, and as the light improved we could see waders on the rocky foreshore. Arriving early was a good move, as joggers and dog-walkers soon appeared, with one or two walking over the rocks to the water's edge. Around the beach to the west is a bay, but by the time we had finished with the rocky foreshore there were several people along the beach and no birds!

From our position overlooking the rocks we saw 6+ dunlin, 3+ whimbrel, at least 2 sanderling and 3 ringed plovers – all trip ticks!



opportunities to stand outside (and is more expensive than the alternative).

Ferry to La Gomera: We had no detailed information about ferries to La Gomera, so on Thursday 27th we travelled down to the south of the island early in the morning and found the ferry terminal in Los Christianos (it is well signed on the approach roads to the town). We discovered that there are currently two operators. Fred Olsen is the one to avoid – they operate an express ferry which does the trip one way in 35 minutes, with very limited

The ferry of choice is currently operated by ARMAS, which makes three one-hour return trips daily on a typical car ferry, with lots of open deck space to view from. We took the 2pm outward sailing and returned on the 5pm sailing. We had had ideas of doing a little birding in the couple of hours available in San Sebastian, but in the end settled for sitting in the main square and having a few beers.

Our target bird for the ferry trip (and for that matter for most of our land-based sea-watching) was little shearwater. Sadly, we failed, and the bird remained a gap in our trip list. The disappointment was eased somewhat by sightings of two Bulwer's petrels, about 45 minutes into the outward sailing. We also had sightings of three long-finned pilot whales earlier in the outward trip, but otherwise the sailings were characterised by constant views of Cory's shearwaters – many extremely close to the ship. As we approached Los Christianos on the return sailing we had two Sandwich terns.

ARMAS have a good web-site which gives details of ferry times etc.



El Teide from the TF21

Tenerife Bird List

1. Bulwer's Petrel:

Two birds were seen on the outward Los Cristianos (Tenerife) to San Sebastian (La Gomera) ferry 27/9.

2. Cory's Shearwater:

Abundant! Almost any sweep of the sea from any part of the coast would find Cory's Shearwaters. Excellent views were had at Punta Teno, and the views from the Los Cristianos (Tenerife) to San Sebastian (La Gomera) ferry on 27/9 were frequently very close indeed.

3. Cattle Egret:

Hérons and Egrets were not easy to find. We only saw this species near the water at the northern end of Golf del Sur, but here there were groups of up to eight birds around the ponds and trees.

4. Little Egret:

A more widespread species than Cattle Egret, but only seen in ones and twos except for 16 around the small reservoir north of Amarilla golf 27/9. An adult at Tejina on 30/9 had bright yellow all the way to its "knees"!

5. Grey Heron:

Uncommon. We saw two birds on a hillside as we drove past San Juan de Rambla on 26/9, six at the Val Molino reservoir 28/9, and then had occasional single birds on or over various ponds later in the trip.



6. Spoonbill:

A bird seen on 28/9 and 30/9 on a pool at Tejina was carrying colour-rings and a flag which subsequently identified it as a female ringed as a fledgling in northern Germany in September 2010, and present on Tenerife since December 2011.

7. Mallard:

A drake on the water's edge at Golf del Sur 25/9 was the only one we saw.

8. Sparrowhawk:
One circling over the small park at La Laguna 28/9, one over Vilaflor 1/10 and one at Golf del Sur on 2/10.
9. Buzzard:
Birds of the race *Buteo buteo insular* were fairly frequent. These included two at the Erjos Pools 26/9 and singles over various slopes and mountains.
10. Kestrel:
Birds of the endemic sub-species *Falco tinnunculus canariensis* were easily the most common raptor.
11. Peregrine Falcon:
A male spooked the few birds at Val Molina reservoir 29/9.
12. Barbary Falcon:
We saw two perched on rock outcrops on the high Teno Cliffs 26/9, with one there on 29/9. One was hunting the valley sides, seen from the top of the Ruiz Gorge 30/9, and one was over our resort at Puerto de la Cruz being mobbed by Plain Swifts on 1/10.
13. Barbary Partridge:
Our first birding stop was at the north end of Golf del Sur on 25/9. As we approached a small depression in the area of dry scrub outside the course fence we began flushing Barbary Partridges. It was difficult to be certain, but a conservative estimate of the number of birds here and near to the water storage tanks was 30. A return visit on 2/10 produced around six birds. The only other Barbary Partridge we saw was hanging from the belt of a hunter who we 'scoped from Las Grimonas on 30/9.
14. Moorhen:
This species was not difficult to find, usually in small numbers on most ponds etc.
15. Coot:
We had only seen this species in very small numbers at the pools at Tejina, until we visited Los Realjos reservoir on 30/9, where we had a total of 57 birds!
16. Stone-curlew:
We only saw Stone Curlews in the "El Fraille" area, near the southern airport on 27/9. Here we had two groups of four birds.
17. Little Ringed Plover:
Only seen at the Tejina Pools on 29/9 and 30/9, where there were up to five birds including juveniles.
18. Ringed Plover:
There were three birds on the rocky foreshore at El Medano 2/10.

19. Sanderling:
Two on the rocky foreshore at El Medano 2/10.
20. Dunlin:
There were 6+ birds on the rocky foreshore at El Medano 2/10.
21. Whimbrel:
At least three were on the rocky foreshore at El Medano 2/10.
22. Curlew:
One was on the shore, 'scoped from the ferry terminal, at Los Cristianos 27/9. The port police were rather unsettled by our 'scopes and tripods, and we were quickly asked to move on!
23. Greenshank:
Single birds were seen on the small reservoir north of Amarilla Golf on 27/9 and 2/10, and at Tejina Pools 28/9 and 30/9 with 2 birds present on the latter date.
24. Common Sandpiper:
Two were at Tejina on both the 28/9 and 30/9, and one at the small reservoir north of Amarilla Golf on 27/9 and 2/10.
25. Turnstone:
Up to six were on the shore, 'scoped from the ferry terminal at Los Cristianos 27/9.
26. Lesser Black-backed Gull:
Three adults were with a group of loafing Yellow-legged Gulls on the beach at Los Cristianos early morning 27/9.
27. Yellow-legged Gull:
Reasonably common along the shore, with largest groups on the beach at Los Cristianos early morning 27/9 on the rocks at Punta Teno.
28. Sandwich Tern:
Two birds from the ferry on 27/9 as we approached Los Cristianos on the return trip.
29. Rock Dove / Feral Pigeon:
Pretty common. In the mountains, and along the cliffs towards Punta Teno many looked good for 'Rock Dove'.

30. Bolle's Pigeon:

One was 'scoped whilst perched at La Grimonas 26/9, one flew across the road as we drove to the Erjos Pools 26/9 and one was perched El Llano de los Viejos 28/9 and watched in the 'scope.



31. Laurel Pigeon:

We had flight views of at least two birds and scope views of two perched at La Grimonas 26/9, with three flying off and again in the 'scope two perched together there on 30/9.



32. Collared Dove:

Common in gardens and woodland edges.

33. Ring-necked Parakeet:

We only identified one free-flying parrot species – a Ring-necked Parakeet which was flying around calling outside our hotel in Puerto de la Cruz on 29/9. We heard a loud parrot call at the botanical gardens on 30/9, and we had two unidentified large parrots calling high over La Caldera on 1/10.

34. Plain Swift:

For some reason we had imagined that Plain Swift might be a tricky species to find. In fact we encountered it almost everywhere – especially pleasing was the flock of up to 20 birds which we saw regularly from our apartment balcony. We had what we have to assume was an aberrant Plain Swift with a completely white body, which was with a flock of 10+ birds at the Erjos Pools on 26/9. A flock of around 30 birds were mobbing a Barbary Falcon over Puerto de la Cruz on 1/10.

35. Great Spotted Woodpecker:
The striking endemic sub-species *Dendrocopus major canariensis* was a frequent visitor, usually in pairs, to the small drinking pool at Las Lajas on our visits on 25/9 and 1/10 and also seen flying across the road on the northern slopes of Mount Teide.



36. Berthelot's Pipit:
Common. We saw this species every day in habitats ranging from dry "semi-desert" to lush golf course greens.



37. Grey Wagtail:
Another endemic sub-species, *Motacilla cinerea canariensis*. Quite a common bird – across an unexpectedly wide range of habitats.
38. White Wagtail:
We saw a juvenile on a fairway at the northern end of the Amarilla Golf course 2/10.
39. Robin:
Quite a frequently met species, of the sub-species *Erithacus rubecula superbis* more often heard than seen.
40. Northern Wheatear:
An adult female was close to the White Wagtail on a fairway at the northern end of the Amarilla Golf course 2/10.

41. Blackbird:
Pretty common in parks, gardens and wooded areas.
42. Western Olivaceous Warbler:
We concluded that an obvious *hippolais* warbler in bushes near the football ground at El Fraille on 27/9 was this species.
43. Spectacled Warbler:
There were at least four (including two singing males) in scrub at El Fraille 27/9. We also saw one in a dry barranco at Amarilla Golf on 27/9.
44. Sardinian Warbler:
A fairly common species in suitable habitat. One called daily from the vegetation above our hotel's swimming pool but we never managed to see it!
45. Blackcap:
Not common, more often heard than seen, but at least two were in the hedges at the northern end of Golf del Sur on both of our visits, 25/9 and 2/10.
46. Wood Warbler:
One was in bushes near the football ground at El Fraille on 27/9.
47. Canary Island Chiffchaff:
A very common bird. Hardly a site visited was without this species. Its range of calls and song took some adjusting to!
48. Chiffchaff:
We saw two, which were calling and singing, in hedges at the northern end of Golf del Sur on 2/10.
49. Tenerife Kinglet:
After an initial struggle to find this species at Las Lagunelas on 28/8, this species seemed to give itself up and we had excellent close views of birds at El Llano de los Viejos on 28/9, Teno Alta on 29/9 and La Caldera on 1/10.
50. Spotted Flycatcher:
Only one seen- flycatching from bushes in the hire-car parking area at the southern airport when we arrived on 25/9.
51. Pied Flycatcher:
A juvenile bird was flycatching from the fence along the northern edge of Gold del Sur 25/9, and presumably the same bird remained there on 2/10.



52. Blue Tit:

An endemic sub-species *Parus caeruleus teneriffae*. A pretty common bird in suitable habitat, with good views of birds visiting the small drinking pool at Las Lajas on our visits on 25/9 and 1/1.

53. Southern Grey Shrike:

We saw birds of the race *Lanius excubitor koenigi* at El Fraille on 27/9, and another at the Northern end of Amarilla Golf on 27/9 and again on 2/10 when it was singing.

54. Raven:

There were two birds around and over Erjos Pools 26/9.

55. Spanish Sparrow:

Not common. Small groups seen behind the southern airport on our arrival on 25/9, on the edge of El Fraille 27/9 and the small reservoir north of Amarilla Golf 2/10.

56. Chaffinch:

A male of the endemic sub-species *Fringilla coelebs tintillon* was at Erjos Pools 26/9, and then plenty of birds were around at El Llano de los Viejos 28/9 and one was heard at La Caldera on 1/10.

57. Blue Chaffinch:

Fairly easily found around the picnic area and the small drinking pool at Las Lajas on our visits on 25/9 and 1/10. One was heard at La Caldera on 1/10.

58. Serin:

We heard and had a flight view of a Serin at La Laguna 28/9, but then had good views of a family party including a singing male in trees at the same location on 30/9.

59. Atlantic Canary:

A very common bird, often in quite large flocks of up to 20. The range of songs and calls caused us some consternation at times before realising that we were hearing Canaries, not a new species for the trip!



60. Greenfinch:

Only one bird seen – in bushes on the fields at Los Rodeos (near the northern airport).

61. Goldfinch:

The last species added to our trip-list when a “charm” of seven birds flew out of the hedge at the northern end of Golf del Sur 2/10.

62. Linnet:

Seen in small numbers at several locations during our trip.

63. Corn Bunting:

A group of four birds were around a goat compound just outside Teno Alta 29/9 and up to 10 others were in the general area.

Tenerife Dragonflies

1. Emperor (*Anax Imperator*):
The most common large dragonfly, often seen patrolling away from water. Females were seen ovipositing at a water tank just south of Santiago del Teide 26/9 and in a pond at the Botanic Gardens, Puerto de la Cruz 30/9.
2. Vagrant Emperor (*Hemianex ephippiger*):
A female was hunting around plants and bushes in a small compound near the football ground at El Fraille on 27/9.
3. Epaulet Skimmer (*Orthetrum chrysostigma*):
An adult and an immature male were on and near a water tank just south of Santiago del Teide 26/9.
4. Scarlet Darter (*Crocothemis erythrea*):
Common around the ponds in the Botanical Gardens in Puerto de la Cruz 30/9.
5. Red-veined Darter (*Sympetrum fonscolombei*):
The most frequently met dragonfly, with many (especially females) found away from water.



Tenerife Butterflies

1. Canary Island Large White:
Two were seen, looking down from the mirador at Icod el Alto.
2. Small White:
Quite common.
3. Bath
White: Uncommon.
4. Green-striped White:
Seen at several locations including El Fraille.
5. African Migrant:
One seen, at Teno Alta 29/9.
6. Long-tailed Blue:
Common. Seen in numbers at La Laguna 28/9 and in the Botanic Gardens at Puerto de la Cruz 30/9.
7. Canary Blue:
Seen at La Laguna 28/9 and Teno Alta 29/9.
8. Canary Red Admiral:
Only one seen, at La Caldera, 1/10.
9. Meadow Brown:
Common around the Erjos Pools 26/9.
10. Canary Speckled Wood:
A few at Teno Alta 29/9.
11. Monarch:
Several at La Laguna 28/9, and two (briefly) at the Botanic Gardens Puerto de la Cruz 30/9.

Tenerife Vertebrates:

1. Barracuda:
At Punta Teno on 28/9, we watched an angler catch and land a large specimen of this impressive fish!
2. Marsh Frog:
Heard in the pools at the small Park at La Laguna 28/9.
3. Red-eared Terrapin:
We saw this introduced species in pools at the small park in La Laguna 28/9 and 30/9, and in the ornamental ponds of the Botanical Gardens in Puerto de la Cruz on
4. West Canaries Lizard:
Very common indeed, all over the island. The wall below the mirador at La Grimonas had over 20 individuals (including some large males) soaking up the sun in the early morning of 26/9.
5. Long-finned Pilot Whale:
Three together from the outward Los Cristianos – San Sebastian ferry 27/9.
6. Algerian Hedgehog:
A road-kill victim on the road north of Amarilla Golf 27/9.
7. Rabbit:
A few singles seen at various locations including the Erjos Pools 26/9.
8. Brown Rat:
Another road-kill victim at Tejina pools!
9. Feral Cat:
Several seen in the rural areas and a very flat road-kill victim at Tejina pools!

