



Field Guides Tour Report

Morocco 2018: Canary Islands Extension

Sep 25, 2017 to Sep 30, 2017
Jesse Fagan and Godfried Schreur

For our tour description, itinerary, past triplists, dates, fees, and more, please [VISIT OUR TOUR PAGE](#).



The lava fields below Teide Volcano on Tenerife were impressive, and a favorite of most everyone on the trip. Photo by guide Jesse Fagan.

A wonderful inaugural tour to the Canary Islands! We visited four islands in 6 days, which included a couple of ferry rides and one small hop from Gran Canaria to Fuerteventura by plane. Overall, it was a relaxed and fun island adventure in which we recorded all the endemic species and a bunch of interesting subspecies. Thanks to my great group and my excellent coleader, Godfried. All the best birding for the remaining 2018 and beyond.

Jesse (aka Motmot) from Lima, Peru

KEYS FOR THIS LIST

One of the following keys may be shown in brackets for individual species as appropriate: * = heard only, I = introduced, E = endemic, N = nesting, a = austral migrant, b = boreal migrant

BIRDS

Anatidae (Ducks, Geese, and Waterfowl)

RUDDY SHELDUCK (*Tadorna ferruginea*) – Good numbers seen at Los Molinos reservoir on Tenerife.

MALLARD (*Anas platyrhynchos*) – One drake was seen at Los Molinos. It looked a bit lonely.

Procellariidae (Shearwaters and Petrels)

CORY'S SHEARWATER (BOREALIS) (*Calonectris diomedea borealis*) – Good numbers (500 indiv.) on the ferry to La Gomera and smaller numbers from Tenerife to Gran Canaria.

Ardeidae (Herons, Egrets, and Bitterns)

GRAY HERON (*Ardea cinerea*) – One on Tenerife and large numbers at Los Molinos Reservoir.

LITTLE EGRET (*Egretta garzetta*) – Singles around Tenerife and Gran Canaria, but good numbers again on Fuerteventura.

CATTLE EGRET (*Bubulcus ibis*) – Just one on Fuerteventura in the town of Tindaya.

Accipitridae (Hawks, Eagles, and Kites)

EGYPTIAN VULTURE (*Neophron percnopterus majorensis*) – Non-migratory and larger in size than mainland populations. Supposedly, first arrived with human colonization of the eastern Canaries approx. 2500 years ago.

COMMON BUZZARD (CANARY IS.) (*Buteo buteo insularum*) – Fairly common on all the islands.

Otididae (Bustards)

HOUBARA BUSTARD (CANARY IS.) (*Chlamydotis undulata fuertaventurae*) – Super awesome to have such nice looks at this species. Seen near Tindaya.

Rallidae (Rails, Gallinules, and Coots)

EURASIAN COOT (*Fulica atra*) – Around 50 indiv. were on the Los Molinos Reservoir.

Recurvirostridae (Stilts and Avocets)

BLACK-WINGED STILT (*Himantopus himantopus*) – Big numbers on Los Molinos Reservoir.

Charadriidae (Plovers and Lapwings)

COMMON RINGED PLOVER (*Charadrius hiaticula*) – Small numbers on Fuerteventura at Salinas del Carmen.

Scolopacidae (Sandpipers and Allies)

WHIMBREL (*Numenius phaeopus*) – One on Tenerife and small numbers on Fuerteventura.

SANDERLING (*Calidris alba*) – A sharply plumaged juvenile was at Salinas del Carmen.

COMMON SANDPIPER (*Actitis hypoleucos*) – At least four were along the margins of Los Molinos Reservoir.

COMMON GREENSHANK (*Tringa nebularia*) – Small numbers at Los Molinos Reservoir.

COMMON REDSHANK (*Tringa totanus*) – One was at Salinas del Carmen on Fuerteventura.

Glareolidae (Pratincoles and Coursers)

CREAM-COLORED COURSER (*Cursorius cursor exsul*) – Really nice looks at 5 birds near Tindaya. This one seems super strange to be found on an island?!

Laridae (Gulls, Terns, and Skimmers)

YELLOW-LEGGED GULL (*Larus michahellis*) – Seen on all the islands.

LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL (*Larus fuscus*) – A few on Tenerife.

SANDWICH TERN (*Thalasseus sandvicensis*) – There were several feeding offshore at Salinas del Carmen, Fuerteventura.

Pteroclididae (Sandgrouse)

BLACK-BELLIED SANDGROUSE (*Pterocles orientalis*) – Large flocks were seen in flight on Fuerteventura, but we also got close to a group of 30 or so indiv. on the ground here. The birds on the Canary Islands are of the nominate race.

Columbidae (Pigeons and Doves)

ROCK PIGEON (*Columba livia*) – Seen on all of the islands. These are feral populations.

BOLLE'S PIGEON (*Columba bollii*) – Usually the more common of the endemic pigeons on La Gomera to see, however, we only saw a handful. The unusual clear, sunny day was probably the reason. [E]

LAUREL PIGEON (*Columba junoniae*) – At least half a dozen were seen perched and heard calling from our overlook on La Gomera. [E]

EURASIAN COLLARED-DOVE (*Streptopelia decaocto*) – Seen or heard on all the islands. Introduced. [I]

Apodidae (Swifts)

PLAIN SWIFT (*Apus unicolor*) – Seen on all the islands, but good numbers on La Gomera.

Upupidae (Hoopoes)

EURASIAN HOOPOE (*Upupa epops*) – The nominate subspecies is resident to Fuerteventura. We saw them at a couple of different sites.

Picidae (Woodpeckers)

GREAT SPOTTED WOODPECKER (CANARIAN) (*Dendrocopos major canariensis*) – The subspecies seen on Tenerife.

GREAT SPOTTED WOODPECKER (CANARIAN) (*Dendrocopos major thanneri*) – Those on Gran Canaria.

Falconidae (Falcons and Caracaras)

EURASIAN KESTREL (*Falco tinnunculus*) – Seen throughout the islands. Seems there are two subspecies on the islands. The more western group including La Gomera and Tenerife (?) belong to *canariensis*. The eastern group on Fuerteventura is *dacotiae*. Godfried thought that birds on the islands were smaller and had broader wings than mainland birds.

PEREGRINE FALCON (*Falco peregrinus*) – The one on Tenerife (flying over the boat carrying prey) sure looked like a northern bird to my eyes. I can't be 100% sure, so let's leave it at as Peregrine sp.

PEREGRINE FALCON (BARBARY) (*Falco peregrinus pelegrinoides*) – Awesome looks at a perched bird on Fuerteventura. A few others seen in flight.

Laniidae (Shrikes)

SOUTHERN GRAY SHRIKE (SOUTHERN) (*Lanius meridionalis koenigi*) – A little confusion about what is actually being seen on the islands. This may now be a subspecies of Great Gray Shrike, *L. excubitor koenigi*.

Corvidae (Crows, Jays, and Magpies)

COMMON RAVEN (*Corvus corax*) – Seen on all of the islands.

Alaudidae (Larks)

LESSER SHORT-TOED LARK (*Alaudala rufescens polatzeki*) – Good numbers in open, rocky country on Fuerteventura.

Paridae (Tits, Chickadees, and Titmice)

AFRICAN BLUE TIT (*Cyanistes teneriffae*) – Complicated taxonomy here. The birds seen on Fuerteventura (at Bentancuria; Ultramarine Tit) are genetically indistinguishable from the NW African race, *degener*. However, birds on Gran Canaria, La Gomera, and Tenerife could all be split in the future. They represent an older lineage and may have sufficient divergence to be three distinctive species.

Regulidae (Kinglets)

CANARY ISLANDS KINGLET (*Regulus teneriffae*) – Also, known as Goldcrest. Seen well on Tenerife in the Canary Island Pine forest. [E]

Phylloscopidae (Leaf Warblers).

WILLOW WARBLER (*Phylloscopus trochilus*) – We had large numbers on Fuerteventura. Near Tindaya and even on the beach at El Cotillo. I am going to remove the chiffchaffs from our list b/c, in the end, I can't conclusively say we saw either Common or Iberian.

CANARY ISLANDS CHIFFCHAFF (*Phylloscopus canariensis*) – Seen very well on Tenerife, La Gomera, and Gran Canaria. [E]

Acrocephalidae (Reed Warblers and Allies).

EURASIAN REED WARBLER (*Acrocephalus scirpaceus*) – A couple of birds were in the reeds (not surprisingly) at Betancuria.

Sylviidae (Sylviid Warblers).

EURASIAN BLACKCAP (*Sylvia atricapilla*) [*]

SUBALPINE WARBLER (*Sylvia cantillans*) – Two were in the scrubby brush with the Willow Warblers on Fuerteventura.

SARDINIAN WARBLER (*Sylvia melanocephala*) – Seen nicely on Fuerteventura at Betancuria.

SPECTACLED WARBLER (*Sylvia conspicillata*) – Seen at several spots on Fuerteventura, where resident.

Muscicapidae (Old World Flycatchers).

SPOTTED FLYCATCHER (*Muscicapa striata*) – Small numbers were seen on Fuerteventura including one on the rocky beach at El Cotillo.

EUROPEAN ROBIN (*Erithacus rubecula superbus*) – A few of us went to look for (and found) this subspecies on Gran Canaria (very near the hotel).

EUROPEAN PIED FLYCATCHER (*Ficedula hypoleuca*) – One was on Tenerife, a couple on Gran Canaria, and a few on Fuerteventura.

FUERTEVENTURA STONECHAT (*Saxicola dacotiae*) – Endemic! A smart looking bird that we saw very well (a couple of pairs) on Fuerteventura.

NORTHERN WHEATEAR (*Oenanthe oenanthe*) – A good bird for the Canary Islands. A lost northern migrant was at Laguna Grande on La Gomera.

Turdidae (Thrushes and Allies).

EURASIAN BLACKBIRD (*Turdus merula*) – Common on the western Canary Islands. Not seen on Fuerteventura.

Motacillidae (Wagtails and Pipits).

GRAY WAGTAIL (*Motacilla cinerea*) – One on Tenerife.

BERTHELOT'S PIPIT (*Anthus berthelotii*) – Good numbers in the lava fields below Teide. Also, seen again on Fuerteventura.

Fringillidae (Finches, Euphonias, and Allies).

COMMON CHAFFINCH (CANARY IS.) (*Fringilla coelebs canariensis*) – This was the subspecies seen on both La Gomera and Gran Canaria.

BLUE CHAFFINCH (TENERIFE) (*Fringilla teydea teydea*) – Females were seen a few times in the pine forest above Vilaflor, but then a stunning male put in a close appearance. Lovely bird. [E]

BLUE CHAFFINCH (GRAN CANARIA) (*Fringilla teydea polatzeki*) – Currently, treated as a subspecies of Blue Chaffinch (AOU/Clements 2018), but this population is very rare; and it should be split very soon. One of the rarest of the Palearctic birds. Thankfully, we were able to see a young male. The bill is much larger on this subspecies compared with Tenerife Blue Chaffinch. [E]

TRUMPETER FINCH (*Bucanetes githagineus*) – Good numbers were seen on Fuerteventura where they seem more common than on mainland Africa.

EURASIAN LINNET (*Linaria cannabina*) – Small numbers but widespread on Fuerteventura.

EUROPEAN GOLDFINCH (*Carduelis carduelis*) – Around 6 indiv. were seen on Fuerteventura at Betancuria.

ISLAND CANARY (*Serinus canaria*) – Endemic to Macaronesia. They were common on Tenerife and Gran Canaria.

Passeridae (Old World Sparrows).

SPANISH SPARROW (*Passer hispaniolensis*) – Very common on Fuerteventura.

Estrildidae (Waxbills and Allies).

COMMON WAXBILL (*Estrilda astrild*) – A small group was seen near our hotel on Gran Canaria.

MAMMALS

BARBARY GROUND SQUIRREL (*Atlantoxerus getulus*) – Attack of the ground squirrels!! [I]

SHORT-FINNED PILOT WHALE (*Globicephala macrorhynchus*) – A small pod was seen on our way back from La Gomera.

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

Other critters seen on the tour:

Tenerife Lizard (*Gallotia galloti*) = These were the large lizards seen on the southern lava fields below Teide Volcano. The big males had blue spots on the sides of their bodies.

Totals for the tour: 62 bird taxa and 2 mammal taxa