

Trip Report

Madeira

23 August – 6 September 2002

Compiled by Niklas Holmström

Participants

23 – 30 August: Niklas Holmström, Laila Nyström and Lena Thurang, Sweden

30 August – 6 September: Niklas Holmström, Sweden

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Travel Info

We booked a flight including accommodation for the first week and transfer from Stockholm (Arlanda Airport) via the Swedish travel agency Fritidsresor. We stayed at Hotel Paraiso in the western part of Funchal, only a 10 minute walk to the sea (Lido) and about 25 to the seawatchpoint Ponta da Cruz. The apartment had a small kitchen and refrigerator, so we could make our own breakfast as well. We rented a car (Peugot 206) from Moinho via our travel agency, for one day (27/9). When my girlfriend (Lena) and my mother (Laila) left Madeira on 30 August, I took the morning bus from Funchal (Lido Monumental) to Porto Moniz.

This was my second trip to Madeira (see the report from 2000) and I didn't look hard for the birds on the land, which I had already seen. The first week covers the period of a family holiday, however, I did see a lot of the Madeiran land birds. My main goal for the birding on this trip was the seawatching from Porto Moniz in the second week. The reason for this was the memory of the 'big day' on 7 September 2000. The seawatching from the shore of Porto Moniz was excellent as expected! To every birder with a family Madeira is perfect for a combined holiday trip! Many places on Madeira, which are good for birders are also good for everyone, which means astonishing views, culture and levada walking. It's funny, with my mother and my girlfriend I saw more Madeiran Firecrests, Chaffinchs and Robins than on my trip 2000! Yet, on the 2000 trip we hunted for all these, but didn't reach the numbers of this trip!

On Friday morning 30/8 I took the bus from Funchal to Porto Moniz. The bus didn't go through the tunnels, but over the mountains: Funchal (along Câmara de Lobos) – Ribeira Brava (10 minutes stop) – Encumeada – São Vicente (10 minutes stop) – Porto Moniz (along the northern coast line via Seixal). The bus trip took about two and a half hours. In Porto Moniz there are many small Hotels and Residencials. If you are a small group of birders I don't think it's necessary to book room beforehand. When I arrived in Porto Moniz I checked in at 'Residencial Salgueiro' at the western part, where you'll find all the tourists. From my balcony (or the sun deck) I had good view over the sea and did lot of seawatching from there (just to see the activity over the sea). How many have had Bulwer's Petrels, Cory's, Great and Manx Shearwaters from a sunny balcony, with a cold beer on the table? On Thursday 5/9 I took the bus from Porto Moniz (12:15) to Funchal. This time the bus drove through the tunnels and I arrived to Funchal one and a half hours later. After a late lunch I took the bus to Machico (from the Marina) and checked into Hotel Dom Pedro, where I had booked beforehand, because it's near the airport. After a morning with birding, on the 6 September, I packed my things and took a taxi to the airport. The plane to Sweden left Madeira at 11:55, 25 minutes before the fixed time!

Weather

The first week the temperature was pleasant, mostly between 22 and 25°C, because of often cloudy weather over Funchal, with occasionally light rain two days. This was unusual for Funchal during this time of the year! At Porto Moniz, the second week, the weather was mostly sunny and hot, but the wind had a somewhat cooling effect. In the northern parts the days are often more or less cloudy, but not this time except for a few hours each day. However, the clouds seldom cover the sea, but gather around the mountains over Porto Moniz. The exception was the last day (the morning on 5/9) when it was overcast with brisk winds from an easterly direction.

Recommended Trip reports and Literature

Trip Report: Madeira and Porto Santo, 29 August-5 September 2002, Peter L. Meininger et. al.

Trip Report: Madeira, 5-12 September 2000, Niklas Holmström

Trip Report: Madeira, 18 September-2 October 1999, Keith Regan

On the web site 'Birds at Madeiran Archipelago', you'll find the reports mentioned above as well as many more:

The web address is: www.algonet.se/~nho/madeira/

Madeira, an attractive birding destination, Juha Laaksonen, Alula 4/99

A birdwatchers' guide to Portugal and Madeira. Moore C.C., Elias G. & Costa H., 1997. Prion Ltd., Perry.

Madeira's Natural History in a Nutshell, Peter Sziemer, 2000 Barcelona. I can highly recommend this book to everyone interested in Madeiran nature, and of course the book contains much information about all of the bird species. The book is rich illustrated with colour photos. The title is also available in German language. If you plan to visit Madeira you have to buy this excellent book!

Flight Identification of European Seabirds. Blomdahl A., Breife B. and Holmström N., London 2002. I did have the final manuscript with all the photos with me on the laptop computer. When writing this report the book is already in the printing machines. Unfortunately I have (as always?) something to add to the text in the book. For the Madeira conditions, you'll find a short ID text after each seabird species.

Reference: *The Birds of the Western Palearctic*. Snow D.W. & Perrins C.M., 1998. *Concise edition*. Oxford University Press, Oxford.

Day-by-day Report

23 August

We arrived to the airport at 11:10 and the first two Little Egrets were seen from the bus in Funchal. We did Funchal in the afternoon, including the Botanical Garden (Governors Residence). In the evening (20:00-20:40) I seawatched from the shore of Lido and observed 10 Bulwer's Petrels, 118 Cory's Shearwaters and three Flying Fishes.

24 August

Boat trip with 'Ventura do Mar' to Desertas Islands from 08:00 to 20:00. The boat had been fully booked (14 persons) for a week. I had foreseen this and had booked places for three, ten days earlier. The day was sunny and hot. In the morning there was no wind at all and the sea was very calm. After three hours on the way out, there was much more wind and we were able to sail the last hour to Deserta Grande. We lay at anchor for four hours, had a very good and much longed-for lunch, bathed in the incredible clear blue and warm sea, and then we landed on the island. I had frightened the passengers by telling them about the highly poisonous Great Wolf Spider, but unfortunately we didn't see one, nor did we see any Monk Seals. Personnel at the biological research station told us about the nature on the Desertas Islands, Chão (the small flat one), Deserta Grande and Bugio (the southern most island and were the Fea's Petrel breed). The marine biologist Tata (one of the crew on the boat) showed me three nests of Bulwer's Petrel, in each nest there was a big downy grey fur ball, a Bulwer's chick!

On the way back (16:00-20:00) the wind was more brisk and we had a second lunch onboard, a cold beer and excellent and close views of Bulwer's Petrel, my absolute favourite among the seabirds at Madeira! In total I observed 26 Bulwer's Petrels, 376 Cory's Shearwaters and 1 Little Shearwater. I will admit that I was a bit disappointed by the fact that I couldn't find a single Fea's/Zino's Petrel, not even a distant one. But birds are not everything and this day was wonderful. A day to remember! The service onboard by the two marine biologists, Tata and Filipe, was extraordinarily good!

25 August

Seawatching from Ponta da Cruz in the morning (07:25-09.30). Apart from many Bulwer's Petrels and Cory's Shearwaters I recognized the first Fea's/Zino's Petrel on the trip, rather distant and flying towards the west. The rest of the day we spent in Funchal discovering the Old City and much more.

26 August

Seawatching from Ponta da Cruz in the morning (07:30-09.10). This morning was very windy (from E) and the seawatching was something to behold. Cory's Shearwater everywhere and it was nice to see so many using the 'shearwater-style' of flight action. Many Bulwer's were also seen and a few came relatively near the shore. After a lunch at our favourite place in the Old City, we took the cableway (both ways) up to Monte. We spent three hours (13:30-16:30) walking in the big Tropical Garden at Monte. Excellent views of Madeiran Firecrests (both adults and juveniles) and Chaffinches, as well as many Robins and big flocks of Plain Swifts. In the garden a pair of Mute Swan and Wood Ducks were held in captivity.

27 August

We woke up to unusual weather; overcast and rain, but warm. We hired a car and drove to Curral das Freiras ('stable of the nuns'). Enjoyed the landscape and had a cup of coffee (10:00-11:00). In dense clouds and rain we drove through the mountains to Ribeiro Frio (12:20-14:00). There were no tourists at all, probably because of the weather. Thank God! We had a nice walk along the levada to the watchpoint Balcões. When we arrived at the 'balcony' watchpoint the clouds disappeared and the sun shone through brightly as though nothing unusual had happened. The view from the watchpoint is very impressive with hillsides covered with Laurel forest and the blue sea to the north. We had lots of Madeiran Firecrests and Chaffinches and the only three Large White (butterfly) we were to see. At the beginning of the walk from Ribeiro Frio to Balcões (10-15 minutes) there is a small house and the owner, an old man, sold homemade things. On the way back (still no tourists!) we stayed there for an hour. We drank coffee, tested homemade wines, booze, liqueurs and had a nice chat with the owner near the open fire in the house. Of course my mother and my girlfriend bought many things, alcohol, bulbs and field garlic, Madeiran caps and mementoes!

Driving north from Ribeiro Frio, there is a watchpoint only a kilometre away. We stayed there because I had 2-3 Long-toed Pigeon there in year 2000. After only five minutes I saw the first one and after a few seconds more there was another bird, which we all saw. After that we drove via Faial-Santana-São Vicente back to Funchal through the tunnels (we arrived 19:00).

28 August

Seawatching from Ponta da Cruz in the morning (07:30-10.00) produced 33 Bulwer's Petrels and 540 Cory's Shearwaters. The true highlight of the day was the dolphins travelling in all directions! There were at least 120 individuals divided into many small groups and a few bigger ones. I watched this scene for at least an hour!

In the afternoon (14:30-18:00) Lena and I went on a second boat trip with 'Ventura do Mar', this time to Cabo Girão (west of Funchal). Because of all the dolphins in the morning there were lots of boats going out this afternoon, trying to see them and perhaps get some close views. Our boat therefore took a very off shore line to Cabo Girão and on the way back closer to the coastline. I, who had seen all the dolphins in the morning, enjoyed excellent views of Bulwer's Petrels (24) and Cory's Shearwaters (44) in good light conditions! In fact this trip offered the very best views of the Bulwer's, compared to the Desertas trip.

29 August

Seawatching from Ponta da Cruz in the morning (07:40-09.00) produced 12 Bulwer's Petrels, 160 Cory's Shearwaters and 2 Fea's/Zino's Petrels. One of the latter come close to the coast and was at that time the best observation of the specie's/species I had ever had! A British birder came by and told me about the Spotted Sandpiper in Machico. Thank you!

At 11.30 we took the bus from Funchal to Camacha. From Camacha we walked the Canico Levada downwards to Moinhos. Two hours of beautiful and easy walking in levadas that I can highly recommend! The bus tickets are cheap all over Madeira, so don't buy an arranged (and comparatively expensive) levada walking tour through an agency. We had a lot of singing Blackcaps, close views of Madeiran Firecrests and Chaffinches as well as many Buzzards and big flocks of Plain Swifts. We also found a few green Four-spot Crickets along the levada.

30 August to 5 September

From the afternoon/evening 30/8 to late morning on 5/9 I seawatched from Porto Moniz, see that heading in this trip report. At Porto Moniz I also meet three good Dutch birders (Peter L. Meininger, Erik Sanders and Gido Davidse). We seawatched together for three days. The seawatching was more pleasant in the company of these three, which included many good discussions about identification of seabirds in different light conditions!

5-6 September

I arrived to Machico at 16:00 on 5/9. I checked in at my pre booked room at hotel Dom Pedro, the highest building near the beach. Between 16:45-18.00 I watched birds along the beach, especially at the mouth of

Ribeiro Machico. Among four species of shorebirds I suddenly found the Spotted Sandpiper, an adult in summer plumage! I had a very nice morning (08:00-09:30) birding in Machico on the 6/9. The Spotted Sandpiper was still present, but I will remember this morning because of the solitude and the concert of all the singing Canarys (and a few Blackcaps), calls of Goldfinchs, Grey Wagtails and all the alert Common Waxbills. Of the latter I had innumerable excellent views! Many sat only a few metres away from me on the wall to Ribeiro Macchico. After this I took two very slow cups of coffee at the silent plaza of Machico, watching Madeirans go to work and trying to sum up two wonderful weeks on Madeira...

Seawatching

There are many headlands on the island that look as though they should produce good views of seabirds under the right conditions. The current knowledge suggests that they are mostly disappointing and one reason is that many presumed hot spots (on the map) are placed too high over the sea such as Ponta do Rosto and Ponta do Pargo. The best and most consistent seawatching spot near Funchal is Ponta da Cruz, the most southerly point of the island, or at Lido. Here a westward movement in the morning and an eastward movement in the evening are visible representing birds travelling to and from the Desertas Islands. The winds are often light on the south side of the island and always more brisk along the northern coastline. Most birders sea watch from a watch point 15 minutes walking (along the shore parade) west of Lido, relatively high above the sea. This site is mentioned in several trip reports as the best site for sea watching. But at Ponta da Cruz there is one more and even better spot. Some hundreds metres east of the southern most and highest spot there is a path leading down to the sea (and the few high rocks reaching from the sea). Here you'll find a good place to sea watch from, lower to the sea surface. In the afternoon this place seems to be a place for nudists or something like that. However, in the morning there are no people there and you can seawatch without stress.

Most seabirds are observed rather distantly. If you are an experienced sea watcher, Ponta da Cruz will be a good training spot for you. The disadvantages are the generally unfavourable light conditions and the position of the observers, quite high on a cliff (but see above). The advantage of Ponta da Cruz is (for an experienced seawatcher) seeing Bulwer's in high numbers. The sea on the south of Madeira is often calm and therefore a better greyish backdrop to detect the blackish Bulwer's. On the other hand the heat haze starts relatively early (compared to Porto Moniz) and is of course frustrating!

Funchal/Ponta da Cruz is located much nearer Desertas Islands, than the hot spot Porto Moniz, which is located at the northwestern tip of Madeira (see the next paragraph). At Ponta da Cruz the difference in direction of the seabirds between the morning and evening is obvious, probably because of the closeness of Desertas. In Porto Moniz, the direction seabirds travel is more complex. Bulwer's Petrels, Little and Cory's Shearwaters had there own directions, both to the east and to the west in the morning and afternoon. I think that these birds off Porto Moniz already have found there feeding waters. I don't think the small shearwaters and petrels have the time to get back to Desertas from Porto Moniz if they headed west in the morning! However, many of the seabirds don't return to their nests every night. Probably that's the reason you'll find some of the breeding seabirds heading east already in the morning at Porto Moniz.

Seawatching elsewhere is less productive with the very notable exception of (already mentioned) Porto Moniz – an excellent and relatively low placed spot near the sea. I found many good places to watch from on this trip. In 2000 I thought the best place to watch from was the shore parade, between the two natural swimming pool areas. On the astonishing day on 31 August I seawatched from there. However, I think the best place for sea watching is located at the eastern part. Near the small and high island Mole, which does not cause a problem for the view. Many seabirds come from the big bay east of Porto Moniz and then round Mole, which is the northern most tip of Porto Moniz. From Monday 2 September and onwards I watched from the low concrete wall next to the coach parking lot, overlooking the natural swimming pools at the eastern part of Porto Moniz. This place is very good, especially if you are a group of seawatchers. If you are alone or two, you could find a few good places down at the natural swimming pools and very low to the sea.

The majority of the seabirds pass much closer compared to Ponta da Cruz. The light conditions are also much better all day long. The heat haze between about 12:00-15:00 gives you the opportunity to have a tasty lunch and have a nap as well. The afternoon/evening light is the most preferable and it's a delight to seawatch at Porto Moniz under these conditions.

The true migraters (Great, Sooty and Manx Shearwater) that pass Porto Moniz appear to follow the northwestern coast line of Madeira and heading west. However, their true direction is doubtless south, disorted by the angle of the northern coast line along Madeira. All of these three species, without exception, headed towards west, on this trip as in the year 2000. But when and why the migration of these species occur is very unpredictable. In the summer and early autumn the weather is dictated by the northeast trade wind and could not be the determining factor. I think that the wind and weather systems between Great Britain and Madeira have a great effect on their route, which may vary from year to year. Worth to mentioning is the heavy occurrence of Sooty Shearwaters (2500 Sooties from one headland on the English East coast on 22 September) and high

numbers of Great Shearwater that passed British Isles in August/September 2002 (John Hopkins and Keith Regan in e-mail). Further observations are required to provide additional information on the numbers, status and migration patterns of these three species.

When you are seawatching at Madeira you should be aware of two important things/factors: The strong sunlight and the position from where you are seawatching (high or low)! The strong light highly affects how the plumage on the birds is perceived. We all know how the appearance of seabirds change with differing conditions at home and they with experience automatically adjust their perception of the birds to accommodate them. From which level above or closeness to the sea you seawatch from is often a crucial factor, when it come to judging size. An example: At Porto Moniz the Manx Shearwaters always look very small and the strong light gave them a pale face and the apparent pale wash on the upper wing. They could therefore be mistaken for Little Shearwaters! (See the ID section on Manx Shearwater).

By Boat

To get the best out Madeira's seabirds it is often necessary to get out onto the sea but remember you can with luck get close and excellent views, but not always. For the best chance to recognize many species and count good numbers, you have to seawatch from shore (Porto Moniz or Ponta da Cruz). The trip to Desertas probably offers the best chances and excellent views of seabirds, especially Little Shearwater, Bulwer's and Fea's/Zino's Petrel. But you never know: Rolf de By (NL) did see up to 30 Fea's/Zino's Petrels on 9 September 2000. John Oates and company did not see any Fea's/Zino's on the boat trip two weeks earlier, on 23 August 2000. So, one could never take it for granted that a trip to Desertas (or Porto Santo) would produce these species. In 2002 we didn't see any Fea's/Zino's from the boat trips but Ponta da Cruz and Porto Moniz produced many distant birds and a few close ones!

2000: We took the ferry to Porto Santo on 11 September. The problem was that we only had one hour birding before dusk on the way back from Porto Santo. To be true, the Porto Santo trip was not worth the money, even if we have good views of Cory's Shearwater and Bulwer's Petrel. But, note that many trip reports in previous years could tell otherwise with Fea's/Zino's Petrel, Little Shearwater, Madeiran Storm-petrel and White-faced Storm-petrel. Also see the trip report from Madeira 29 August–5 September 2002, by Peter L. Meininger et al.

Seawatching at Porto Moniz 30 August–5 September

30 August: Seawatching from the western part between 18:00–19:30, a bit cloudy and calm sea

31 August: Seawatching from the shore parade between 08:45–11:45, 14:00–15:30 (from the balcony) and 17:00–20:20, a bit cloudy in the morning, then clear blue sky, strong winds from NE

1 September: Seawatching from the shore parade between 09:00–12:00 and 15:30–16:00 (unfortunately a break because of severe headache), in the morning cloudy and light E winds, during the afternoon cloudy with occasionally light rain and winds from E

2 September: Seawatching from the eastern part (from a low concrete wall, overlooking the natural swimming pools) between 07:45–11:45 and 14:45–18:15, clear (and very calm sea in the morning), NW winds

3 September: Seawatching from the eastern part between 08:30–11.30 and 15:20–19:30, clear visibility, calm sea, light winds from NW and very hot, at 18:00 the wind change to NE

4 September: Seawatching from the eastern part between 08:30–12.10 and 15:40–19:00, brisk NE wind in the morning, but lighter for rest of the day, a bit cloudy in the morning

5 September: Seawatching from the eastern part between 08:30–11.45, perfect light conditions for seawatching, overcast, brisk E wind and a greyish sea

Total of seabirds counted at Porto Moniz

Date	30/8	31/8	1/9*	2/9	3/9	4/9	5/9	Total
Fea's/Zino's Petrel	–	2	2	6	4	–	2	16
Bulwer's Petrel	9	39	49	62	42	26	11	238
Cory's Shearwater	110	468	500	865	310	164	308	2725
Great Shearwater	–	1393	79	–	1	2	1	1476
Sooty Shearwater	1	4	2	–	–	1	–	8
Manx Shearwater	58	219	138	432	195	259	102	1403
Little Shearwater	4	17	5	8	3	1	–	38
Great Skua	–	1	–	1	3	–	–	5
Pomarine Skua	–	–	7	–	–	1	1	9
Arctic/Pomarine Skua	–	–	2	–	1	1	–	4

*** 1 September 2002** (Peter L. Meininger, Erik Sanders and Gido Davidse, Netherlands)

In addition to my numbers above the Dutch seawatchers counted following from Porto Moniz, between 16.30-19.15 (when I have to take a break because of a headache): 12 Fea's Petrels, 44 Bulwer's Petrels, 250 Cory's Shearwaters, 191 Great Shearwaters, 1 Sooty Shearwater, 221 Manx Shearwaters and 16 Little Shearwaters.

11 September 2002 (John Hopkins, UK)

The British birder, John Hopkins, seawatched from Porto Moniz (09:00-11:30 and 15:30-19:00) and counted following: 269 Cory's Shearwaters, 38 Great Shearwaters (all in afternoon), 35 Sooty Shearwater, 1091 Manx Shearwaters, 2 Balearic Shearwaters and 6 Arctic Skuas.

12 September 2002 (John Hopkins, UK)

Seawatching from Porto Moniz between 15:30-18:20: 43 Cory's Shearwaters, 343 Great Shearwaters, 11 Sooty Shearwater, 1355 Manx Shearwaters, 1 Arctic Skua and 90 Common Terns. (Thanks for the information John!)

Species List (english, scientific and swedish names)

Fea's/Zino's Petrel – *Pterodroma feae/madeira* – Atlant-/Madeirapetrell

1 – towards west in the morning at Ponta da Cruz 25/8. **2** – towards west at Ponta da Cruz 29/8, one of the birds passed relatively close in very good light conditions!

Porto Moniz: A total of **16** were seen between 30/8-5/9. I had two close views on 2/9 and 5/9. The latter came very close to the shore where I was seawatching and it was a pleasure to observe the bird moving around over the surface, slowly towards the west.

ID at glance: Like a small and compact Cory's with dark underwings, contrasting with white body. Dusky head (which often appear dark), dark grey upperparts and the tail (in strong light) often seems to shine white at certain angles, at other times in different light (pale backdrop) I could not see the tail and the bird seemed almost tailless. Easy to miss/overlook when there are many seabirds over the sea! Together with Bulwer's the one which stays clear of land.

Given the extreme rarity of Zino's Petrel *Pterodroma madeira* (20-30 pairs endemic on Madeira), I assume that all gadfly petrels I observed were Fea's Petrel, but to distinguish them in the field from a spot at the coast is impossible. The breeding population of Fea's Petrel on Bugio, Desertas Islands is estimated at 150-200 pairs (Snow & Perrins 1998),

Bulwer's Petrel – *Bulweria bulwerii* – Spetsstjärtad petrell

10 – from Lido in the evening 23/8. **26** – Excellent views on the boat trip ('Ventura do Mar') to Desertas Islands 24/8. On Deserta Grande the marine biologist Tata showed me three nests with one chick each. I also found a few dead birds among the stones and rocks (adults and chicks). **65** – towards west at Ponta da Cruz 07:25-09:30 25/8 (a few came close to the shore). **52** – towards west at Ponta da Cruz 07:30-09:10 26/8. **33** – towards west at Ponta da Cruz 07:30-10:00 28/8. **24** – Excellent views on the boat trip ('Ventura do Mar') to Cabo Girão 14:30-18:00 28/8. **12** – at Ponta da Cruz 07:40-09:00 29/8.

Porto Moniz: A total of **238** were seen between 30/8-5/9. A few came near, but the majority stayed clear of land. The species is more difficult to detect at Porto Moniz than at Ponta da Cruz. Many birds are seen at distance and with a dark swelling sea as a backdrop and are therefore easy to overlook, compared to the conditions at Ponta da Cruz.

ID at glance: Resembles a giant and long-winged *Oceanodroma* storm-petrel! The flight action is very characteristic; acrobatic and vigorous with quick turns and twists (recalling a *Chlidonias*-tern). The plumage appears to be uniformly blackish. The pale panel across the upperwingcoverts is obvious only at close range, such as seen from boat trips. A potential misidentification with Sooty Shearwater is in my opinion unrealistic.

The breeding population in the Madeira archipelago is estimated at 7500 pairs (Snow & Perrins 1998).

Cory's Shearwater – *Calonectris diomedea borealis* – Gulnäbbad lira

118 – from Lido in the evening 23/8. **76** (+ **300** resting at sea) – Boat trip to Desertas Islands 24/8. This trip offered many excellent views! **215** – towards west at Ponta da Cruz 07:25-09:30 25/8. **545** – towards west at Ponta da Cruz 07:25-09:10 26/8. **540** – towards west at Ponta da Cruz 07:30-10:00 28/8. **44** – Excellent views on the boat trip ('Ventura do Mar') to Cabo Girão 14:30-18:00 28/8. **160** – at Ponta da Cruz 07:40-09:00 29/8.

Porto Moniz: A total of at least **2725** were seen between 30/8-5/9.

ID at glance: Easiest identified by the size, the slower mechanical 2-5 shallow wing beats followed by a long glide and angled wings, big head and bill. The plumage is less contrasting than on Great Shearwater, in strong sunlight the head and upper back is the lightest part of the upperparts.

Birds feeding and resting on the water can be seen almost everywhere particularly from headlands and boat trips. The breeding population in the Madeira archipelago is estimated at over 16500 pairs (Snow & Perrins 1998).

Great Shearwater – *Puffinus gravis* – Större lira

Porto Moniz: A total of **1476** were counted between 30/8-5/9. On the astonishing day on 31 August the species was counted as follows: **201** (08:45-11:45), **193** (14:00-15:30, from the balcony) and **999** (17:00-20:20). Loose groups of up to 15 birds were seen on 31 August and sometimes it was difficult to decide when a flock ended and the next one started. Many flocks and single birds allowed excellent views from within a few hundred metres. The seawatch on the afternoon and the evening was a pure delight! Many Great were seen together with Cory's in the same telescope view.

ID at glance: Easily distinguished from Cory's, even at large distances, by slimmer silhouette and smaller size. The wings are slightly shorter, narrower and held straighter than Cory's. More stiffer-winged and powerful flight than the more mechanical 'flapping' Cory's, wings held less bowed. It's possible to sort out the Great from Cory's by size, silhouette and flight action alone. Best distinguishing plumage characters are the generally contrasting plumage, distinct dark crown, contrasting with white cheek, white U on the upper tail (this can also be seen to a lesser extent on Cory's) and the greyish gleam over the upperwing arm, contrasting with the dark hand.

Mentioned as accidental by Moore *et al.* (1997) and occasional by Sziemer (2000). Previous trip reports, if mentioned, tells of 1-3 Great Shearwaters, except our first trip (Holmström *et al.* 2000), when we counted 219 passing Porto Moniz on 7 September 2000.

Sooty Shearwater – *Puffinus griseus* – Grålira

Porto Moniz: A total of **8** were counted between 30/8-5/9. All birds passed alone, except for two, which at times were seen together with Great and Cory's Shearwater in the same telescope view.

ID at glance: The most powerfully built shearwater. The torpedo-shaped and bulky body looks more substantial and it has a more pointed wing shape than other shearwaters. Gives a pale brownish impression (reminiscent of young skuas) in strong sunlight, not the blackish impression as in northern waters where we are used to seeing it. Hardly misidentifiable with any other shearwater.

Not mentioned by Moore *et al.* (1997) or by Sziemer (2000). On our first trip to Madeira (Holmström *et al.* 2000) we counted five Sooty Shearwaters passing Porto Moniz on 7 September 2000 and that was a very unexpected species on that trip, no other previous report had mentioned this species.

Manx Shearwater – *Puffinus puffinus* – Mindre lira

Porto Moniz: A total of **1403** were counted between 30/8-5/9. They were rarely seen as single birds. Most common were flocks between 3-9, but I also noticed flocks of up to 24 birds. Except for the Little Shearwaters this was the seabird that came closest to the shore, after they had rounded the Mole Island. When I seawatched alone I probably missed many close flocks.

ID at glance: Many trip reports in previous years mention Little Shearwater as the most common 'small shearwater' to be observed at Madeira in autumn, especially at Porto Moniz. Strange! It's not my job to judge others birders seawatching results, but I suspect that (in some cases) Manx Shearwaters could have been misidentified as Little Shearwaters. However, I only want that future seawatchers who visit Porto Moniz will be aware and pay more attention to the 'small shearwaters' that pass by!

At Porto Moniz all Manx Shearwaters look very small, because they pass by at longer distance than the seawatchers think they do, depending on the height of the observation spot. The seabirds that rounded the Mole Island and heading to the west seem to be very near, but they aren't. I think it's the proportions of the Mole Island (without any other references) and the deep wide swells of the sea that delude us into believing that the conditions are the same as on our local spot at home in northwestern Europe. Remember that the Manx (and Balearic) Shearwater is a small shearwater! Then we have the strong sunlight at Madeira. Many seawatchers along the coast of northwestern Europe are familiar with the seabird movements that often take place during low pressures with strong (westerly) winds. In these light conditions Sooty Shearwaters look very dark (which see) and Manx Shearwaters show distinct borders between dark and white/pale areas. It's often easy to identify different species of shearwaters in these conditions, because we have considerable experience of the birds in this area and under these conditions when the birds often occur.

I'm not an expert, but here is an example: When we seawatched from Porto Moniz in September year 2000 we originally assumed almost all 'small shearwaters' passing Porto Moniz to be Little Shearwaters (didn't all Trip Report tell that this place was best for seeing Little Shearwaters?). The birds appeared small, with fast wing beats, pale faces and with a pale wash on the upperwing. After lengthy discussions and the feeling that something was wrong, we had to conclude that the great majority of the 'small shearwaters' actually concerned Manx Shearwaters! The literature we had available didn't fit the conditions of Madeira at all. What have I learnt

from this? Always trust your feelings and beware of the geographical factor on the spot you watch from as well as the very important light conditions.

All these birds off Porto Moniz (usually flying in flocks of up to 10-20 individuals) had dark hoods (but in bright, low sunlight appearing pale-faced), and the apparent pale wash on the upper wing was clearly caused by reflected sunlight. The pale face is also exaggerated (in strong sunlight) because of darker neck sides, which frame the face. The face looks very pale, but never shows an isolated dark eye as in Little Shearwater (rarely seen from land and only from very close views that you can get from a boat). If you are unsure I can recommend you to place yourself at the very east watchpoint at Porto Moniz and observe the seabirds in different light before they round Mole and then heading west.

I had many good discussions with the Dutch birders and we realised that we are used to seeing Manx Shearwaters in northwestern Europe (Scandinavia and Netherlands) during stormy conditions, when they show a very different flight action (shearing) than during the calm circumstances on Madeira, when they were flying more actively. But remember, when seawatching from relatively high seawatching spots from land on Madeira, the altitudes of the arcs of many seabirds are not clearly visible. Even at Porto Moniz you sit too high to judge the height of the arcs. Fea's/Zino's Petrel and Manx Shearwater have a flight style with very high arcs, but even at a relatively low place such as Porto Moniz it can be difficult to notice this.

The breeding population of the Madeira archipelago is estimated at (only!) over 500 pairs (Snow & Perrins 1998).

Little Shearwater – *Puffinus assimilis baroli* – Dvärglira

1 – on the boat trip to Desertas Islands 24/8.

Porto Moniz: A total of **38** were seen between 30/8-5/9. The majority were single birds and a few observations of 2-3 birds in a loose group. The majority also passed low to the surface and relatively close to the shore and were therefore easy to miss!

ID at glance: The flight is not as direct as in other shearwaters and gives a feeling of uncertainty, the wingbeats are more fluttering with short glides and never use the high arcs as in Manx. The head is often lifted then and now. The forepart (including the face) is much paler than in Manx and in certain angles the head give a very whitish impression against a dark blue sea, but the isolated dark eye is rarely seen from land, see above on Manx Shearwater for further ID's.

The breeding population of the Madeira archipelago (Desertas Islands) is estimated at over 1300 pairs (Snow & Perrins 1998).

Little Egret – *Egretta garzetta* – Silkeshäger

2 – Funchal 23/8, 1 towards east – Porto Moniz 31/8, 1 – Machico 5/9 and 4 – Machico 6/9.

Grey Heron – *Ardea cinerea* – Gråhäger

1 – Funchal Harbour 24/8. 1 – Lido 25/8.

Sparrowhawk – *Accipiter nisus granti* – Sparvhök

1 – Ponta da Cruz 25/8. 2 – between Ribeiro Frio and Santana 27/8. 1 – at Ponta da Cruz in the morning 29/8. 1 – Porto Moniz 31/8. 2 – from my Hotel balcony at Porto Moniz 1/9.

Buzzard – *Buteo buteo* – Ormvråk

Widespread and conspicuous. At least **28** birds were seen in total.

Kestrel – *Falco tinnunculus canariensis* – Tornfalk

Widespread and conspicuous. Seen daily.

Ringed Plover – *Charadrius hiaticula* – Större strandpipare

2 (ad and juv) – at Ponta da Cruz in the morning 29/8. 2 – Machico 5/9 and 1 at Machico 6/9.

Sanderling – *Calidris alba* – Sandlöpare

1 – on the beach at Funchal Marina 23/8. 1 at Machico 5/9 and 2 6/9.

Ruff – *Philomachus pugnax* – Brushane

1 – towards west with two Whimbrels at Porto Moniz 2/9.

Bar-tailed Godwit – *Limosa lapponica* – Myrspöv

1 – steel ringed at Machico 5 and 6/9.

Whimbrel – *Numenius phaeopus* – Småspov

3 – at Ponta da Cruz 28/8. 1 – at Porto Moniz 30/8. 2 – towards west at Porto Moniz 2/9. 1 – at Porto Moniz 3 and 4/9. 6 towards west – at Porto Moniz 5/9.

Redshank – *Tringa totanus* – Rödbena

1 – Porto Moniz 4/9.

Spotted Sandpiper – *Actitis macularia* – Fläckdrillsnäppa

British and French birders had independently found an adult Spotted Sandpiper at Machico on 27 August. The three Dutch birders (Peter, Erik and Gido), who I met at Porto Moniz, had searched for the bird earlier in the week, without luck. So when I arrived to Machico in the afternoon on 5/9 I had no idea that I would find the bird. I sat on a big stone watching the shorebirds present on the beach (the mouth of Ribeiro Machico), my telescope was superfluous, and suddenly there it was. A beautiful adult bird in summer plumage only a few metres away! The bird was still present in the morning on 6/9. Back home in Sweden I received mail from the Dutch birders telling me that they finally found the bird on 4/9, the day before they left Madeira. They photographed and videoed the bird. There is one previous record from Madeira: one observed at Funchal on 26 April 1960 (Peter L. Meininger in e-mail).

Turnstone – *Arenaria interpres* – Roskarl

The commonest wader found on Madeira. One or two could usually be found on rocky beaches and Harbour walls (max 22 – on the beach at Machico 5 and 6/9). One of the birds at Machico was colour-ringed and had been ringed as a breeding female on 29 June 2002 at Alert, Ellesmere Island, Nanavut, Canada (82.30 N, 62.20 W)! I received this information from Peter L. Meininger, Netherlands. Note that this bird was seen on the same place at Machico as the Spotted Sandpiper.

Great Skua – *Stercorarius skua* – Storlabbb

1 towards west – in the evening at Porto Moniz 31/8. 1 towards east – at Porto Moniz 2/9. 3 (1 towards west and 2 towards east) – Porto Moniz 3/9.

Pomarine Skua – *Stercorarius pomarinus* – Bredstjärtad labb

7 – at Porto Moniz 09:00-12:00 1/9; 2 (1 pale adult-type and 1 pale 3rd summer-type) towards east and 5 (a flock of 4 1st summer-type and 1 pale adult-type) towards west. 1 (1st summer type) – stationary off shore Porto Moniz 4/9. 1 (1st summer type) – stationary off shore Porto Moniz 5/9 in the morning, after a while the bird heading west. The two adult-type birds mentioned above showed long and twisted tail projection.

Arctic/Pomarine Skua – *Stercorarius parasiticus/pomarinus* – Labb/Bredstjärtad Labb

1 + 1 distant birds – towards west at Porto Moniz 1/9. 1 – to west at Porto Moniz 3/9. 1 – Porto Moniz 4/9. All four birds were too distant to be identified.

Atlantic Herring Gull – *Larus michahellis atlantis* – ”Medelhavstrut”

Common along the coast particularly around the Port at Funchal, Ponta da Cruz and Cabo Girão.

Lesser Black-backed Gull – *Larus fuscus graellsii* – Silltrut

1 adult – Porto Moniz 2 and 3/9.

Common Tern – *Sterna hirundo* – Fisktärna

Small numbers and flocks were seen daily along the coast. High numbers at Funchal Harbour (16), Ponta da Cruz (26) and Porto Moniz (15). Among the adults and juveniles there was a few 1st summer birds as well. A suspected Roseate Tern on Madeira should therefore be scrutinised more closely!

Arctic Tern – *Sterna paradisaea* – Silvertärna

1 adult – Ponta da Cruz 25/8. 1 adult – Porto Moniz 31/8.

'Comic' Tern – *Sterna hirundo/paradisaea* – Fisk-/silvertärna

75 – distant flock towards west at Porto Moniz 31/8 and 60 distant birds towards west at Porto Moniz 3/9.

Feral Pigeon – *Columba livia* – Stadsduva

Common, but we did not find many "Rock Dove", except for 30 "pure" birds during the Levada walk from Camacha to Moinho on 29/8. I didn't pay much attention to this species, however.

Long-toed Pigeon – *Columba trocaz* – Madeiraduva

2 – between Faja da Cedro Gordo and Riberio Frio 27/8. Same place as when I visited Madeira in 2000! I didn't try very hard at all for this species. We observed these two only after five minutes at the watchpoint.

Plain Swift – *Apus unicolor* – Enfärgad seglare

Common everywhere, often seen in small flocks up to ten birds. At places located on higher levels, such as Monte and Camacha, we observed loose flocks up to 70 birds.

Grey Wagtail – *Motacilla cinerea schmitzi* – Forsärla

Common and can be seen almost anywhere, seen daily. High concentration at the mouth (on the beach) of Riberio Machico, at least 30 birds on 5 and 6/9.

Berthelot's Pipit – *Anthus berthelotii madeirensis* – Kanariepiplärka

10-15 – Desertas Islands (Deserta Grande) 24/8. I didn't search more for this species, as I have seen it before on Madeira (2000).

Robin – *Erithacus rubecula* – Rödhake

A few were heard and seen almost everyday. Many at the Tropical Garden in Monte on 26/8 and Riberio Frio 27/8. Heard calling daily in Porto Moniz, but rarely seen.

Blackbird – *Turdus merula cabreræ* – Koltrast

Heard and seen almost everyday, with up to 8 birds. Easiest seen at dawn and in the evening

Blackcap – *Sylvia atricapilla heineken* – Svarthätta

Heard calling and singing everyday, especially at Lido, Tropical Garden in Monte, Riberio Frio, the Levada walk from Camacha to Moinho and Porto Moniz. Rarely seen.

Madeira Firecrest – *Regulus ignicapillus madeirensis* – Brandkronad kungsfågel

12 – at the Tropical Garden in Monte 26/8, both adults and juveniles. At least 30 at Riberio Frio (adult and juveniles) 27/8. Easiest seen when walking along the levada to Balcões. A total of 12 between Riberio Frio and São Vicente 27/8. At least 7 (adults and juveniles) during the Levada walk from Camacha to Moinho on 29/8. When I visited Madeira in year 2000 only juveniles were seen.

Chaffinch – *Fringilla coelebs madeirensis* – Bofink

10 – at the Tropical Garden in Monte 26/8 (a nearly tame male at the restaurant). At least 25 at Riberio Frio 27/8 (9 at Balcões). At least 14 were seen during the Levada walk from Camacha to Moinho on 29/8.

Canary – *Serinus canaria* – Kanariesiska

Beware of this species which is both common and extremely vocal. The calls sometimes are very like Linnet, Greenfinch, Twite and Goldfinch!

Goldfinch – *Carduelis carduelis parva* – Steglits

15 – Botanical Garden in Funchal 23/8. 10 – Riberio Frio 27/8. 3 (1 adult and 2 juveniles) – São Vicente 27/8. 5 – Funchal 27/8. 1 – at Ponta da Cruz in the morning 29/8. 5 (2 adult and 3 juveniles) – Machico 6/9.

Common Waxbill – *Estrilda astrild* – Helenaastrild

10 – in the Riberio (river channel) Macchico 5/9 and at least 30 Machico 6/9. The latter was seen in dense vegetation in the end of Riberio Machico. Standing on the promenade wall next to channel near the sea gave excellent views of this introduced species.

NON-BIRDS

Mammals

Unidentified Dolphins

Over 120 were seen off Ponta da Cruz 09:00-10:00 28/8! There were many groups of dolphins that appeared in different directions and the biggest flocks contained 20-30 individuals. The majority of the dolphins were probably Spotted. It was surely a experience I never will forget! A distant group of at least **10** individuals (presumed Spotted or Common) were seen at Porto Moniz 3/9.

Spotted Dolphin (*Stenella frontalis*)

A few groups off Ponta da Cruz in the morning 28/8 could be identified as this species, which is also very playful with high jumps and so on. But Common Dolphin also shows this habit.

Common Dolphin (*Delphinus delphis*)

Two groups (10 + 15) off Ponta da Cruz 28/8 could be identified as Common Dolphins.

Bottle-nosed Dolphin (*Tursiops truncatus*)

A group of five individuals was seen off Porto Moniz 3/9.

Unidentified Whales (presumed Fin or Sei Whales)

1 + 1 distant off Porto Moniz in the afternoon 3/9. The last one was at the surface for half an hour, so I had the opportunity to show the whale through my telescope to many tourists that passed by. Two distant whales were seen from Porto Moniz in the morning 5/9.

Unidentified Bats

Two at Ponta da Cruz at dawn 25/9. There are three species of bats that live on Madeira: the Madeira Pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus maderensis*), Lesser Noctule (*Nyctalus leisleri*) and the Grey Long-eared Bat (*Plecotus austriacus*). The latter is easy to identify by its long hare-like ears. To distinguish the other two in flight is very difficult.

Fishes

Flying Fish

3 – off shore Lido 23/8. One excellent view of **1** Flying Fish near the boat, when we anchored at Cabo Girão with the boat 'Ventura do Mar' in the afternoon 28/8. **1** – off Porto Moniz 31/8. **2** – off Porto Moniz 3/9.

Reptiles

Madeiran Wall Lizard

Seen everywhere and this is also the "only" reptile species on the island. However, there are three different subspecies and are sometimes treated as species. They live on Porto Santo, Desertas (Deserta Grande and Bugio) and Salvage Islands. In the Botanical Garden in Funchal you can also find the Canarian Lizard, which is introduced from Tenerife recently.

Butterflies

Monarch

You can hardly miss this beautiful butterfly if you visit Madeira and Funchal in August/September. A big butterfly that sails around in the air. This species was seen daily in Funchal with up to 30 each day and less numerous at higher levels. Other species we could recognize were:

Clouded Yellow

Small White

Large White (only three)

Speckled Wood

Madeiran Speckled Wood

Madeira has 14 species of butterflies. Three species are endemic to Madeira: Madeiran Brimstone, Madeiran Speckled Wood and Madeiran Grayling. The subspecies of Large White is also endemic and has become extremely scarce.

Costs, addresses and phone numbers (all prices is given in Euros)

Boat trips

Today there are only two boats that have regular tours from Funchal to Desertas Islands (Deserta Grande), 'Ventura do Mar' and 'Gavião'. You will find their offices and boats at the end of the Funchal Marina. They are located on the land side (not at the jetty side), before the walking wall that separates the Marina and the beach in NE direction.

'Ventura do Mar'

The old sail boat has places for 12-14 passengers (the crew excluded) and is, in my opinion (compared to 'Gavião') best suited for birders/seawatchers. The two marine biologists (Tata and Filipe) will give you excellent service and could identify dolphins and whales (if they appear) to you. They also are very familiar with the seabirds around Madeira and Desertas. Tata has for example studied the Cory's at Desertas and is the master at finding nests of Bulwer's Petrel. 'Ventura do Mar' leaves Funchal for Desertas two days a week, in 2002 on Saturday and Monday. With 'Ventura do Mar' you have four more hours at sea than with the boat 'Gavião'! Four hours is very important for a true seawatcher, this along with the difference in price does not make the choice very hard. Book places in good time!

Price: Desertas 08:00-20:00; 72,00 per person (Saturday and Monday). A half day from Funchal to Cabo Girão (and back); 27,50 per person.

Phone: +351 291 280 033

Mobile: 96 339 0796 /7/8

'Gavião'

The boat is a modern sailing boat, more for tourists that want to see dolphins. On this boat you can't run along the whole boat to see seabirds, as on 'Ventura do Mar'. On the tour to Desertas you also lose four important hours for a price 3 Euros more than 'Ventura do Mar'. If you are a birder with a big B, you choose 'Ventura do Mar', without any doubt!

Price: Desertas 10:00-18:00; 75,00 per person (Monday and Thursday). A half day on the sea; 28,00 per person.

Phone: +351 291 241 124

Madeira by bus

The buses on Madeira are very good! You can get to almost every place on Madeira cheaply! Example: Funchal-Porto Moniz; 3,70 (the most expensive ticket on the island is 4,70), Funchal-Camacha; 1,70 and Funchal-Machico; 2,20.

Cableway (Funchal-Monte)

Price: One way; 8,00 and both way; 13,00. The entrance to the Tropical Garden at Monte; 7,50 (including two different glasses of Madeiran Wine in the restaurant).

Hotel and Residencials at Porto Moniz

In Porto Moniz you will find rooms from 25,00 to 35,00, the price depending of how long you stay. If you are a small group of birders you will find rooms without booking in beforehand. I found a single room very quickly at **Residencial Salgueiro** (in the centre of Porto Moniz) for 30,00/night (including breakfast). Salgueiro lies near the sea and you are able to seawatch from your balcony or the sun deck.

Address: Vila do Porto Moniz (at the plaza where the bus stops and the opposite the Orca Hotel and their pools)

Phone: +351 291 850 080

Web site: www.hotelsalgueiro.com

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