

TENERIFE

December 25th 2011- January 1st 2012

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This was a one-week family holiday with focus on relaxing, sunbathing, swimming and activities for the kids (Siam Park should not be missed!)... However, I did some birding with the aim to see the Canary Islands endemics on Tenerife. I was lucky to tick them all! Most difficult to find was Laurel Pigeon, which required several attempts at different locations. All the other endemics were rather easy to come across. As “bonus birds” to the endemics I manage to see Plain Swift, Macaronesian Shearwater and Barbary Falcon, all lifers to me. However, with focus on other things the bird list ended up rather short this time...

The trip was booked through Vingresor flying out from Copenhagen, and we stayed at the Sunwing Resort Fanabé, in the southwestern part of Tenerife. A very nice resort, but not optimal from a birding perspective since most of the interesting sites are located in the northern part of the island. To go from Fanabé or Playa de las Americas to Puerto de la Cruz takes about an hour on the highway.

The weather at Tenerife this week was nice, between 20-24 degrees Celsius most days and sunshine all the time. The northern part of the island seems to be more cloudy. On higher altitudes the temperature could drop to 5-10 degrees.

We rented a 4WD Skoda Yeti the whole week (AVIS, 350 EUR, pickup at the airport), which proved to be very useful on some of the smaller roads. A car is essential for birding at Tenerife!

Preparations were made with the help of two guidebooks, "A birdwatcher's guide to the Canary Islands" (Clark&Collins) and "Finding birds in the Canary Islands" (Gosney), as well as recent trip reports on Internet. Detailed tourist maps of Tenerife can be obtained in any of the local Supermarkets. I bought one 1:150.000 which was good enough.

Below the visited sites and main bird sightings are described:

Las Lajas

The "famous" picnic spot on the way to Teide from Vilaflor turned out to be very fruitful for most of the endemics. We arrived around 8.00 and spent an hour in the area completely on our own. Some **10 Blue Chaffinches** were seen nicely among the picnic tables, a few **Canaries** sang in the trees and **2 Tenerife Blue Tits** were also around. **Canary Islands Chiffchaff** were also present here (as all over the island...), as were the Canarian subspecies of both **Great Spotted Woodpecker** and **Robin**, a few were seen of each species. **1 Plain Swift** was flying over us.

1,2 km south of Las Lajas is another site described as "Respetamos La Naturaleza" (a sign next to a small bridge). Here **2 Tenerife Goldcrests** were seen at close range.



Las Lajas



Tenerife Blue Tit

El Teide

A spectacular place and well worth a visit, but no interesting birds besides **Berthelot's Pipits** at the base station of the cable car and some other places along the road. Be prepared for very cold weather at the top of the mountain!



El Teide



Berthelot's Pipit

Las Grimonas

After two tunnels on the coastal road westwards from Puerto de la Cruz towards San Juan de la Rambla, there is a small lay-by at a mirador where the mountain slope on the opposite side of the road can be viewed. This seems to be a reliable spot for Laurel Pigeon on Tenerife, but it took me three visits to the site in order to see one! At 9.00, after 45 minutes of waiting **1 Laurel Pigeon** flew out from the woods high above the road and perched nicely for a few minutes in a dead tree, providing good scope sightings.

Mirador El Lance

A place with very good views of the mountain slopes, on the road between Los Reajeleros and Icod Alto. I was here for an hour or so at sunrise 7.30, but no pigeons visible at all...

Area Recreativa La Chanajiga

This place is difficult to find (as mentioned in several trip reports) and I went on a detour of at least one hour before I managed to find the right spot! Follow detailed instructions in the book carefully. Go through Las Llanadas and then another 15-20 minutes further on uphill, following the main road. The winding road is paved all the way to the spot, which is marked by signposts "Zona Recreativa La Chanajiga". You should never get into the pine forest (where I ended up...), then you are too far uphill.

When finally there, I went into the laurel forest, by car, beyond the children playground and stopped in a few places along the first two kilometres with good views of the laurel slopes. **10 Bolle's Pigeons** were seen, all flying. A group of at least **50 Plain Swifts** were flying above the forest. No Laurel Pigeons visible.

Punta del Teno

A late afternoon visit to this beautiful place. At the cliffs at “the mirador after the tunnel” (as described in the book) **2 Barbary Falcons** were immediately spotted hovering above us in the strong winds. At the lighthouse nothing special was seen besides gulls and ravens.

La Gomera

One day we took the Naviera Armas morning ferry (8.45) to La Gomera. The crossing took approximately 1 hour, but nothing special was seen in the morning.

La Gomera is truly a beautiful island and a visit is highly recommended. We took the car and turned left towards Monte El Cedro and stopped 4.4 kilometer along the road towards the park centre at Mirador El Rejo (as described in the book) among dramatic cliffs and laurel forests. The place was this day very windy and we actually failed to spot any Laurel Pigeons here! A handful of pigeons passed us flying at a very quick pace, and only one could be clearly identified, a **Bolle's Pigeon**. Also the “mirador” a kilometer further on is worth checking for pigeons, where the mountain ridge can be checked from both sides. We took also the narrow road down to El Ciedro, with was not very productive for birding. On the road back to San Sebastian and the ferry a few **Berthelot's Pipits** were seen. **Canaries** also seemed to be even more common on La Gomera. In the harbour a group of **Plain Swifts**.

On the ferry crossing back to Tenerife and Los Cristianos (16.30) we saw **1 Macaronesian Shearwater**, together with several dolphins and a group of smaller whales.



La Gomera / El Cedro

Bird list:

Macaronesian shearwater	1 La Gomera ferry
Little Egret	2 Playa de Fanabé
Buzzard	common
Kestrel	common
Barbary Falcon	2 Punta del Teno
Woodcock	1 La Chanajiga
Yellow-legged Gull	common
Rock Dove	common
Bolle's Pigeon	10 Las Chanajiga, 1 La Gomera/Mirador El Rejo
Laurel Pigeon	1 Las Grimonas
Collared Dove	common
Plain Swift	1 Las Lajas, 50 La Chanajiga, 10 La Gomera/San Sebastian port
Hoopoe	1 Siam Park
Great Spotted Woodpecker	2 Las Lajas (<i>canariensis</i>)
Berthelot's Pipit	10 Teide, 1 La Gomera
Robin	common (<i>superbus</i>)
Blackbird	common
Canary Islands Chiffchaff	common
Tenerife Goldcrest	2 "La Naturaleza"
Tenerife Blue Tit	2 Las Lajas
Raven	2 Punta del Teno
Spanish Sparrow	common
Chaffinch	1 Mirador El Lance
Blue Chaffinch	10 Las Lajas
Canary	common
(Sacred Ibis	3 Los Cristianos port)