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OBSERVATIONS OF BIRDS IN THE MADEIRAN ARCHIPELAGO, SUMMER 1981

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RESUMO. Como parte do programa da Expedição da Universidade de Manchester, foi estudada a avifauna entre Julho e Setembro de 1981. Sesenta e quatro espécies foram observadas e são dadas notas quanto à sua distribuição e abundância. Cinco espécies assinaladas são novas para a Madeira: *Pernis apivorus*, *Falco naumanni*, *Sterna paradisea*, *Anthus campestris* e *Turdus viscivorus* o qual é suspeito de ter nidificado. Garajaus rosados, *Sterna dougallii* foram encontrados a nidificar nas ilhas Selvagens.

ABSTRACT. The bird fauna was surveyed between July and September 1981 as part of the programme of the Manchester University 1981 Expedition. Sixty-four species were observed, and notes on their abundance and distribution are presented. Five species recorded were new to Madeira: Honey Buzzard *Pernis apivorus*, Lesser Kestrel *Falco naumanni*, Arctic Tern *Sterna paradisea*, Tawny Pipit *Anthus campestris*, and Mistle Thrush *Turdus viscivorus*, which is suspected to have bred. Roseate Terns *Sterna dougallii* were found breeding on the Salvage Islands.

During the Manchester University 1981 Expedition to Madeira, observations were made of a number of bird species considered scarce and five species which had not been previously recorded. These observations are described together with a summary of the distribution and abundance of all the species seen.

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The expedition visited Madeira for seven weeks between late July and early September 1981. Work was mainly confined to the eastern half of the island. Ringing sites were established on the Ribeira de Santa Luzia near Casa do Areeiro where the expedition was based, on the Ribeira da Ametade, and in Funchal. Day visits were made to all three Deserta Islands during mid-August and the nights of the 16th and 17th August were spent ringing seabirds on Deserta Grande and Bugio. Part of the expedition visited Porto Santo between the 25th and 29th August, and I was fortunate to be able to spend a day on the Salvage Islands on the 11th August.

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SYSTEMATIC LIST OF SPECIES

(all dates refer to August unless otherwise stated)

GON-GON *Pterodroma feae*

This species, or *P. madeira*, was seen only occasionally at sea: 3 on 13th and 2 on 16th between Madeira and the Deserta Islands; singles on 25th and 29th between Madeira and Porto Santo. None of the birds were observed closely enough to allow specific determination. A breeding population of 30-40 pairs was estimated on Bugio between 16th and 18th (G. le Grand). A minimum of 45-50 pairs was estimated in 1968/69 (Jouanin *et al.*, 1969).

FREIRA *Pterodroma madeira*

Details of *P. madeira/feae* sightings are given under *P. feae*. Birds presumably visiting one of the Madeiran colonies (Bannerman & Bannerman, 1965; de Naurois in Cramp & Simmons, 1977) were heard after dark from Pico do Areeiro on 8th.

BULWER'S PETREL *Bulweria bulwerii bulwerii*

Commonly seen at sea: 1 on 10th and 2 on 11th outside Funchal harbour; 100+ between Madeira and the Deserta Islands on 13th and

16th; 50+ on 18th, 50+ on 25th and 300+ on 28th between Madeira and Porto Santo; 162 were counted during a sea voyage between Salvagem Grande and Madeira on 12th. Many pairs breeding on the Deserta Islands; 123 birds were trapped on Deserta Grande during the nights of 16th and 17th. Large numbers of wings discarded by hunters were found on all three islands.

CORY'S SHEARWATER *Calonectris diomedea borealis*

Commonly seen at sea and off-shore from Madeira: 20+ off-shore from Câmara de Lobos on July 20th; 100+ from Ponta de São Lourenço on August 4th; 150+ from Porto da Cruz on 8th; 3 outside Funchal harbour on 10th; 500+ on 13th, 200+ on 25th, 300+ on 28th and 100+ on 29th between Madeira and Porto Santo. Only 26 birds were seen during a sea voyage between Salvagem Grande and Madeira on 12th.

Birds were heard near Ponta das Gaivotas, Madeira, during the night of 5th, possibly flying to a small colony near Caniçal which is said to be much persecuted for human consumption. Many pairs breeding on the Deserta Islands. Hundreds of wings discarded by hunters were found on all three islands.

A gathering of 2500+ were seen off Salvagem Grande at dusk on 11th.

GREAT SHEARWATER *Puffinus gravis*

Only seen on one occasion: 8 flying south between Madeira and Porto Santo on 28th.

MANX SHEARWATER *Puffinus puffinus puffinus*

Seen occasionally at sea: 1 mid-way between Salvagem Grande and Madeira on 12th, and 10 on 13th; 1 on 16th between Madeira and the Deserta Islands, and 5 on 28th between Madeira and Porto Santo.

Birds were heard after dark at the bottom of the valley leading to Curral das Freiras below Pico do Areeiro on 9th.

LITTLE SHEARWATER *Puffinus assimilis baroli*

Seen only occasionally at sea: 1 on 13th and 1 on 16th between Madeira and the Deserta Islands; and 1 on 28th between Madeira and Porto Santo.

WHITE-FACED PETREL *Pelagodroma marina hypoleuca*

None seen alive, but remains of many birds were found on Salvagem Pequena on 12th.

MADEIRAN PETREL *Oceanodroma castro*

None seen at sea but 5 birds were trapped on Deserta Grande and 22 on Bugio during the nights of 16th and 17th. Many birds were heard after dark on the Deserta Islands, but they apparently moved far out to sea during the day.

GREY HERON *Ardea cinerea*

Eight sightings, all from Porto Santo: 4 over the town on 26th, 1 at Ribeira Salgado and 2 flying west along the beach on 27th, and 1 on the beach on 28th.

PURPLE HERON *Ardea purpurea*

One record: a juvenile over Porto Santo airport on 28th.

HONEY BUZZARD *Pernis apivorus*

A single adult was seen and photographed near Monte on 12th. It was identified by its small, protruding dark head, comparatively slim body and longish three-banded tail, barred underwing coverts, translucent primaries and conspicuously dark carpal patches and wing-tips. This appears to be the first record of the species for Madeira.

SPARROWHAWK *Accipiter nisus granti*

A number of sightings, all from Madeira: singles at Pico do Areeiro, Curral das Freiras, Pico Ruivo, Ribeiro Frio, Achada do Cedro Gordo, Lamaceiros, João Frino, Rochão, southern slope below Paul da Serra, Ribeira Funda, Cancela, and a pair in the valley below Fajã da Nogueira.

BUZZARD *Buteo buteo buteo*

Seen frequently on Madeira where single birds were recorded from all parts of the island, particularly near wooded areas and at high altitude. Pairs were noted at Balcões, Poiso, Santo da Serra, São Roque do Faial, Monte and near Machico. Two pairs were seen in the valley of the Ribeira da Ametade between Cruzinhas and Fajã da Nogueira, one with 2 young on 6th.

A maximum of 4 birds were seen on Deserta Grande on 17th and a single bird was observed on Bugio on the same date. Pairs were recorded at Pico Branco and Espigão on Porto Santo.

LESSER KESTREL *Falco naumanni*

A single adult male was seen very well at close range at the view point near São Gonçalo on 3rd. It was identified by its conspicuously

unmarked white under-wings with black tips, buffish body, pale chin, prominent black terminal band on the underside of the tail, and unmarked chestnut mantle and coverts with slate-grey greater coverts. This is apparently the first record of the species for Madeira.

KESTREL *Falco tinnunculus canariensis*

Recorded almost daily on Madeira with a maximum of 5 together at Pico do Areeiro on July 20th. Pairs were seen at many places including Funchal, Câmara de Lobos, Quinta Grande, Cancela, Machico, Caniçal, Ponta de São Lourenço, Porto da Cruz, Fajã da Nogueira, Ribeiro Frio and Porto Novo. A melanistic bird was seen very well at Câmara de Lobos on July 20th. Single birds were occasionally seen on Deserta Grande and Bugio, and two birds were seen on 26th and 6 on 28th on Porto Santo.

RED-LEGGED PARTRIDGE *Alectoris rufa*

Recorded only from Madeira: 20 birds were seen at Prainha on July 30th and 4 on August 6th; and a small covey was seen on most days near Casa do Areeiro.

LITTLE RINGED PLOVER *Charadrius dubius*

One record: 8 in Funchal harbour on 29th.

RINGED PLOVER *Charadrius hiaticula*

One record: 2 on Porto Santo beach on 27th.

KENTISH PLOVER *Charadrius alexandrinus*

Recorded only from Porto Santo: 1 inland on 27th; and 5 on the 27th, 1 on 28th and 4 on 29th on the beach.

GREY PLOVER *Pluvialis squatarola*

One record: a single bird on Porto Santo beach on 27th.

SANDERLING *Calidris alba*

Two records: a single bird was present on Porto Santo beach between 24th and 27th, and 3 were seen in Funchal harbour on 30th.

DUNLIN *Calidris alpina*

Recorded only on three dates: 2 flying east near Caniçal on July 22nd; 1 flying south about 11km south of Madeira on 12th; and 5 on Porto Santo beach on 27th.

WOODCOCK *Scolopax rusticola*

Only one record: a single bird near Pico do Areeiro at dusk on 13th.

WHIMBREL *Numenius phaeopus*

Two records from Madeira: 15 at Prainha, Ponta de São Lourenço on July 30th, and 1 near Santa Cruz on September 2nd.

Single birds were seen on Bugio on 17th and Deserta Grande the following day. Birds were seen flying over the beach on Porto Santo on three dates: 3 on 25th, 1 on 26th and 2 on 27th. A single individual was recorded on Salvagem Pequena on 11th.

REDSHANK *Tringa totanus*

Recorded on only three dates: 1 at Machico on July 22nd, and 1 on August 25th and 5 on 27th on Porto Santo beach.

GREENSHANK *Tringa nebularia*

One record: 2 at Ribeiro Salgado, Porto Santo on 27th.

COMMON SANDPIPER *Actitis hypoleucos*

Two records, both from Porto Santo beach: 6 on 25th and 1 on 26th.

TURNSTONE *Arenaria interpres*

Recorded throughout August in Funchal harbour with a maximum of 20 birds. Four birds were present on Bugio on 16th and 17th; and 1 was recorded on Porto Santo beach on 27th and 4 on 28th.

BLACK-HEADED GULL *Larus ridibundus*

A juvenile was present in Funchal harbour from July 20th to the end of August, and 2 were seen on 10th. Two (a juvenile and a first-summer bird) were seen daily between 25th and 28th on Porto Santo beach.

LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL *Larus fuscus*

A single adult was seen in Funchal harbour on a number of occasions in August.

HERRING GULL *Larus argentatus atlantis*

Common all round the coast, with a maximum of 200+ birds recorded together at Machico on July 23rd. There was a regular easterly movement over Funchal each evening, often involving hundreds of birds.

During clear weather, parties of up to 20 were often seen flying south-east over Pico do Areeiro (alt. 1800 m). Seen on the Deserta Islands and Porto Santo whenever they were visited.

L. a. argentatus

A single bird was present in Funchal harbour throughout August.

ROSEATE TERN *Sterna dougallii dougallii*

Single birds were present during July and August in Funchal harbour. Two were seen off the north coast of Bugio on August 18th, and one was feeding off Porto Santo beach on 28th. Three pairs were found breeding on Selvagem Pequena during a visit on 11th. This appears to be the first breeding record for the Salvagem Islands.

COMMON TERN *Sterna hirundo*

Birds were regularly seen in Funchal harbour throughout July and August with a maximum of 8 on August 3rd. In addition, 4 were seen at Câmara de Lobos on July 20th; 2 at Machico on July 22nd and 27th; 1 at Porto da Cruz on August 8th; and 2 regularly in the Baía de Abra throughout August.

Larger numbers were recorded from the Deserta Islands with 10 off Deserta Grande on 13th and 16th, and 25 off Bugio on 18th. About 10 birds were also regularly seen off Porto Santo beach between 25th and 29th. Ten pairs were found to be breeding on Selvagem Pequena on 11th.

ARTIC TERN *Sterna paradisea*

Three birds were recorded: 1 with common terns *Sterna hirundo* in the Baía de Abra on July 23rd, and 2 together off Bugio on 18th. These appear to be the first documented records for Madeira.

LITTLE TERN *Sterna albifrons*

One record only: a single bird off Porto Santo beach on 27th.

ROCK DOVE / FERAL PIGEON *Columba livia atlantis*

Individuals showing characteristics of pure rock doves were only seen at Cabo Girão, Madeira, although there may have been some cross-breeding between this population and feral pigeons from nearby towns and villages.

LONG-TOED PIGEON *Columba trocaz*

This species was only seen regularly in the valley of the Ribeira da Ametade between Fajã da Nogueira and Cruzinhas where maximum

counts of 8 on 6th and at least 12 on 7th were obtained. Two birds were seen between Pico Ruivo and Pico do Areeiro on 5th, and 1 in the Ribeira de Santa Luzia on 1st.

TURTLE DOVE *Streptopelia turtur*

A single bird near Água de Pena on 16th was the only record from Madeira, but on Porto Santo 3 were seen on the beach on 26th, 6 at Ribeiro Saigado on 27th and 2 near the airport on 28th.

CUCKOO *Cuculus canorus*

Only one record: a grey-phase bird on Bugio on 18th.

BARN OWL *Tyto alba schmitzi*

None were seen alive, but a corpse was found on the south-facing slope below Paul da Serra and a skeleton was found on Deserta Grande during August; this is now in the Manchester Museum.

PLAIN SWIFT *Apus unicolor*

Seen commonly on Madeira at all altitudes between sea-level and 1800 m, with a maximum of 50+ together at Câmara de Lobos. Flocks of 20+ birds were seen regularly elsewhere, generally at breeding colonies. Small numbers were seen on Deserta Grande and Bugio and birds were seen daily on Porto Santo with a maximum of 60+ over the town on 26th.

SWIFT *Apus apus*

During mid to late August one or two birds were occasionally seen over Pico do Areeiro, but were only identified with certainty in the presence of plain swifts *Apus unicolor*. A flock of about 500 birds was observed feeding over Porto Santo on 28th and 29th and finally left the island in a south-easterly direction.

PALLID SWIFT *Apus pallidus brehmorum*

Seen only on Madeira at or near breeding colonies: 150+ were observed near São Roque do Faial and many were seen over the valley of the Ribeira do Faial during early August: a colony of about 30 birds was located in a coastal cave close to Funchal harbour later in the month.

ALPINE SWIFT *Apus melba*

Recorded on three dates only on Madeira: 1 between Pico Ruivo and Pico do Areeiro on 5th, 1 (possibly the same bird) nearby at Fajã da Nogueira on 6th, and 2 over Funchal on September 1st.

HOOPOE *Upupa epops*

A single bird in Funchal harbour on 11th was the only record from Madeira but on Porto Santo, where the species breeds, birds were found all over the island and were seen daily with a maximum count of 20 between the west end of the beach and the airport on 28th.

HOUSE MARTIN *Delichon urbica*

One record: about 15 birds near Porto Santo airport on 28th.

TAWNY PIPIT *Anthus campestris*

Two birds were seen at Ponta de São Lourenço on July 23rd. Identified by their relatively large size, wagtail-like (*Motacilla* spp.) stance and profile, pale sandy coloration with prominent dark-centred median coverts and virtually unstreaked breast, these birds were seen in typical habitat but were not subsequently relocated. Although Bannerman & Bannerman (1965) document a probable sighting at almost the same location, this appears to be the first authenticated record for Madeira.

BERTHELOT'S PIPIT *Anthus berthelotii madeirensis*

Only regularly recorded on Madeira from the area around Pico do Areeiro and from the eastern peninsula. A nest containing three eggs was found at Pico do Areeiro on July 22nd, and well-fledged young were there on July 27th. At least five family parties were seen and over 60 birds counted during a walk along the eastern peninsula on July 23rd. Good numbers were seen on all three Deserted Islands with a maximum of 40 in the central valley of Deserta Grande on 17th. Particularly common on Porto Santo where hundreds of birds were recorded daily.

GREY WAGTAIL *Motacilla cinerea schmitzi*

Quite common on Madeira with breeding pairs recorded at many places and at all altitudes. Mating was observed near Casa do Areeiro on July 21st, and fully feathered young were found in nests at two sites on the Ribeira da Ametade at the end of July. A total of 26 birds was trapped at this locality during July and August. One pair was seen near Porto Santo town on 26th.

WHITE WAGTAIL *Motacilla alba alba*

Only one record: 3 on the south-west point of Porto Santo on 25th.

ROBIN *Erithacus rubecula microrhynchus*

Quite common on Madeira but very skulking and usually seen away from human habitation in woodland and scrub at all altitudes

between sea level and the tree-line. A total of 18 birds were trapped at one site on the Ribeira da Ametade during July and August.

BLACKBIRD *Turdus merula cabrerae*

Common in areas of woodland and scrub on Madeira and, although seen at all altitudes, particularly numerous near the coast. Ten birds were trapped in Funchal during two days in August.

MISTLE THRUSH *Turdus viscivorus*

An extremely interesting series of sightings near Casa do Areeiro: 12 birds, some of which were carrying food and apparently feeding young, were seen on the morning of 5th, and by late afternoon the number had risen to 25; smaller numbers of birds were subsequently seen in the vicinity with 8 together on 9th. This species has apparently never been previously recorded from Madeira, although subsequently at least 6 birds were seen during December 1983 near the tree-line above Funchal (Bourne, 1984). The possibility that mistle thrushes breed on Madeira requires further investigation.

SPECTACLED WARBLER *Sylvia conspicillata orbitalis* (=bella)

Recorded only on Madeira: 2 males were heard singing near São Roque do Faial on 8th but were not seen; 4 to 6 pairs were present throughout August near Caniçal; and 1 pair was seen near Camacha on 28th, the male being subsequently trapped and ringed.

BLACKCAP *Sylvia atricapilla heineken*

Very common on Madeira especially at low altitudes in well-wooded areas but also in towns. Thirty-two birds were trapped over six days at a site on the Ribeira da Ametade during July and August. No birds of the race *S. a. obscura* were observed.

FIRECREST *Regulus ignicapillus madeirensis*

Abundant in wooded and scrub-covered areas from sea-level to the tree-line, but apparently more common at higher altitudes. Fifteen birds were trapped over 6 days at a site on the Ribeira da Ametade (alt. 750 m), and 22 over 4 days at a site near Casa do Areeiro (alt. 1700 m).

SPANISH SPARROW *Passer hispaniolensis hispaniolensis*

A common breeding species in Funchal and most towns and villages near the coast east of Funchal, but less common on the north coast and in villages west of Funchal. Partially albinistic birds were seen on a number of occasions. Very common in the town on Porto Santo, where

over 200 birds gathered to roost each evening in a group of palm trees *Chamaerops* sp.

ROCK SPARROW *Petronia petronia madeirensis*

A number of sightings on Madeira: 8 at São Roque do Faial and 2 at Porto da Cruz on 7th; 6 at Caniçal on 4th; and a flock of about 40 at Ponta de São Lourenço on 5th. Regularly seen on Deserta Grande with a maximum of 20 at the north end of the central valley on 11th. Also seen on I. Chão with a maximum of 10 on 12th.

CHAFFINCH *Fringilla coelebs madeirensis*

Very common on Madeira in wooded areas, particularly at high altitude. During July and August 10 birds were trapped over 6 days at a site on the Ribeira da Ametade, and 5 over 4 days near Casa do Areeiro.

Serinus sp.

Two small *Serinus* sp. were recorded with flocks of canaries *S. canaria* at Machico and on Deserta Grande. The possibility of these birds being *Serinus* *S. serinus* was considered but the descriptions taken at the time were not sufficiently detailed to confirm identification. Small individuals occasionally occur in *S. canaria* populations on the Azores (Mayaud, 1931), but it is not known whether similar individuals are found on Madeira.

CANARY *Serinus canaria*

Quite common on Madeira, particularly near the coast where a maximum of 30 was seen at Ponta de São Lourenço on July 23rd. Often seen drinking on the Ribeira de Machico with a maximum of 23 on July 22nd. Seen on Deserta Grande whenever the island was visited with a maximum of 50 in the central valley on 17th. Flocks of over 20 were frequently seen on Porto Santo.

GREENFINCH *Carduelis chloris*

One bird recorded near Funchal Museum was the only sighting. This may indicate a decline in numbers since 1968 when the species was first recorded breeding (Zino, 1969a).

GOLDFINCH *Carduelis carduelis parva*

Quite common on Madeira. Although most numerous near the coast, family parties were seen at many other localities and at high altitude. The highest count was 14 on the river at Machico on July 23rd, and 5 were trapped in Funchal at the end of August.

LINNET *Acanthis cannabina nana*

Not common on Madeira: 2 on the Ribeira de Machico on July 23rd; 2 near Poiso on August 5th; and parties of 3 and 4 near Achada do Cedro Gordo on 8th. A single bird was trapped on the Ribeira de Santa Luzia near Casa do Areeiro on 5th.

More common on Porto Santo where flocks of over 20 were seen near the town on 26th and on the western side of the island on 28th.

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