

# B O C A G I A N A

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### BIRD NOTES FROM MADEIRA, SUMMER 1986

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With 1 figure

**SUMMARY.** The Manchester University 1986 expedition visited Madeira, Porto Santo and Deserta Grande during July, August and September. 42 bird species were observed and notes on their distribution and abundance are presented. Two Balearic Shearwater *Puffinus puffinus mauretanicus* Lowe, 1921 were observed between Madeira and Deserta Grande. Two subspecies thought to be at risk by ICBP, Sparrowhawk *Accipiter nisus* and Linnet *Carduelis cannabina nana*, were found respectively to be common and rare. Mistle Thrush *Turdus viscivorus* first recorded in 1981 was again seen.

**RESUMO.** A expedição de 1986 da Universidade de Manchester visitou a Madeira, Porto Santo e Deserta Grande durante Julho, Agosto e Setembro. 42 espécies de aves foram vistas e apresenta-se aqui observações ligadas à sua distribuição e abundância. Dois Patagarros da subespécie *Puffinus puffinus mauretanicus* Lowe, 1921 foram observados entre a Madeira e Deserta Grande. O Furabardo (*Accipiter nisus granti*) e o Pintarroxo (*Carduelis cannabina nana*), duas subespécies consideradas pela ICBP em risco de extinção, foram achadas comum e rara respectivamente. Foi visto novamente o Tordo (*Turdus viscivorus*) primeiramente assinalado em 1981.

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## INTRODUCTION

The following species were recorded by the University of Manchester expedition to Madeira, which was present on the island from 25th July to 17th September 1986. The expedition was largely concerned with conducting a thorough census of the population of the Long-toed Pigeon *Columba trocaz*. For this purpose we were based at four forest rest houses during our stay. These were respectively: Lamaceiras (25th July - 5th August), Fonte do Bispo (9th - 16th August), Ribeiro Frio (16th - 30th August) and Encumeada (30th August - 13th September). A short visit was made to Porto Santo from 5th - 9th August and a day trip was made to Deserta Grande on 9th September.

The majority of the expedition's time was spent taking the census of pigeons in the forested valleys of the north of Madeira. Relatively little time was spent in other habitats or around the coast, and this accounts for the apparently low number of species recorded during a two month stay.

We should like to express our gratitude to all those in Madeira who provided help and assistance during our stay. In particular to Dr M. Biscoito and Mr. G. E. Maul of the Funchal Museum, to Mr. P. A. Zino and Dr. F. Zino. To the Secretário Regional da Economia for giving us permission to stay in the houses owned by the Forest Department, to Mr. H. Costa Neves for organizing our accommodation and to the Forestry guards at Lamaceiros, Fonte do Bispo, Ribeiro Frio and Encumeada for putting up with us. The Direcção Regional de Turismo made possible the trip to Deserta Grande and the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds provided general financial assistance. We should like to thank K. Hamer, J. Hill, M. V. Hounsome, S. Hughes, M. Jones, L. Lace, C. Turtle and L. Vaelley for contributing records and observations and, finally, we should like to thank Dr. Martin Jones for his assistance in the production of this paper.

### *Pterodroma* Petrels

On a journey to Deserta Grande on 9th September seventeen *Pterodroma* petrels were seen; fourteen on the early-morning outward journey and three on the return. The birds seemed randomly distributed in ones and twos. At this time of year breeding *Pterodroma feae* on Bugio would be incubating eggs (Zino & Zino 1986), thus these birds were perhaps 'off-duty' or non-breeding individuals from this colony. Two individuals were photographed at close range.

Two of the 17 birds were noticeably different from the others. They showed complete breast bands and appeared darker on the underwing and tail. The birds watched for some minutes at a distance of approximately 100 m. They were viewed with binoculars and a shouldermounted x20 telescope, in calm conditions and excellent visibility. Zino & Zino (1986) state that neither *P. feae* nor *P. madeira* ever have a complete breast band. The

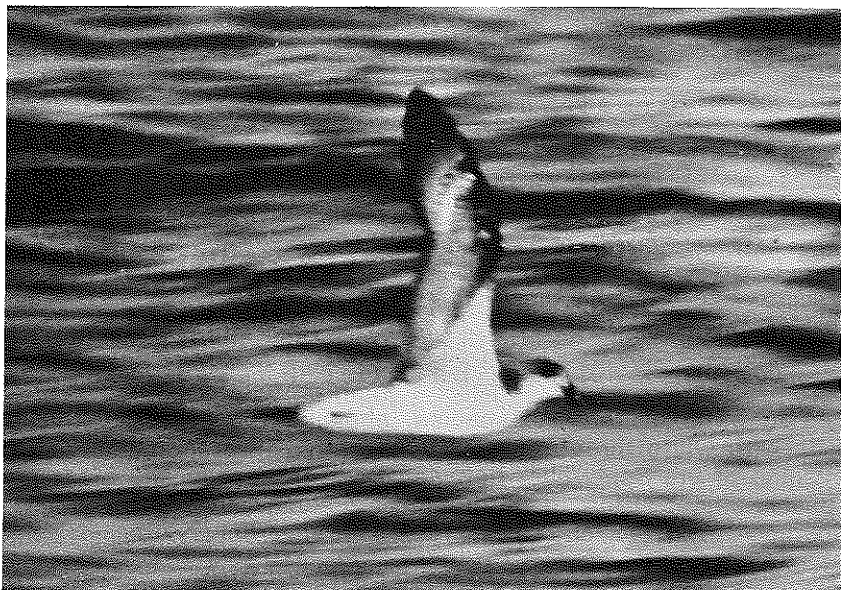


Fig. 1. -- *Pterodroma* sp. in flight. Probably *P. feae*. Off the south coast of Madeira, 9th September 1986. (Phot. B. Zonfrillo)

presence of a breast band is a diagnostic character of *P. mollis* and we would therefore tentatively identify these individuals as Soft-plumaged Petrels.

#### *Bulweria bulwerii* Bulwer's Petrel

A total of 48 birds were seen at sea between Funchal and Deserta Grande on 9th September. At the Doca landing area on the west side of Deserta Grande, many birds were breeding under rocky slopes, some chicks were estimated at 2 - 3 weeks old. Time did not permit an estimate of population density to be made. A Bulwer's Petrel chick was found on a visit to the Ilhéu de Fora at the end of the Peninsula of São Lourenço on 9th September. Bannerman & Bannerman (1965) suspected breeding on this island but ours appears to be the first positive record.

#### *Calonectris diomedea borealis* Cory's Shearwater

Large numbers were seen in rafts between the Ponta de São Lourenço and the Deserta Islands at 19.15hrs on 11th August. On 9th September several small rafts of 30 - 60 birds, were seen between Funchal and Deserta Grande. In all 220 birds were seen on the sea and in flight.

On 1st August 10 pairs of Cory's Shearwater wings were found near Boca do Risco. These were presumably from birds taken from one of the colonies on the north coast of Madeira.

*Puffinus gravis* Great Shearwater

Five were seen on 9th September between Funchal and Deserta Grande. Two were settled on the sea quite close to our boat and one was photographed.

*Puffinus puffinus puffinus* Manx Shearwater

One seen between the Deserta Islands and Funchal on the evening of 9th September.

*Puffinus puffinus mauretanicus* Balearic Shearwater

Two birds of this sub-species, showing the characteristic brown plumage with white throat and centre of belly, were seen flying south on the evening of 9th September between Deserta Grande and Madeira. One flew past the boat at less than 20 metres. Bannerman & Bannerman (1965) did not accept an "unconfirmed" record of this shearwater in Sarmento (1948).

*Ardea cinerea* Grey Heron

Two Grey Herons were seen flying up the valley of Ribeiro Frio on 21st August. They were seen to land in a Laurel Tree. A juvenile was seen fishing on the rocky shore at Ponta de São Lourenço on 22nd August.

*Falco tinnunculus canariensis* Kestrel

A widespread and common species, occurring in all types of habitat but particularly abundant on the Ponta de São Lourenço.

*Buteo buteo harterti* Buzzard

A common though less widespread species than kestrel, preferring higher, less cultivated areas. Frequently encountered.

*Accipiter nisus granti* Sparrowhawk

Seen on several occasions, mainly over the tops of the Laurel forests. Sightings were: A juvenile male at Fonte do Bispo on 10th August and a female there on 11th August. A female at Ribeira da Janela on 13th August and two different females there 7th September. One near Ribeiro Frio on 21st & 24th August, two pairs and a single female along the levada to Caldeirão Verde, and a single at the top of Fajã da Nogueira on 22nd August. At Encumeada, a female on 31st August and two females on 3rd September were seen. Finally, a female was also present at Ginjas on 3rd September.

*Charadrius hiaticula* Ringed Plover

One juvenile at Funchal marina on 16th September.

*Calidris alba* Sanderling

One at Funchal Harbour on 8th September and another, or perhaps the same bird, at the same place on 16th September.

*Scolopax rusticola rusticola* Woodcock

Seen on two occasions on 27th August near the summit of the north side of Pico das Torrinhas in Laurel forest, and on 2nd September on the east side of Pico Canário, near thick conifer growth. Both birds were in areas of wet ground at high altitude.

*Numenius phaeopus* Whimbrel

One seen flying past the seafront at Funchal on 23rd August. Four were seen near the fossil sand bed on the Ponta de São Lourenço on 24th August.

*Tringa nebularia* Greenshank

One adult present on a small tidal pool between Ribeira Brava and Ponta do Sol on 3rd September.

*Arenaria interpres* Turnstone

Present on seafront at Funchal on every occasion visited. An influx in early September increased numbers from 14 on 23rd August to 34 on 8th September. By 15th September this number had fallen to 10.

*Larus ridibundus* Black-headed Gull

Present at Funchal Harbour. An adult in winter plumage on 23rd August, 3 on 27th August and a juvenile on 28th August.

*Larus fuscus* Lesser Black-backed Gull

Several winter plumage adults seen at Funchal Harbour from 13th September with 5 on 15th September.

*Larus argentatus atlantis* Herring Gull

Common on the south coast and on the Peninsula but less so on the north of Madeira. This species is also found inland, notably at the rub-

bish tip at Quinta das Searas below Poiso, where ca. 450 were present on 1st August. Two adults were seen near the Café at the summit of Pico Areeiro on 6th September.

*Sterna sandvicensis* Sandwich Tern

Three records, all from the north coast: one heard at Porto Moniz on 2nd September, another seen at São Vicente on the same day, and another sighting from São Vicente on 7th September.

*Sterna hirundo* Common Tern

Seen on every visit to Funchal, where between 6 and 10 were usually present in the harbour. The majority of these birds were juveniles. Other records were of a juvenile between Ribeira Brava and Ponta do Sol on 3rd September, several off the Ponta de São Lourenço on 9th September, and ca. 30 seen on the same day near Deserta Grande.

*Columba livia* Rock (Feral) Dove

Some pure strain individuals were seen with Feral birds. Up to 30 were feeding on the tideline at Funchal. Also seen on Ponta de São Lourenço, the valley above Curral das Freiras and around Ponta do Sol.

*Columba trocaz* Long-toed Pigeon

This species was seen in many locations in North Madeira. For full details please refer to Jones (in press).

*Tyto alba schmitzi* Barn Owl

Two records. One found dead on the beach at São Vicente on 2nd September and one alive at the roadside near Campanário at dawn on 9th September.

*Apus unicolor unicolor* Plain Swift

Commonly seen over every habitat type and altitude. In late afternoons and evenings the roads, trails and levadas (watercourses) were favourite hunting places, with birds hurtling past about a metre above ground level. In the mountains the swifts were often congregated over wooded ridges. Large numbers were seen near Pico das Torrinhas on 26th July, and 42 were counted on 6th September at Encumeada. They were found breeding on the dry craggs around Pico Areeiro and on a cliff face at the top of the valley of the Ribeiro do Urzal (near Pico das Torrinhas).

*Upupa epops* Hoopoe

One or two birds seen every day at the campsite on Porto Santo from 5th - 9th August.

*Hirundo rustica* Swallow

One at Machico on 17th September.

*Anthus bertheloti madeirensis* Berthelot's Pipit

Restricted to the more arid regions of Madeira. This species was found at high altitude in areas such as Pico do Cedro, Pico Areeiro & Paul da Serra, and at lower altitude on the Ponta de São Lourenço peninsula.

*Anthus trivialis* Tree Pipit

One found recently dead at the Doca landing site on Deserta Grande on 9th September. It appears that this is the second record for Madeira. The specimen was taken back to England for positive identification and is now preserved in the Manchester Museum.

*Motacilla cinerea* Grey Wagtail

A widespread and abundant species. It inhabits almost all areas where water is found, including Funchal and other urban habitats. An individual was observed on 7th September with a wingless cricket *Metroptera falix* in its bill.

*Erithacus rubecula microrhynchus* Robin

A shy and secretive bird on Madeira, more often heard than seen. It is frequent in most wooded and well vegetated areas, and also in high altitude areas dominated by Tree Heather *Erica* spp..

*Turdus merula cabrerae* Blackbird

This species was found to be common in lowland scrub, agricultural areas and Laurel forest, but rare in regions dominated by Tree Heather. The conspicuousness of this species varied markedly with the time of day. For example, an evening transect along a levada on the outskirts of Lama-ceiros, near Porto Moniz on 6th September revealed only one Blackbird, while on the same transect at dawn on 7th September 25+ were seen.

*Turdus viscivorus* Mistle Thrush

One seen on the evening of 6th September among Pines by the roadside below Pico Areeiro. Five years previous, at the same spot, a small

party of Mistle Thrushes were seen by another Manchester University Expedition. The species was again recorded from this area during December 1983 (Bourne 1984), and it now seems highly likely that a small breeding population inhabits this area. This is the only known site where the species occurs in Madeira.

*Sylvia atricapilla obscura* Blackcap

Widespread and common in well vegetated areas. It was seen and often heard singing in agricultural areas, forest edge habitat and Laurel forest. It was, however, notably rarer in the latter.

*Regulus ignicapillus madeirensis* Firecrest

A very common species in Tree Heather and Laurel forest, and often the only species present in the former. It was also seen occasionally on the edge of agricultural land. From mid August onwards the vast majority of Firecrests seen were juveniles, travelling in loose flocks of 10 - 15 birds. Counts made at São Jorge showed one flock of 56 birds and on one Tree Heather plant at Pico Ruivo 25 were counted.

*Passer hispaniolensis* Spanish Sparrow

This species was seldom encountered. Definite records are from Ribeira Brava on 30th August and twice from Funchal; 2 in the Parque de Santa Catarina on 27th August and up to six regularly at the café by the marina, but only in the early morning. This situation is very different from that found in 1981 by Swash (1986) who described it as 'A common breeding species in Funchal and most towns and villages near the coast east of Funchal'. It clearly quits the breeding areas out with the breeding period.

*Petronia petronia madeirensis* Rock Sparrow

A single flock of 35 just past Prainha on the Ponta de São Lourenço was the only observation.

*Fringilla coelebs madeirensis* Chaffinch

A common species of Laurel forest, Pine and Eucalyptus. It also frequents picnic areas. As with Firecrests, juveniles were particularly abundant during August and September. One pair were feeding a single large chick on a nest in a small Laurel tree at São Jorge on 6th September.

*Serinus canarius canarius* Canary

Canaries were regularly seen around habitation in Funchal and on the drier areas of Madeira. Observations include a male at Machico on 23rd



August, 6 in Curral das Freiras on 24th August, 7 in Funchal on 27th August and 2 on 9th September, 20 at Boaventura on 28th August, 25 above São Vicente on 31st August and a flock of 30 at Ponta do Sol on 3rd September. On Deserta Grande a flock of 30+ were seen at the Doca landing area on 9th September.

*Carduelis carduelis parva* Goldfinch

Several small parties of this species was observed during the expedition and one large flock was seen. Heard singing at Ribeiro Frio on 21st and 24th August, several at Queimadas on 22nd August, on 24th August 2 were seen near Ribeiro Frio and 1 on the Ponta de São Lourenço, 2 in the Parque de Santa Catarina on 27th August, several at Encumeada on 30th August and 1st September and others seen at Boaventura and São Vicente on 28th and 31st August. Two were seen at Lamaceiros near Santa on 7th September and a large flock of 60+ was seen at the Miradouro near Banco das Voltas on 28th August.

*Carduelis cannabina nana* Linnet

This species was not often encountered. Other seed-eating species were forming flocks but Linnets were only observed in ones and twos. One was at Queimadas on 23rd August, 1 at Ribeiro Frio on 23rd August, two at Pico Ruivo on 28th August, and 1 was seen at Lamaceiros on 7th August. Swash (1986) also found this species to be uncommon on Madeira; the reasons for this are not obvious.

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