

B O C A G I A N A

Museu Municipal do Funchal

Madeira

5.XI.1987

No. 110

A BRIEF REPORT ON BIRDS OBSERVED ON MADEIRA, MARCH 31 - APRIL 14, 1987

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RESUMO. Durante uma visita de duas semanas à Madeira foram observadas no total 40 espécies de aves, 26 nidificantes, 14 visitantes mais ou menos regulares e 3 não completamente identificadas. Com respeito à época de nidificação, até meados de Abril foi notada apenas uma actividade mínima de construção de ninhos nalguns dos Passeriformes.

ABSTRACT. During a two weeks stay on Madeira and Porto Santo, we observed a total of 40 bird species; 26 were breeding species, 14 were more or less regular visitors, and 3 species were not fully identifiable. With respect to the breeding season, up to mid-April we noticed only minimal nest building activity in some of the passerines.

1. INTRODUCTION

We stayed on Madeira from March 31 - April 14, 1987, for holidays and for a preliminary, exploratory study on the Blackcap, *Sylvia atricapilla* (on which a special short report will be given in the 'Bonner Zool. Beitr.'). Along with this study, we used any opportunity to spot and identify other

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avian species. The 'handbook' of the Bannermans on Madeiran birdlife, published in 1965, is now more than 20 years old, and since that time, the sparse literature published on the Madeiran avifauna is rather erratic and mainly based on occasional observations. There is also no local ornithological working or 'birding' group, and for these reasons we have decided to publish our list of observations below as a small contribution to a future comprehensive compilation of the avifauna of Madeira.

We lived in Caniço de Baixo, and were restricted to the southeastern part of the island in most of our activities. The farthest points we reached from there were in the southwest, Ribeira Brava, in the west, S. Vicente, S. Jorge and Porto da Cruz, and Porto Santo in a one day vessel trip. Birding was adversely affected by a spell of inclement weather conditions from April 4 - 7, and by heavy storms from the 11th to the 13th.

2. ABBREVIATIONS AND CATEGORIES

B. & B.: Bannerman and Bannerman, 1965, C. d. B.: Caniço de Baixo, P. S.: Porto Santo, Pta. d. S. L.: Ponta de São Lourenço. We use "some" for up to 10 individual birds, "numerous" for up to about 50, "common" for up to 100, and "very common" for more than 100 individuals.

3. SYSTEMATIC LIST OF SPECIES

We follow the lists given in Peterson et al. (1985) and Heinzl et al. (1983). We do not use the subspecies names since we have been unable in many cases to recognize the characteristics of the subspecies. In the cases where we could identify subspecies, they were consistent with those normally seen on Madeira.

CORY'S SHEARWATER *Calonectris diomedea*

Common offshore (in agreement with other reports) C. d. B. and adjacent areas everyday, especially in the forenoon. During the vessel trip from Funchal to P. S. on the 9th of April, we counted (from one side of the vessel each) 113 individuals on the outward journey, and 67 on the return trip. The largest resting colonies were comprised of about 20 individuals.

MANX SHEARWATER *Puffinus puffinus*

Most probably calling during the night of April 11.

LITTLE SHEARWATER *Puffinus assimilis*

One soaring very close to the coast of C. d. B. during the extremely stormy period, not far from a group of Cory's Shearwaters. There have only a few observations been reported in recent years (e.g. Sturhan 1969, Hunter et al. 1986, Swash 1986, Zonfrillo et al. 1986).

LITTLE EGRET *Egretta gazetta*

Of this "common" visitor (B. & B.), otherwise only reported by Sturhan (1969: 1), we saw two: Funchal Harbour April 4, C. d. B. April 12.

HERON *Ardea cinerea*

Nine observations from April 1 to 13, C. d. B., Pta. d. S. L., Porto da Cruz, Gaula. Of this nonbreeding but year-round-present species (B. & B.), there were also eight sightings by Swash (1986).

PURPLE HERON *Ardea purpurea*

One was roused from the Giant Reed wilderness at Ribeira do Caniço, April 3. Among the sparse records, there is another recent sighting (Swash 1986).

SPARROWHAWK *Accipiter nisus*

Of this species with "meagre" field observations (B. & B., see also Sturhan 1969, Hunter et al. 1986, Swash 1986 for several sightings), we saw one at the Botanical Garden in Funchal and one in Caniço.

BUZZARD *Buteo buteo*

Some individuals almost everyday at various places, from the coast to the mountain ridge. On the 7th of April a group of three at Ponta do Rosto north-east of Prainha and one on the 9th at P. S. (as earlier reported by Sturhan 1969, Swash 1986, Zonfrillo et al. 1986).

KESTREL *Falco tinnunculus*

Numerous, almost daily sightings, maximum six at once on April 1 at Ribeira de Santa Cruz, two on the 9th at P. S.. From the coast to the central massifs.

RINGED PLOVER *Charadrius hiaticula*

About four of these not-often-reported passage migrants (B. & B.) on March 31 in the Funchal Harbour (for two other records see Swash 1986).

DUNLIN *Calidris alpina*

More than 50 individuals in flocks in the Funchal Harbour on March 31. According to B. & B. one of the most common waders on passage migration; for summer records see Swash (1986).

RUFF AND REEVE *Philomachus pugnax*

Some Reeve at Funchal Harbour March 31; for earlier observations, see Sturhan (1969).

WHIMBREL *Numenius phaeopus*

Of this 'most common wader' visiting Madeira (B. & B.) with regular recent sightings, we saw 15 at Pta. d. S. L. and heard calls on P. S.

SPOTTED REDSHANK *Tringa erythropus*

One at the marine bathing area of C. d. B., April 3; formerly reported by B. & B.

REDSHANK *Tringa totanus*

We found this 'regular passage migrant' (B. & B.) only on March 31: two at C. d. B., and two or three in the Funchal Harbour; for a few other records, see Swash (1986).

COMMON SANDPIPER *Actitis hypoleucos*

Two of these numerous-recorded visitors (B. & B.) at the marine bathing area of C. d. B., April 3; other reports by Sturhan (1969) and Swash (1986).

TURNSTONE *Arenaria interpres*

The most regularly-seen wader species, numerous records daily at various coastal areas, the largest groups with up to 30 individuals in the Funchal Harbour.

BLACK-HEADED GULL *Larus ridibundus*

From March 31 to April 6 up to about ten in the Funchal Harbour area, with a maximum of about four in full breeding plumage (for similar records, see B. & B. and Sturhan 1969).

HERRING GULL *Larus argentatus*

Omnipresent, mainly concentrated along the coast, but feeding on wastes up to the mountainous country, and even soaring over the highest massifs. The largest flocks, which followed fishing vessels, were composed of more than 300 individuals.

ROSEATE TERN *Sterna dougallii*

Eight fishing in the new harbour of P. S., April 9, during the fore- and afternoon; one had distinct and two had slight rosy colouration of the breast. At several times, pairs left the group, landed on the surface of the sea, and displayed in 'head and tail up postures'. For other recent records of this supposed breeding species (B. & B.), see Swash (1986).

COMMON TERN *Sterna hirundo*

As regularly reported, daily some or numerous individuals offshore at various places, two or four on P. S. close by the Roseate Terns.

ROCK DOVE *Columba livia*

Numerous records of this common breeder at various coastal areas; most of the individuals observed on the cliffs appeared to be 'pure' conspecifics.

LONG-TOED PIGEON *Columba trocaz*

Six on April 5 in the forest park of Pico das Pedras.

TURTLE DOVE *Streptopelia turtur*

One possible sighting of this occasional breeder (B. & B., see also Swash 1986) on April 11 above Santo da Serra.

SWIFT *Apus apus*

Some or numerous observations daily, including on P. S..

PALLID SWIFT *Apus pallida*

At least two on March 31 at C. d. B., and a few occasionally - identified individuals until April 13 in southern coastal areas. We did not use much time to search for Pallid Swifts, since the date of first spring observation is the 15th of March (Schindler, 1960).

HOOPOE *Upupa epops*

One sighting of this breeding species at Pta. d. S. L. on the 7th of April, and three on the 9th on P. S..

TREE PIPIT *Anthus trivialis*

One individual close to some Berthelot's Pipits at C. d. B., 1st of April. There is one early record by Schmitz (1905), and two recent sightings are reported by Bourne (1984).

BERTHELOT'S PIPIT *Anthus berthelotii*

Some to numerous individuals were seen almost everyday from coastal areas at C. d. B. up to slopes of the Pico do Areeiro, and also on P. S.. On Pta. d. S. L., we counted more than 50 individuals during a walk of about 4 km (a corresponding number reported by Swash 1986).

GREY WAGTAIL *Motacilla cinerea*

Some or numerous encounters everyday, from the coast through fields, villages, along water-courses, up to the forest park of Pico das Pedras.

WHITE WAGTAIL *Motacilla alba*

One individual of this regularly-reported visitor was seen in Funchal Harbour on March 31.

ROBIN *Erithacus rubecula*

Almost everyday some or numerous records; scattered along coastal areas and settlements, mainly from the lower timberline up to the Pico do Areeiro.

BLACKBIRD *Turdus merula*

Numerous from coastal areas to the highest mountain forests. There was full song every morning from about 6 a. m. onwards, but among hundreds of individuals, we saw only one carrying nesting material. This may indicate a fairly late breeding season as stated by Schmitz (1899) for May/June.

SPECTACLED WARBLER *Sylvia conspicillata*

From this rare breeding species, we heard only one warning individual in a low thicket close to a small brook below Camacha.

BLACKCAP *Sylvia atricapilla*

We made a special preliminary study on this species with respect to distribution, density and behaviour. Results will be reported in 'Bonner Zool. Beitr.'. By identifying over 100 males, one melanistic individual could be detected (at Funchal). The birds were in full song in periods of fine weather, and pair formation was well-advanced. But besides nests of the previous years, we found just one under construction; thus the breeding season was still ahead.

FIRECREST *Regulus ignicapillus*

This Madeiran 'elf-bird' was quite numerous in the mountainous forest. We saw, in two separate areas, two and three pairs, respectively, within a distance of less than 5 m showing territory defence and most intensively displaying; one copulation was also observed.

SPANISH SPARROW *Passer (domesticus) hispaniolensis*

This 1930's intruder (B. & B.) was common or very common in the southern, lower parts of the island and on P. S.. Flocks of up to 30 individuals were seen in the fields and in villages, especially where palm trees were centrally located.

ROCK SPARROW *Petronia petronia*

Only recorded on Pta. d. S. L., but here abundant. We saw small flocks of 8, 35, and about 50 individuals; in the area of Ponta do Rosto, we also saw large, mixed flocks of over 200, composed of about 50% Rock Sparrows, about 30% Goldfinches, and about 10% each of Linnets and Canaries. Since recent reports mention only fairly low numbers (e. g. Hunter et al. 1986, Swash 1986, and Zonfrillo et al. 1986), we wonder if the large and mixed flocks observed were still 'late-winter' aggregations resulting from the inclement weather conditions.

CHAFFINCH *Fringilla coelebs*

Commonly to very commonly observed in the 'middle zone' (B. & B.); quite closely restricted to woodlands.

CANARY *Serinus canaria*

Commonly seen daily, especially in the cultivated areas, including P. S.. Many birds displayed song-flights — one collected nesting material (C. d. B., 4th of April); on Pta. d. S. L. still in mixed flocks (see Rock Sparrow).

GREENFINCH *Chloris chloris*

Possibly an individual (not fully identified) in a mixed flock on P. S. (see Rock Sparrow). For other rare records, see Sturhan (1969) and Swash (1986).

GOLDFINCH *Carduelis carduelis*

Daily records of some or numerous birds in the cultivated areas of the central and eastern parts of the southern island; quite common on Pta.

d. S. L., where we counted more than 40 in one mixed flock (see Rock Sparrow). Many paired individuals appeared to be nearing the breeding period. Contrary to B. & B.'s opinion, this species has not disappeared from the area between Funchal and Machico.

LINNET *Acanthis cannabina*

Almost everyday some or numerous individuals, all in the southern lowlands of the island, in most cases, pairs in cultivated areas; on Pta. d. S. L., more numerous in flocks (see Rock Sparrow).

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We are grateful to Mr. G. E. Maul, the retired Director, and Dr. J. M. Biscoito, the Director in charge of the Museu Municipal do Funchal for their information and help.

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