

B O C A G I A N A

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MORE WINTER NOTES FROM MADEIRA

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I recently spent two weeks (22nd December, 1975 — 4th January, 1976) in Madeira with my husband and son. As these dates coincide with the stay of Buxton (1960) in 1959/60 I thought it of interest to record the birds we saw. I have followed the species order and nomenclature of Bannerman (1965).

We stayed in Machico, a fishing village some 22 km. east of Funchal. We made an afternoon coach trip to the Pico Areeiro and an all-day coach trip round the island. We hired a taxi for the day for the Ribeiro Frio trip and again for an afternoon trip to Caniçal and the São Lourenço peninsula. The weather during the first week was unusually wet and overcast for the time of year, but improved during the second week.

Birds were on the whole rather scarce and difficult to see. The most interesting records appear to be 1) the melanistic male Blackcap *Sylvia atricapilla* var. *heineken*. Mr. Maul (*pers. comm.*) tells me that he has only once seen this variety in the wild; 2) the Spectacled Warblers *Sylvia conspicillata* above Machico, which Mr. Maul refers to as rare and evasive; and 3) the Goldfinches *Carduelis carduelis* in Machico. Birds we expected to see and did not include are the Linnet *Carduelis cannabina* and the Rock Sparrow *Petronia petronia* and wintering gulls.

RESIDENT SPECIES

Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus* 24.12.75 and 30.12.75 in the valley a few km. N. of Machico, mobbed by Spanish Sparrows *Passer hispaniolensis* on the first occasion; 26.12.75 and 31.12.75 hovering over headland on

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W. side of Machico Bay; 30.12.75 pair at Cruzinhas; 2.1.76 Câmara de Lobos and Ribeira Brava; 3.1.76 Caniçal. Sparrowhawk *Accipiter nisus* 3.1.76 one beyond Caniçal. Buzzard *Buteo buteo* 24.12.75 at least two, probably three on the spur road to Pico Areeiro; 26.12.75 one near Poiso, one above Machico; 30.12.75 one at Santo da Serra, one by road from Santo da Serra to Poiso, pair at Cruzinhas.

Atlantis Gull *Larus argentatus atlantis*. Present in varying numbers every day in Machico Bay; 24.12.75 about fifty birds, both juvenile and adult, on the plateau near Pico Areeiro, almost certainly the same area as found by Bannerman (*loc. cit.*); seen at every coastal locality visited. All the adult gulls seen at any locality appeared to be this race, juveniles appeared to be 1st and 3rd Winter only. I noticed no roosting flights as mentioned by Bannerman.

Madeiran Laurel Pigeon *Columba trocaz*. Tantalizing glimpse of pair across the valley from the Trout Hatchery, Ribeiro Frio, another fleeting glimpse at Balcões. Rock Pigeon *Columba livia* 30.12.75 above road from Santo da Serra to Poiso flock of probably purebred, 3.1.76 flock beyond Caniçal; feral flock in Machico.

Little Black Swift *Apus unicolor* 26.12.75 6-8 small swifts above headland W. of Machico bay unidentified to species; 29.12.75 flock ca. 6 in much the same area seen in better conditions and positively identified; 2.1.76 several Ribeira Brava.

Blackbird *Turdus merula* 2.1.76 2 males at Santana. Robin *Erithacus rubecula* 2.1.76 pair at Santana. Blackcap *Sylvia atricapilla obscura* 26.12.75 var. *heineken* in hotel garden Machico; 30.12.75 *obscura* Ribeiro Frio in Botanical Garden; 2.1.76 São Vicente. Spectacled Warbler *Sylvia conspicillata bella* 29.12.75 Machico/Holiday Inn, one in garden by main road; 31.12.75 ridge on west above Machico at least two pairs and 1-2 singles. Firecrest *Regulus ignicapillus madeirensis* 30.12.76 common at Ribeiro Frio Botanical Garden and along levada to Balcões. Grey Wagtail *Motacilla cinerea* 24.12.75 and 28.12.75 Machico; 30.12.75 Ribeiro Frio; 2.1.76 Ribeira Brava. Berthelot's Pipit *Anthus berthelotii* 3.1.76 pair above beach beyond Caniçal, one by electricity substation on North coast N. of Caniçal

Chaffinch *Fringilla coelebs madeirensis* 26.12.76 ridge on west above Machico; 30.12.75 in gardens on path from Balcões to Ribeiro Frio. Goldfinch *Carduelis carduelis* 1.1.76 Machico at least five in mixed flock with Canaries on waste land and gardens by the river bridge on the Caniçal road and at least two with Canaries at mouth of the river at Machico, about 1/2 km. downstream, possibly the same birds. This appears to be more goldfinches in one day than have been recorded in print for the last fifty years. Meinertzhagen (1925) Buxton (*loc. cit.*) Canary *Serinus canarius* 31.12.75 ridge on West above Machico, several in small flock; 1.1.76 Machico mixed flock with Goldfinches; 3.1.76

Canical. Spanish Sparrow *Passer hispaniolensis* ubiquitous, Ribeira Brava to Canical, not seen on N. coast.

MIGRATORY BIRDS

Curlew *Numenius arquatus* 3.1.76 one in rough grass where road ends E. of Canical. White Wagtail *Motacilla alba* 28.12.75 Machico one. Starling *Sturnus vulgaris* 3.1.76 flock of 150 - 200 near the road above and east of Canical in open country.

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