

FUERTEVENTURA - Mike & Emma Cram & family

6th to 13th February 2008

This was mainly a family holiday, staying in a villa a short walk from **Caleta de Fuste** (Owners Direct £450), flights from **Birmingham** (My Travel £750). Late cancellation of our Cardiff flight meant a very early morning start for us. A long day for Holly and James, but they were fine.



Wed 06Feb08

We arrived on time mid-afternoon, picked up our hire car (KIA), went straight to the villa and chilled out in **Caleta de Fuste**. We saw the first of many **Spanish Sparrow, Collared Dove, Yellow-legged Gull and Rock Dove**. We were surprised to get the first lifer of the trip, a pair of very confiding **Berthelot's Pipit** near a subway next to McDonalds. An evening visit to the salt pans at **Casas Salinas** a few km to the south produced **Little Egret, Turnstone, Swallow** and a **Black Redstart**.

Thu 07Feb08

We took a drive to familiarise ourselves with the island. Near **Antigua** the first of many **Southern Grey Shrike** were seen on roadside bushes and wires. It became apparent that **Berthelot's Pipit** were fairly common, found in many places across the island. As we neared **Tefia** we had a major stroke of luck as a superb **Houbara Bustard** flew across the road and posed long enough for some photos before melting away into the landscape!



Houbara Bustard at Tefia



Ruddy Shelduck

Embalse de los Molinos, a few km west of **Tefia**, is an impressive barranco that snakes itself up to a dam with an expanse of stony fields. This is probably the best site on the island, due to its large stretch

of freshwater. The highlights there were **100+ Ruddy Shelduck, 1 Barbary Falcon, 2 Pallid Swift, several Plain Swift, 2 Red-rumped Swallow, 1 Hoopoe, 1 House Martin, 3 Trumpeter Finch and 2 Common Raven**. There was no sign of any Cream-coloured Coursers or Black-bellied Sandgrouse.

We then made our way through **Betancuria** and through **Vega de Rio Palmas** where we encountered our only **2 Barbary Partridge** of the trip. We also saw another **Plain Swift** and some begging **Common Raven** in the mountain bends above **Tuineje**. Those roads simply have to be driven, quite an experience, especially the viewpoints, but our enjoyment was short lived



Barbary Partridge



Ravens begging for biscuits!

.....as James suddenly projectile vomitted all over us and the car. It was a rather uncomfortable hour's journey back to the villa via a Supermarket for cleaning materials. Mike drew the short straw of cleaning the car, but was rewarded with a fine male **Sardinian Warbler** singing outside the villa, also a pretty **Geranium Bronze** and numerous **Greenish Black-tip** butterflies.

Fri 08Feb08

A much windier day, as we enjoyed the town and beach in **CDF**. The Highlights were several **Gannet, Turnstone, Linnet, Common Starling** and **Barbary Ground Squirrel** taking nuts at close range much to the amusement of the children. We also saw a few **Plain Tiger** butterflies.

After a shower of rain, we took a drive to a small pond near **Tuineje** called **Rosa de Catalina Garcia**. The rough track off the main road was a bit bumpy, but perfectly drivable with care allowing us to drive right up to the pool. Holly was asleep and James snacking so we scoped and took some photos of some of the 25 species noted there including: **4 Little Egret, 1 Little Grebe** (trilling), **3 Spoonbill** (including one heavily colour ringed), **Teal, Shoveler**, the long-staying drake **Ring-necked Duck, 2 Ruddy Shelduck, 10 Kentish Plover, 1 Little Ringed Plover, 1 Dunlin, 1 Ruff, 20+ Black-winged Stilt, 1 Common Sandpiper, 1 Greenshank, 1 Spotted Redshank** and a **Southern Grey Shrike**.

Sat 09Feb08

Morning and early afternoon spent on the beach/town, then a short drive of a few km to the north end of the **Barranco de la Torre**, easily accessed from the main road to the Quarry. We were rewarded here with the 2 male and 1 female of the endemic **Fuerteventura Stonechat**. Other highlights were, **5 Egyptian Vulture, 1 Hoopoe, 1 Spectacled Warbler**. We then moved on for a snack at **Casas Salinas**, which was quickly becoming our favourite little pit stop as it was by the sea and we had discovered a track that took us right up to some walled raised fields. **Gannet, Grey Heron, Sandwich Tern, Whimbrel, 5 Lesser Short-toed Lark**. At evening at **CDF** again, we watched **25 Spanish Sparrow** in one palm tree. Slap up meal in town. James ate like a horse.



Egyptian Vultures



Fuerteventura Stonechat

Sun 10Feb08

Off to the zoo today in the south of the island, via a few short stops. **El Pared Desert area** only 4 **Lesser Short-toed Lark**, but the track was a bit rough and we exercised caution with kids in the car and made no attempt to find Coursers and Sandgrouse. On the way out a **Houbara Bustard** flew over! As we drove through **Costa Calma**, a **Barbary Falcon** flew over and we chanced across 5 **Cattle Egret** in the middle of a roundabout! A brief stop near the hotel in **Sol Gorriones** yielded **Hoopoe**, **White Wagtail**, **Goldfinch** and absolutely nothing on the beach apart from a few naked Germans.

An enjoyable visit to the zoo was cut short by rain. As we left **La Lajita**, we found a **Common Chiffchaff** and a **Common Myna** in the woods around the area. We stopped off again at **Rosa Catalina de Garcia** again and saw much the same plus **Common Kestrel** and **Spectacled Warbler**. Then we stopped off at **Barranco de la Torre** for a photo attempt at **Fuerteventura Stonechat**. We did not bother going further south to **Morro Jable** for the *Monk Parakeets* and *Ring-necked Parakeets* – I'm told they are easy to get?.....

Casas Salinas at dusk produced 2 **Berthelot's Pipit**, 16+ **Lesser Short-toed Lark**, 2 **Pallid Swift** and 3 **Trumpeter Finch**.

Mon 11 Feb08

Mike's morning off for good behaviour! I headed for **Embalse de los Molinos** at dawn and spent two hours scanning the stony fields at different view points but sadly no Coursers, Curlews, Bustards or Sandgrouse. There was still plenty to enjoy including a flock of mainly **Pallid** with a few **Plain Swift**, 2 **Trumpeter Finch**, **LST Lark**, **Sardinian Warbler**, a fine male **Fuerteventura Stonechat**, 2 **Berthelot's Pipit** and a nice local race **Common Buzzard**. There were also 4 **Little Egret**, 2 **Little Ringed Plover** and a **Greenshank** in the wetter parts of the barranco just east of the dam.

I moved on and took the mountain roads stopping off to check out an area recommended by Paul Parsons as worthy of checking out. The well vegetated fields just south of **Betancuria** were quite pretty and there was plenty of bird activity, but my attention was drawn to a very nice **Canary** sitting in a bush. Small numbers do occur on Fuerteventura, but they are far more common on Tenerife.

I parked in the village of **Vega de Rio Palmas** and almost immediately spotted a singing (African) **Blue Tit** of the *degener* race. It was quite happy singing from high up in some very tall Palm trees and came down to some wires giving better views. I then walked down the barranco towards the dam at **Embalse de las Penitas**. Species noted included **Common Kestrel**, **Sardinian Warbler**, **Song Thrush** and **Linnet**. As I took out an apple, about 8 **Barbary Ground Squirrel** appeared and ended up sharing it with me!

Back at **CDF** after lunch we mooched around the town and added some nice Lepidoptera to the trip list: - **Painted Lady**, **African Grass Blue** and **Hymenia recurvalis**.

Tues 12Feb08

Morning spent in town and on beach/harbour. Afternoon visit to **Casas Salinas** was very productive. Emma found 3 **Red-throated Pipit** in the raised walled fields in amongst the **LST Larks**, **Hoopoes** and **Trumpeter Finches**. Also present were **Grey Heron**, **Whimbrel**, **Kentish Plover**, **Common Sandpiper**, **Plain Swift** and **Southern Grey Shrike**.



Casas Salinas - Hoopoe, Trumpeter Finch and Red-throated Pipit

Wed 13Feb08

We set off to the Airport and home. We noted a few Swift sp on the coastline near the Terminal and a **Berthelot's Pipit** on the wires nearby, a nice way to sign off.

We noted 62 species in all plus 5 species of butterfly and 2 moths. Mike had 7 lifers (12 for the Western Palearctic) plus a new race tick (African Blue Tit). Emma had 15 lifers.

A full week's birding here and you would surely clean up on the specialities that we missed like Cory's Shearwater, Stone Curlew, Cream Coloured Courser, Black-bellied Sandgrouse, Monk Parakeet and Ring-necked Parakeet. Though we had our fair share of luck with Houbara Bustard, significant finds were surely the 5 Cattle Egret, 3 Red-throated Pipit, Canary and the Common Myna.

List of bird species (62):-

Little Grebe	Northern Gannet	Grey Heron	Cattle Egret
Little Egret	Eurasian Spoonbill	Ruddy Shelduck	Eurasian Teal
Northern Shoveler	Ring-necked Duck	Tufted Duck	Egyptian Vulture
Common Buzzard	Common Kestrel	Barbary Falcon	Barbary Partridge
Common Moorhen	Common Coot	Houbara Bustard	Black-winged Stilt
Little Ringed Plover	Kentish Plover	Dunlin	Ruff
Whimbrel	Spotted Redshank	Common Redshank	Common Greenshank
Common Sandpiper	Ruddy Turnstone	Yellow-legged Gull	Sandwich Tern
Rock Dove	Collared Dove	Plain Swift	Pallid Swift
Hoopoe	Lesser Short-toed Lark	Sand Martin	Red-rumped Swallow
House Martin	Barn Swallow	Berthelot's Pipit	Red-throated Pipit
White Wagtail	Black Redstart	Fuerteventura Stonechat	Song Thrush
Spectacled Warbler	Sardinian Warbler	Blackcap	Common Chiffchaff
Blue Tit (degener)	Southern Grey Shrike	Common Starling	Common Myna
Common Raven	Spanish Sparrow	European Goldfinch	Common Linnet
Trumpeter Finch	Canary		

Mammals:- Barbary Ground Squirrel

Butterflies (5):-

Plain Tiger, Greenish Black-tip, Geranium Bronze, African Grass Blue, Painted Lady

Moths (2):-

Herpetogramma Centrostigalis, Hymenia recurvalis

Thanks

Thanks go to Paul Parsons & Martin Hnatiuk for their invaluable annotated notes and maps from their visit to Fuerteventura 23rd February to 2nd March 2005.

Without some of these notes it would have been trickier to see some of the species with our restricted birding time. On the whole I think we did very well. Although we failed to turn any of those smaller Ravens into Brown-necked Ravens! None of them resembled the many Brown-necked I've seen in both Oman and the UAE.

References:-

- (1) We found the **AA Island Map of Fuerteventura** very handy, at a scale of 1:50,000 we never got lost even when the map got spattered with recycled yoghurt vomit! A lot of it was in German, but that's where my CSE in German came in handy!
- (2) We also took **Michelin Road Map of Spain & Portugal Edition 2007 (Page 95)** at 1:400,000 this was handy for a large overview and for day trip planning.
- (3) The only bird book you really need here is the **Collins Bird Guide** (Britain & Europe)
- (4) Though I hear **Clarke and Collins' A Birdwatcher's Guide to the Canary Islands** is also a handy companion, especially if you wish to visit the other Canary Islands.

If you need any more gen or information just get in touch with us.

Written by MIKE CRAM – 1st March 2008