



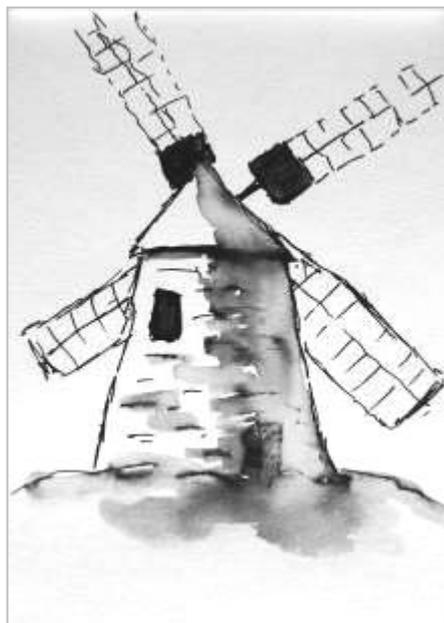
Honeyguide

WILDLIFE HOLIDAYS

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**Fuerteventura
Canary Islands
18th – 25th March 2015**

Participants

Malcolm and Helen Crowder
Kate Dalziel
David and Diana Melzack
John Rumpus and Rosemary Macdonald
Eiluned Morgan

Leader

David Collins

Report by David Collins

Our holiday was based at the Hotel Oasis Casa Vieja in La Oliva

www.oasiscasavieja.com/en/

All the photos in this report were taken by group members, indicated by initials, during the holiday week.

Front cover: houbara bustard and cream-coloured courser with half-grown chick by David Collins,
both photos taken on Tindaya plain;

sketches of one of the windmills on the ridge above the hotel, and
David Collins at Pájara looking for warblers, by Rosemary Macdonald.



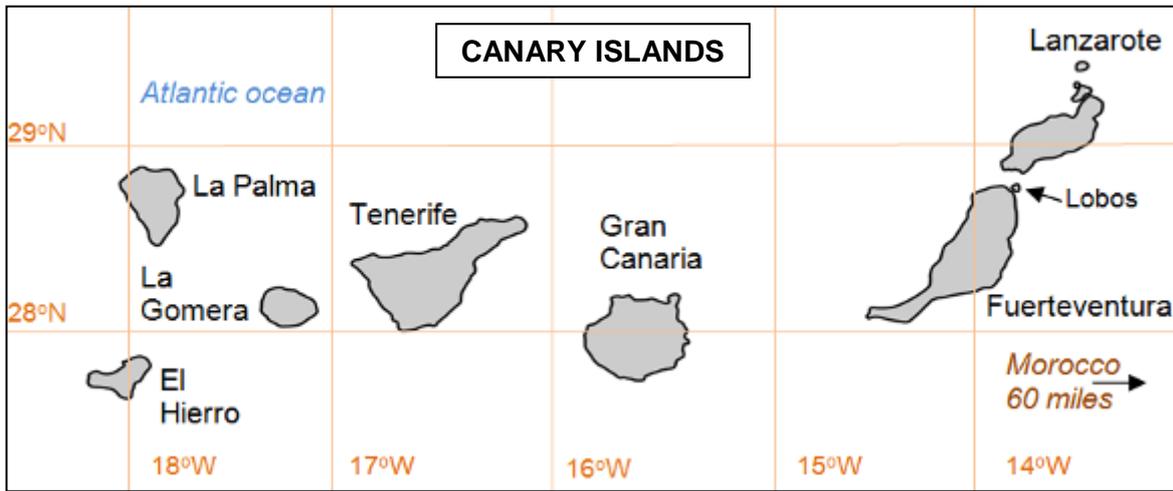
As with all Honeyguide holidays, part of the price of the holiday was put towards a conservation project, in this case for La Sociedad Española de Ornitología (SEO), the Spanish Ornithological Society, and its work in the Canary Islands. The conservation contribution this year of £40 per person was supplemented by gift aid from those eligible through the Honeyguide Wildlife Charitable Trust, giving a donation of £400 / 540€.

Cristina González, SEO/BirdLife, Delegada Territorial de Canarias, wrote to say:

"Agradecemos tu apoyo e interés en Canarias y en SEO/BirdLife y la labor que llevamos a cabo. Agradecemos mucho vuestro gesto y será bienvenida, sobre todo teniendo en cuenta la crisis económica que vivimos hoy en día, y las necesidades que tenemos para poder llevar cabo actuaciones de conservación y protección de las aves."

"We appreciate your support and interest in the Canaries and SEO/BirdLife and the work that we do. We appreciate your gesture and it will be welcome, especially given the economic crisis we live in today, and the needs we have to carry out action for the conservation and protection of birds."

This year's donation brings the total given to SEO since the first Honeyguide holiday in Spain in 1991 to £16,305. The total for conservation contributions from all Honeyguide holidays since 1991 to March 2015 is £98,200.



Itinerary

Wednesday 18 th March	Fly to Fuerteventura and arrive at Hotel Oasis Casa Vieja.
Thursday 19 th March	Morning walk over lava area near the hotel. El Cotillo area in the afternoon.
Friday 20 th March	La Oliva fields and the reservoir at Los Molinos. Late afternoon at Tindaya Plain.
Saturday 21 st March	Pájara in the morning, then various places in the Betancuria area.
Sunday 22 nd March	Wetlands at Rosa de Taro, Las Salinas, and Los Alares. Lunch in Barranco de la Torre. Brief visit to Tiscamanita.
Monday 23 rd March	Pájara again, then on to the south coast and Jandía.
Tuesday 24 th March	Pre-breakfast visit to La Oliva fields. Vega de Rio Palmas for a walk down the barranco to Las Penitas reservoir. Quick stop in Betancuria, then a final visit to Tindaya Plains.
Wednesday 25 th March	Return to the UK.

Wednesday 18th March: arrival

A day of travel and settling into our accommodation at Casa Vieja, which consisted of two three-bedroom villas with comfy sitting areas and kitchens.

Thursday 19th March: Villaverde and El Cotillo

After breakfast we gathered in the cactus garden that surrounds the hotel. There were plenty of handsome Spanish sparrows, and we noticed that one of the resident collared doves was paired to an African collared dove. This species is a recent colonist to the island, and the form here is recognisable as the 'Barbary' type by its very pale colour and red legs and eye.



Lava field and the volcanic cone of Montaña Arena (DM)

We then set out for a leisurely walk along the tracks behind the hotel. At first we picked our way through the outskirts of the village where there were lots more Spanish sparrows. A laughing dove sang from the top of an agave spike and then perched on a telegraph pole, allowing us to admire it. Soon we were on the old mule track that crosses the lava field (malpais) formed tens of thousands of years ago by the imposing volcanic cone of Montaña Arena, which we could see to our left. The best birds were a delightful family party of southern grey shrikes and an even more obliging family of spectacled warblers that gave great views – at close range we were able to see that the juveniles are much plainer than the adults, especially lacking the contrasting head pattern. Clearly the bird breeding season was already well advanced, due no doubt to the better than average winter

rainfall. In fact the rainy season was clearly still in progress, and a short sharp shower caught out the hapless leader who was the only one not wearing waterproofs! David and Diana kindly produced a 'one use' poncho, but in the gusty wind it was no easy matter to get it on.



Caralluma burchardii, flowering finished and with long seed pods, growing beneath the savoury-smelling, *Launaea arborescens* (HC); Fuerteventura chat on *Kleinia nerifolia*, nicknamed 'crazy daisy' (HC); and *Euphorbia regis-jubae*, named in honour of King Juba II who is credited with discovering the Canary Islands in ancient times (MC)

Other interest was provided by our first hoopoe of the trip and views of a Barbary ground squirrel on a lava wall. Plants of note included the succulent *Kleinia nereifolia*, a bizarre relative of the ragwort, and the equally odd succulent fingers of *Caralluma burchardii*, a rare member of the milkweed family that is confined to a few places in the Eastern Canary Islands, with a closely related form on the Moroccan coast. It is not an easy plant to spot at first due to its stone-like colour and shape, but Helen soon got her eye in and was spotting clumps of it everywhere. A third succulent was *Euphorbia regis-jubae* with its yellow bracts. Spiny plants included *Lycium intricatum* with its edible red berries (beloved by houbara bustards and a range of other birds) and *Asparagus pastorianus*.

As a result of the winter rains, there were plenty of ruderal species flowering along the track, including lots of the pretty magenta-flowered fagonia *Fagonia cretica*, crown daisy *Chrysanthemum coronarium* and the showy little dock *Rumex vesicarius* with its large red fruits.

To the leader's surprise, just before we turned back towards the hotel we bumped into our first Fuerteventura chats of the week. As the name suggests, it is found only on Fuerteventura, and even here it has a restricted range. It is not normally seen in this area, so a confiding family party of this attractive little bird was a lucky find.

We ate our packed lunches in one of our villas before heading out for the afternoon to the coast at El Cotillo. We parked by the lovely sandy cove near the lighthouse at Toston where we saw a few whimbrels, turnstone and common sandpiper as well as a fearless Berthelot's pipit which ran around us. Then we had a short walk across the sand-covered lava leading to another cove. Here we enjoyed a range of coastal plants, the showiest of which were the yellow-flowered umbellifer *Astydamia latifolia* and lots of the lovely endemic sea lavender *Limonium papillatum*. We also noted the peculiar succulent shrub *Zygophyllum fontanesii* with its grape-like swollen stems, Sea Heath *Frankenia capitata*, the endemic *Lotus lancerottensis* and the somewhat similar looking yellow-flowered toadflax *Kickxia sagitata*.



Berthelot's pipit (KD); *Cistanche phelypaea* and Toston lighthouse (HC); *Limonium papillatum* (MC)

Out to sea there was a constant light movement of Cory's shearwaters, and we had good views of a male Kentish plover that from its behaviour clearly had a nest nearby.

Before returning to the hotel we drove back through El Cotillo and out onto the plain to the south in search of houbara bustard. However, there were none to be seen and indeed very few birds at all.

Friday 20th March: La Oliva fields, Los Molinos Reservoir and Tindaya plain

It's not every day that starts with a solar eclipse! With remarkable foresight, John had kept the special glasses that he was given at work when the last solar eclipse occurred back in 1999 and had brought them with him. So we were able to view the eclipse well. At maximum the sun was about a third covered by the moon – much less than it would have been back home but still impressive.

We then headed for the relatively green area of fields to the south of La Oliva. These always hold small birds, and we had good views of Berthelot's pipits and lesser short-toed larks. Both were singing, the pipit giving its simple 'chiree' and the lark including the usual mimicry of other local birds. Also calling were two quails from a large field further down the track. Other birds included several hoopoes and southern grey shrikes, a noisy pair of ruddy shelducks and an anxious black-winged stilt. Best of all though were the black-bellied sandgrouse. We had good flight views of several birds, but were also lucky enough to have prolonged views of one on the top of a bank. They are such splendid birds with their black belly patch, grey head and breast and rusty throat. Butterflies included painted ladies and our first green-striped whites for the week.

We then drove south across barren hinterland to the reservoir at Los Molinos. Surprisingly extensive bright red patches of *Mesembryanthemum nodiflorum* and small areas of bright green cultivated ground coloured the landscape here and there. It was lunchtime by the time we got to the reservoir so we ate our picnic by the dam. Lunch was interrupted when a Barbary falcon (the North African relative of the peregrine) shot past us and circled high over the reservoir. Some of the group managed to follow it as it drifted back towards the sea at great height. Finally it appeared to stall for a while and then stooped vertically at an incredible speed before disappearing from view.

On the reservoir itself about 40 ruddy shelducks kept up an almost constant din of braying and yelping noises, perhaps at least partly because several pairs had families of very young goslings in tow. Waders included several black-winged stilts, greenshank, common sandpiper and little ringed plover. We also had decent views of a small group of trumpeter finches. As we turned to retrace our steps, a purple heron was spotted cautiously making its way through vegetation on the far bank, this stop a brief pause on its migration northwards.



Los Molinos reservoir (KD); and *Mesembryanthemum crystalinum* – water-retaining cells make the plant glisten, giving it the name 'ice-plant' (HC)

The day had now warmed sufficiently to open the *Mesembryanthemum* flowers, and we stopped to admire a lovely patch of *Mesembryanthemum crystalinum* with its showy white blooms.

We drove down to the attractive cove at Los Molinos where we had intended to walk up the well vegetated barranco. Alas, heavy rain started just after we arrived and as it showed no sign of abating, we decided to cut our losses and seek better weather elsewhere. There were heavy storm clouds to the south but clear skies to the north so we headed back towards Tindaya.

The plains west of Tindaya are good for houbara, and it was still a bit early in the day to hope to see this elusive and secretive bird. Thankfully, though, we were now in bright sunshine, so we decided to walk down the narrow road that crosses the plain to scan for cream-coloured coursers. However, we had barely gone two hundred yards when we spotted our first houbara fairly close to the road. Although they are very wary of people, they do allow close approach in vehicles, so we returned to the minibus and drove down the road to where we had seen it. After a bit of searching we managed to relocate it, and we all had good views of this remarkable, rather haughty looking bird (photo on cover).

We then continued slowly down the lane towards the coast, keeping a close look-out for other desert birds. It was clearly our lucky day, because we had not gone far at all before we spotted a very close cream-coloured courser. What a beautiful bird it is when seen at such close range. The sandy colour blends wonderfully well with the surrounding desert, but the blue-grey cap, surrounded by white and black is delightful. And they are such elegant birds. In fact we had come upon not one bird but a pair with a half-grown chick. We got out of the minibus to make sure everybody could see. They did move away a bit but stayed close enough for us all to have good views through telescopes. So in hardly any time at all we had seen both of the desert specialities we had hoped to find.

That being the case we decided to drive on to the coast. Before we got there, though, we spotted another houbara in a patch of scrub. Indeed it turned out that there were two, and they came closer and closer. By manoeuvring the van slightly we managed to intercept one that was intent on crossing the road, and we had incredible views. Lots of photos were taken! Finally reaching the coast we had a short walk to the top of the fine basalt cliffs. There were a few Cory's shearwaters far out to sea but not much else, so we decided to head for home. On the way back yet another houbara crossed the road and gave close views, and the coursers were still there. This time we stayed in the van and had great close views of the pair feeding their chick (photo of adult and chick on cover). Lots more photos were taken!

Evening log in the cosy sitting room of one of the villas was briefly interrupted by the sound of a stone-curlew calling from fields close to the hotel.

Saturday 21st March: Pájara and the Betancuria area

Uncharacteristically, a rather wet day, so it was a case of dodging showers and choosing places where the weather was kinder. Our first stop was at the village of Pájara, where there are plenty of trees, a small park and a bougainvillea-lined barranco. A good place for butterflies in better conditions! The trees in the park held no fewer than five species of warbler, a very noisy ring-necked parakeet and a wintering (and very skulking) robin. Yellow-browed warblers have been present in the trees around the park all winter, and we could hear their squeaky calls as soon as we arrived. Seeing them was a different matter though: some of the group were lucky enough to get good views and others not so lucky. To add to the difficulty, both willow warbler and chiffchaff were in the same trees.

At least one of the yellow-browed warblers was singing; a rare opportunity to hear the song of this bird outside its Asiatic breeding grounds. However, it could not be described as an impressive song – just a few squeaky notes, and certainly nothing to compare with the songs of the resident blackcaps and Sardinian warblers. We had great views of the male Sardinian warblers, which were uncharacteristically keen to sing from the tops of bare shrubs. They are certainly handsome birds when seen well. A heavy shower forced us under the cover of the park café, from where we sallied from time to time in the hope of catching further glimpses of the yellow-browed warblers.

We then headed into the Betancuria mountains towards the valley of Vega de Río Palmas with its stately palm trees. On the way we stopped off at a viewpoint where the ravens have become remarkably tame and Barbary ground squirrels have also become very accustomed to humans. Plants on rocks just across the road included the showy endemic shrub *Asteriscus sericeus* with its large yellow flowers, the attractive pink flowered *Ononis serrata* and the mauve flowered branched broomrape.

The plan had been to walk down the barranco to the old (silted up) reservoir and its tamarisk thicket. Unfortunately, the rain was against us, so we drove to the end of the road to eat our lunch in and around the van. One of the exceedingly tame local ravens was grateful for scraps. Unfortunately there was no let-up in the weather by the end of lunch so we gave up on the plan and headed for the 'forest' area just south of Betancuria. This area has a scatter of tired looking pine trees. The weather was slightly kinder to us here and after a short walk through the scattered pines we managed to see a family party of canaries for which this area is well known. These are the wild type rather than the gaudy yellow cage birds we are more familiar with, much more like their relatives the serins. We also had good views of one of the few migrant birds of the week, an obliging tree pipit which was attempting to sing to itself perched in a tree.

The weather over Vega de Río Palmas still looked poor, so we gave up on it for the day and instead headed north towards sunnier skies. We parked at the Mirador de Velosa and walked down a track on the high ridge to the east, with fine views over the island below. This area is above 2000 feet and the plants are different to those on the dryer ground below. They included the endemic yellow-flowered rock rose *Helianthemum thymiphyllum*.



Admiring the tiny endemic *Helianthemum thymiphyllum* (HC)

At the end of the track there were hairy green moth caterpillars all over the ground (later identified as caterpillars of the winter web-worm moth). Rosemary found a rather fine scarf that had evidently blown down the slope from the mirador above. Having washed it she wore it proudly for the rest of the week!

Sunday 22nd March: small wetlands in the east of the island

Thankfully the weather was rather kinder to us today, although it had its moments! Our first scheduled stop was the wetland at Rosa de Taro, with its fringing stands of giant reed. However, just before we got there Helen spotted our first Barbary partridge of the trip on a roadside wall. By the time we had all got out of the minibus it had disappeared, but we could hear it calling not too far away, and after a bit of searching we in fact managed to find three birds and all had good views. Moving a very short distance on, we arrived at the wetland, where a small bird flushed from the margin looked interesting but could not be relocated. However, a brief snatch of reed warbler song later on from the opposite shore suggested that this may have been the mystery bird, quite a scare migrant to the island. Inevitably there were a few ruddy shelducks out on the water and flying noisily around from time to time. A female Fuerteventura chat gave great views and a turtle dove crooned from the depths of tamarisks at the southern end of the lake.

Next stop was on the coast at the small salt pans at Las Salinas. There were few birds on the salt pans but on the rocky foreshore a few waders included seven sleepy ringed plovers and a couple of whimbrels. Sandwich terns were passing in small groups, and the leader managed to spot a distant great skua heading north. A new bird for the island for him, although sadly the rest of the group was unable to get onto it. Far more exciting though was a pod of cetaceans feeding not too far offshore. Close enough to get decent views in our telescopes. Perhaps half a dozen animals generally surfacing at the same time and showing very tall dorsal fins. At the time they were thought likely to be pilot whales, which are indeed quite common hereabouts. However, scrutiny of books back home suggests they were probably Risso's dolphins on account of their fin shape and lack of bulging heads. There were a few larger whales too with small dorsal fins set well back on their bodies – these were certainly minke whales.

Rain clouds had been gathering while we watched the whales, but fortunately there was a handy café so we retreated first to the relative shelter on the veranda, then when things got really nasty to the interior! The toilets were well worth a visit here. The ladies' loo seat cover had a fetching picture of a goldfish on it and the equivalent picture in the gents had an impressive 3D image of a great white shark.



Ruddy shelduck with goslings ("like little humbugs"); and spectacled warbler (JR)

We drove down the short track to the mouth of the Barranco de la Torre with its palms and tamarisks. Between downpours we had a walk up the barranco. Sardinian warblers were here but not much else today, so we moved on to the small wetland at Los Alares, where the roadside pool held two pairs of black-winged stilts and a pair of little ringed plovers. The larger pool beyond had more stilts plus a common sandpiper. Yet more ruddy shelducks too, again with very small goslings. Spectacled warblers flitted around in the bushes.



Heading west we came upon the surprising sight of a commercial crop of *Aloe vera* (above, HC) – a large field of yellow flowered succulents is something none of us had ever seen before. It was certainly photogenic and our cameras were busy before we pressed on to the final stop of the day near Tiscamanita. We drove through the village and out on to the plains to the west, arriving just before a violent rainstorm swept in from the north-west. As it did so eight Egyptian vultures, both adults and young birds, rose into the air and headed for high ground to the east. With the rain now lashing down we decided to head north for home, arriving a bit earlier than normal, but before dinner we went out again to an area near the village of Lajares in search of stone-curlews. We heard several but were unable to spot any.

Monday 23rd March: the far south

Our journey south was punctuated by a stop at the café in Pájara for morning coffee where we spent some more time looking for the yellow-browed warblers. As before, only some of the group were lucky enough to get good views. Then we pressed on through unspoilt desert mountain scenery towards Jandía. On the long descent towards the settlement of La Pared we ground to a halt to watch an adult Egyptian vulture circling in a glorious blue sky – yes, the weather was being kind to us at last. Then on to the car park of the zoo at La Lajita in search of exotic butterflies and bulbuls.

The sun was hot now, so butterflies were active and we had very good views of geranium bronze. However, all the red admirals appeared to be the standard form and not the Canary red admiral (a subspecies of Indian red admiral). After a bit of effort we all had good views of the bulbuls, perhaps four or five in all. These are red-vented bulbuls, natives of southern Asia but seemingly well established here now and breeding wild in a small area in the south of the island.



Three exotics: red-vented bulbul; geranium bronze, a South African species which has spread through the importation of pelargonium cultivars; and monk parakeet, which originates from South America and, like the ring-necked parakeet, adapts well to urban environments (JR)

Lunch was at the woodland park at Costa Calma. Sadly, no migrants at all to be seen here so after lunch we pressed on to the isolated hotel at Los Gorriones. From a vantage point nearby we looked down over the tidal pools and saltmarsh where two spoonbills were the highlight. Four swallows heading west at least confirmed that some migration was happening.



Jandia spurge and its dramatic setting (HC)

Then on down the peninsula to the remote Gran Valle to see the extraordinary, cactus-like endemic succulent Jandía spurge *Euphorbia handiensis*. This plant is not only endemic to the peninsula, but is extremely localised even there. On the hillside beyond we could see several large clumps of the equally impressive and even larger Canary Islands spurge *Euphorbia canariensis*. Although this species is common in some of the islands it is very local in Fuerteventura.

On the way back we stopped briefly in the resort at Morro Jable to admire several monk parakeets feeding on Mesembryanthemum seeds next to the road. This is another bird that has become established in the wild in this part of the island.

Tuesday 24th March: Betancuria mountains and Tindaya plain

About half the group enjoyed a pre-breakfast walk in the nearby fields just the other side of La Oliva. Much the same mixture of birds as on the visit earlier in the week, but there were lots and lots of hoopoes, at least three family parties and probably around fifteen birds in total.

On the way back we took a different route through the village and when we were just a few hundred yards from the hotel chanced upon a stone-curlew. From the bus we had really great close views of it. There is nothing like a good bird to give you an appetite for breakfast!



Stone-curlew (JR)

After breakfast, with the weather finally looking more settled, we decided to head back to the Betancuria hills to do the walk down the Barranco de las Penitas at Vega de Río Palmas that had been rained off earlier in the week. That said, it was drizzling slightly when we arrived at the parking spot above the bridge. Fortunately, though, there is now a rather splendid café here complete with pictures of local birds on the walls and a good quality gift shop, so we had a mid-morning coffee/tea break, by which time the sun had finally won the battle and we set off down the barranco in warm sunshine.

Just below the bridge is a permanent pool where we spotted a reddish dragonfly sunning itself on a rock. The pale flashes on the sides of the thorax confirmed that this was an epaulet skimmer, a North African species that is also found in southern Spain but not often recorded in Fuerteventura. There were also emperor dragonflies and scarlet darters.

This barranco is one of the few on the island that has a permanent trickle of water running down it. Due to the recent rain, there was now rather more than a trickle, which made the narrower first section more difficult than usual. Nevertheless, with a bit of care we all managed to make our way through to the wider, flat part of the barranco where a small pale yellow butterfly could be seen flitting through the sparse flowers. It was our first greenish black-tip of the week. There were painted ladies and clouded yellows too, and a large butterfly that flitted past just one of the group just might have been a plain tiger.



Rock-hopping at the start of the barranco walk (HC); and juvenile southern grey shrike (DM)

Birds included Sardinian warblers and African blue tits, but best of all was a Barbary partridge making its way across the hillside just above the barranco.

The tamarisk thicket that has formed where the old reservoir used to be is a delightful spot, surrounded as it is by steep, barren mountain slopes. Several turtle doves were crooning from the thicket, and from time to time one would rise in display flight showing its distinctive tail pattern. We see them so rarely at home these days that it is a delight to find a place where they are still numerous.

Resplendent against the clear blue sky, an adult Egyptian vulture flew close overhead, and we noticed its nest on the cliffs just above us, where we were able to watch the sitting bird through telescopes. As we turned back towards the bus there was a noisy family of southern grey shrikes. One of the juveniles was particularly confiding and posed happily for photographers.

The sun was still shining when we got back to the minibus, so the new bus shelter was the perfect place to have our lunch. Overhead we saw Egyptian vultures again, and several swifts appeared. Brief views suggested they were rather pale-throated and therefore pallid swifts, but they could just possibly have been the endemic plain swifts. Better views would have enabled us to identify them but they shot through and were never seen again.



Cream-coloured courser feeding close to the minibus (KD)

We then had a walk through the charming old village of Betancuria in search of monarch and plain tiger butterflies. This is usually a good place for these two large butterflies. Alas, we saw neither. There was a stiff breeze and it may be that it was just not quite warm enough for them. More green-striped whites, clouded yellows and painted ladies, but nothing more exotic.

For our finale we decided to try our luck again at the Tindaya plain where we had had good views of houbara and cream-coloured courser on our second day. So we drove back north towards La Oliva, turning off through Tindaya village to the same area as before. Within an hour we were lucky enough to have great close views of no less than five houbaras and an absolutely delightful pair of cream-coloured coursers feeding happily very close to the minibus. It would be difficult to think of a better way to end a holiday.

For our last evening we forsook the hotel restaurant and drove to Cotillo for a splendid meal at the Vaca Azul (complete with full-sized blue cow) overlooking the sleepy harbour.

Wednesday 25th March: travel back to England

After a leisurely breakfast we gathered in the hotel garden for a group photo before saying goodbye to those on the two earlier flights back to the UK. The remaining six spent time walking on the old mule track behind the hotel, buying local produce and relaxing in the lounge before being collected by taxi for our early evening flight back to Gatwick.

Highlights of the week as nominated by group members

Helen	Bird	Cream-coloured courser.
	Plant	<i>Caralluma burchardii</i> .
Malcolm	Birds	Great views of all the larger desert birds – houbara, cream-coloured courser and stone-curlew.
Kate	Birds	Cream-coloured courser and the spectacled warbler family.
	Plants	The succulent 'crazy daisy' (<i>Kleinia neriifolia</i>).
	Other	The colours of the landscape.
David	Birds	Fourteen new species, best were cream-coloured courser and red-vented bulbul.
	Plant	Flowering mimosa.
Diana	Birds	Cream-coloured courser and the southern grey shrike family.
Rosemary	Bird	Egyptian vulture at nest in Las Palmas valley.
	Plant	The Jandía euphorbia.
John	Bird	Barbary partridge.
	Plant	Lichens covering wet rocks.
Eiluned	Plant	<i>Mesembryanthemum crystallinum</i> in full flower.
David	Birds	The family party of cream-coloured coursers and the houbaras.
		Also nominated as event of the week – the solar eclipse.
		Group's favourite place – Las Penitas valley.



Admiring the view from the Mirador de Velosa (MC)

BIRDS (62 species)

Cory's Shearwater	Several seen off coasts
Little Egret	Four at Los Molinos Reservoir and ones and twos seen on the coast
Purple Heron	One at Los Molinos Reservoir
Grey Heron	One or more most days
Spoonbill	Two at Los Gorriones on south coast
Ruddy Shelduck	40 at Los Molinos Reservoir, a pair all week at La Oliva fields, & several other sightings
Egyptian Vulture	Eight at Tsicamanita, pair at nest in Las Penitas valley
Buzzard ¹	Only a few seen
Barbary Falcon	One at Los Molinos Reservoir
Kestrel ²	Seen every day
Barbary Partridge	Three near Rosa del Taro and one in Rio Palmas valley
Quail	Two singing in fields at La Oliva
Moorhen	At Los Molinos Reservoir, one at La Oliva and one at Rosa del Taro
Coot	A few pairs (including chicks) at Los Molinos Reservoir; also at Rosa de Taro
Houbara Bustard	Four at Tindaya plain on first visit, five on second visit
Black-winged Stilt	Los Alares, Los Molinos Reservoir and a pair at La Oliva
Stone-curlew	One seen well opposite the hotel, several others heard
Cream-coloured Courser	Two pairs on Tindaya plain, one with half-grown chick
Little Ringed Plover	Pairs at Los Molinos and Los Alares
Ringed Plover	About a dozen over the week
Kentish Plover	One on the north coast near the lighthouse at Toston
Whimbrel	Ten in total at various coastal locations
Greenshank	Two at Los Molinos Reservoir
Common Sandpiper	Singles at Toston, Los Molinos, and Los Alares
Turnstone	Two at Toston
Yellow-legged Gull	Seen in good numbers every day
Sandwich Tern	Ten past Las Salinas
Great Skua	One flew north past Las Salinas at distance (leader only)
Black-bellied Sandgrouse	At least six at La Oliva and others seen from minibus
Rock Dove/Feral Pigeon	Seen every day
Collared Dove	Common
African Collared Dove ³	One paired to a Collared Dove at the hotel throughout
Turtle Dove	At least three singing in tamarisk thicket at Río Palmas valley and in a few other locations
Laughing Dove	Two seen near the hotel, one singing at Rio Palmas Valley
Monk Parakeet ⁴	Seven at Morro Jable
Ring-necked Parakeet ⁵	One at Pájara
Pallid/Plain Swift	Very few seen, none well enough to positively identify
Hoopoe	Seen every day, with a maximum of at least 15 at the La Oliva fields
Lesser Short-toed Lark	Singing birds seen/heard most days
Swallow	Four at Los Gorriones on the south coast
Berthelot's Pipit	Seen every day
Tree Pipit	One seen in the 'forest' near Betancuria
Meadow Pipit	Up to three present at La Oliva fields
Robin	One in Pájara park
Fuerteventura Chat	Seen on four dates at various locations, including lavafields near hotel
Northern Wheatear	One seen in Lajares by Kate only
Reed Warbler	One singing at Rosa del Taro (leader only)
Spectacled Warbler	A few seen most days
Sardinian Warbler	Singing birds in Pájara, Betancuria and Rio Palmas Valley
Blackcap	Several seen and singing in Pájara
Chiffchaff	One in Pájara park
Willow Warbler	One in Pájara park
Yellow-browed Warbler	Three in Pájara park
African Blue Tit ⁶	Pájara and mountain areas near Betancuria
Southern Grey Shrike ⁷	A few seen every day
Red-vented Bulbul ⁸	Three or more at La Lajita
Raven	Seen every day
Spanish Sparrow	Common
Canary	A pair with a juvenile in the pine forest near Betancuria
Goldfinch	Pájara and Costa Calma
Linnet	Few seen
Trumpeter Finch	Seen every day
Corn Bunting	Just one seen from the minibus in the centre of the island

¹ The Canary Islands sub-species is *Buteo buteo insularum*.

² The Eastern Canary Islands sub-species is *Falco tinunculus dacotiae*.

^{3&4} These introduced species are now considered to be established as wild birds in the Canary Islands.

⁵ This introduced species is now considered to be established as a wild bird in the Canary Islands as a whole, although it is not clear whether it is fully established in Fuerteventura.

⁶ The sub-species found in Fuerteventura is *Cyanistes ultramarinus degener*.

⁷ The sub-species found in Fuerteventura is *Lanius meridionalis koenigi*.

⁸ Although this introduced species is not yet officially considered to be established in the wild, it is now regularly seen in various places on the island.

MAMMALS

Algerian hedgehog *Atelerix algirus* – several road corpses but none were seen alive.

Rabbit *Oryctolagus cuniculus*

Barbary ground squirrel *Atlantoxerus getulus*

Feral goat *Capra hircus* – it is quite difficult to work out which of the goats are wild, but some of those we saw in the mountains would certainly have been part of the self-sustaining feral population.

Minke whale

Risso's dolphin

REPTILES

Eastern Canary Islands lizard *Gallotia atlantica*

Eastern Canary Island gecko *Tarentola angustimentalis*



Eastern Canary Islands lizard (DM)



Barbary ground squirrel (JR)

BUTTERFLIES

Greenish black-tip

Large white

Painted lady

Green-striped white

Small white

Common blue

Clouded yellow

Red admiral

Geranium bronze



Green-striped white (HC); painted lady (DM); and epaulet skimmer – the diagnostic black-bordered white stripe (epaulet) on the side of the thorax is just visible (HC)

OTHER INVERTEBRATES

Emperor dragonfly *Anax imperator*

Maize moth *Spoladea (Hymenia) recurvalis*

Scarlet darter *Sympetrum erythraea*

Sand Dart moth *Agrotis* sp.

Epaulet skimmer *Orthetrum chrysostigma*

Caterpillars of the winter web-worm moth

Red-winged grasshopper *Acrotylus insubricus*

Potter wasp *Delta dimiatipenne*

Blue-winged grasshopper *Sphingonotus caeruleus*

Ground bug *Spilostethus pandurus*

White-banded digger bee *Amegilla quadrifasciata*

White crab spider, probably *Misumena vatia*



Left to right: *Spoladea recurvalis*, a tropical micro-moth and scarce autumn migrant to the UK, seen on roadside vegetation by the hotel; *Amegilla quadrifasciata*, a white-banded digger bee seen on geraniums in the zoo car park; *Delta dimiatipenne*, a potter wasp seen in the woodland park at Costa Calma (HC).

PLANTS (90 species)		
Pinaceae		
<i>Pinus canariensis</i>	Canary Islands pine	Planted in the Castillo de Lara forest
<i>Pinus halepensis</i>	Aleppo pine	As above
Aizoaceae		
<i>Aizoon canariense</i>		Endemic creeping plant
<i>Mesembryanthum crystallina</i>		Large white flowers
<i>Mesembryanthemum nodiflorum</i>		Forming red patches all over the island – small white flowers
Apiaceae		
<i>Astydamia latifolia</i>		On shore near Cotillo lighthouse
<i>Foeniculum vulgare</i>	Fennel	Rio Palmas valley
<i>Torilis nodosa</i>	Knotted hedge-parsley	Rocks in mountains
Asclepiadaceae		
<i>Caralluma burchardii</i>		Stone-like succulent near hotel etc.
Asteraceae		
<i>Asteriscus sericeus</i>		Small shrub with silvery leaves and yellow flowers in mountains near Betancuria. Endemic to Fuerteventura.
<i>Calendula arvensis</i>	Annual marigold	Weed of cultivation
<i>Chrysanthemum coronarium</i>	Crown daisy	
<i>Dittricha (Inula) viscosa</i>		Betancuria area
<i>Filago pyramidata</i>	Broad-leaved cudweed	On paths
<i>Kleinia neriifolia</i>		The common succulent 'ragwort' shrub
<i>Launaea arborescens</i>		Shrub with soft spines
<i>Pallenis heirochuntica</i>	Rose of Jericho	Mountains
<i>Phagnalon rupestre</i>		Mountains
<i>Senecio leucanthemifolius</i>	Coastal ragwort	Sand at Toston (near Cotillo)
<i>Silybum marianum</i>	Milk thistle	
<i>Sonchus bourgeaui</i>		In mountains
<i>Sonchus tenerimus</i>		A weed at the hotel
<i>Taraxacum officinale</i>	Dandelion	Road verge in Fustes
Boraginaceae		
<i>Echium bonnetii</i>		Endemic viper's bugloss species
<i>Echium decasnei</i>		Endemic white flowered shrub at forest near Betancuria
<i>Heliotropium erosum</i>	Heliotrope	Low plant with white flowers
Brassicaceae		
<i>Cakile maritime</i>	Sea rocket	Sandy area near Cotillo
<i>Erucastrum canariense</i>		Yellow flowered sp. in mountains
<i>Mattiola parviflora</i>		On plains
Cactaceae		
<i>Opuntia dillenii</i>		Small, yellowish, widely naturalised
<i>Opuntia ficud-indica</i>		Large plantations, some naturalised
Caesalpiniaceae		
<i>Ceratonia siliqua</i>	Carob	In gardens
Caryophyllaceae		
<i>Polycarpha nivea</i>		Silvery leaved shrublet on sand etc.
Chenopodiaceae		
<i>Patellifolia (Beta) patellaris</i>		Straggling on rocks
Cistaceae		
<i>Helianthemum thymiphyllum</i>	Rock rose sp.	Mountain rocks
Convolvulaceae		
<i>Convolvulus althaeoides</i>	Mallow-leaved bindweed	Roadsides
<i>Cuscuta approximate ssp episonchus</i>	Dodder	Smothering epiphyte on <i>Launaea</i> shrubs
Euphorbiaceae		
<i>Euphorbia canariensis</i>	Canary Islands spurge	Big clumps at Gran Valle (distant)
<i>Euphorbia handiensis</i>	Jandía spurge	Gran Valle
<i>Euphorbia balsamifera</i>		Mountains
<i>Euphorbia regis-jubae</i>		Widespread
<i>Euphorbia trigona</i>		Very tall non-native cactus-like plant planted at hotel etc.
<i>Mercurialis annua</i>	Annual mercury	Weedy species
<i>Ricinus communis</i>	Castor oil plant	
Fabaceae		
<i>Asphaltum bituminosum</i>	Bitumen vetch	Roadsides etc.
<i>Lathyrus clymenum</i>		Bicoloured (red and purple) vetchling in cultivated areas etc.
<i>Lotus glinoides</i>		Tiny pink flowered lotus, Gran Valle

<i>Lotus lancerottensis</i>		Widespread yellow flowered lotus
<i>Ononis hesperia</i>	Large yellow restharrow	Sandy areas
<i>Ononis serrata</i>		Large pink flowers, on rocks
<i>Scorpiurus muricatus</i>	Scorpion vetch	Frequent weed
Frankeniaceae		
<i>Frankenia capitata</i>	Sea heath	Cotillo
Fumaricaceae		
<i>Fumaria muralis</i>	Ramping fumitory	Weedy species on tracks etc.
Geraniaceae		
<i>Erodium cicutarium</i>	Common storksbill	Weed on paths etc.
Malvaceae		
<i>Lavatera cretica</i>	Smaller tree mallow	In mountain areas
<i>Malva parviflora</i>	Least mallow	Weed at hotel etc.
Mimosaceae		
<i>Acacia cyclops</i>		Roadsides etc. in mountains
Moraceae		
<i>Ficus carica</i>	Fig tree	
Orobanchaceae		
<i>Cistanche phelypaea</i>		Large yellow broomrape in coastal sands
<i>Orobanche ramosa</i>	Branched broomrape	Mauve flowered species in mountains
Oxalidaceae		
<i>Oxalis pas-caprae</i>	Bermuda buttercup	Double-flowered examples in mountains
Papaveraceae		
<i>Papaver hybridum</i>	Rough poppy	
<i>Papaver rhoeas</i>	Common poppy	
<i>Papaver somniferum</i>	Opium poppy	
Plantaginaceae		
<i>Plantago afra</i>		Common on tracks etc
Plumbaginaceae		
<i>Limonium papillatum</i>	A sea lavender	Endemic pink flowered species on coastal rocks at Cotillo
Polygonaceae		
<i>Rumex vesicarius</i>		Dock with large red fruits
Primulaceae		
<i>Anagalis arvensis</i>	Scarlet pimpernel	Blue flowered form
Resedaceae		
<i>Reseda lancerotae</i>		Pale yellow flowers, coastal sandy areas and mountains
Scrophulariaceae		
<i>Kickxia sagittata</i>		Yellow flowered toadflax
Solanaceae		
<i>Datura stramonium</i>	Thorn-apple	
<i>Lycium intricatum</i>		Low, thorny shrub
<i>Nicotiana glauca</i>	False tobacco	
Tamaricaceae		
<i>Tamarix canariensis</i>	Canary Islands tamarisk	In barrancos
Zygophyllaceae		
<i>Fagonia cretica</i>		Attractive, sprawling pink flowered weed
<i>Zygophyllum fontanesii</i>	Sea grape	Succulent on coastal rocks/sand
Agavaceae		
<i>Agave americana</i>	Century plant	
<i>Agave fourcroydes</i>		
Arecaceae		
<i>Phoenix canariensis</i>	Canary Islands palm	Río Palmas etc.
<i>Phoenix dactylifera</i>	Date palm	Widely cultivated
Juncaceae		
<i>Juncus acutus</i>	Sharp rush	Río Palmas
Liliaceae		
<i>Aloe vera</i>		Commonly planted and cultivated
<i>Asparagus pastorianus</i>		Spiny shrub
<i>Asphodelus fistulosus</i>	Hollow-leaved asphodel	Common small species
<i>Asphodelus ramosus</i>	Common asphodel	Larger species in mountains
<i>Drimia maritima</i>	Sea squill	Leaves seen in mountain areas
Poaceae		
<i>Arundo docax</i>	Giant reed	
<i>Avena fatua</i>	Wild oat	Roadsides etc.
<i>Pennisetum setacium</i>	Fountain grass	Attractive roadside weed
<i>Stipa capensis</i>	Mediterranean needle-grass	Long silvery awns in southern areas