

Lanzarote and Fuerteventura specialities: Allen's Gallinule, Houbara Bustards, Fuerteventura Stonechats

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Early January 2012 I was together with Hannu and Petri on a week holiday/birding trip on Lanzarote. The main target was certainly Allen's Gallinule which was found there around Christmas time. One bird was found already early December in Fuerteventura as well. However, that time I could not go for a trip but Gallinule gave us another chance early January.

As we got very decent last minute offer of a package trip, we took the opportunity to see the Gallinule but also Houbara Bustard and Fuerteventura Stonechat from the other island. I have avoided Canary Islands as my holiday destination, and hence those two last species were missing in my WP list.

Immediately on 7th January we headed to Tias Golf course where the Gallinule has been feeding. After an hour search we found the bird by the fairway #10 and got decent shorts from it.



Allen's Gallinule was feeding by the fairway #10 and reservoir. When it was chased too aggressively, it flew inside bushes and vegetation between fairway #10 and reservoir. Anyhow, the bird was surprisingly tame and allowed rather well to approach. Probably it had used to golfers walking on the golf course.

Next morning we went near Tegüise as we read from other reports that the plains SW of Tegüise is good for Houbara Bustards. Very soon we found at least 5 birds which were feeding on the fields.



Houbara Bustard can be hard to see when it's lying but when it moves, it can be found easier especially from car.

Old trip reports indicated that Teguise Golf course can be a good birding place, at least in migration time. On 8th in the afternoon we explored the golf course area and to our surprise Petri found a Little Bunting near the tee-off #7.



We read from a Canary Island guide book that the species is a rare species in the island. After our trip we read from Lanzarote birding blog that it was actually the first observation of Little Bunting in the islands. Independently local birders had found the same bird earlier in the morning as well. Very good spontaneous finding from both groups!

On 9th we with Petri decided to go to Fuerteventura for a day when Hannu decided to rest in Lanzarote. Our main target was to find Fuerteventura Stonechat. On the eastern side of La Oliva we found a male and 2 females but they were not cooperative for photographing. We continued on to Las Molinas reservoir where we

had pleasure to photograph very closely both a male and 2 females.



Additionally the reservoir had two female-plumaged Ring-necked Ducks, photo below.



We still continued south to Rosa de Catalina Garsia which had hosted another Allen's Gallinule in December. Now we found a female plumaged Blue-winged Teal together with Common Teals.



Blue-winged Teal (left) is a bit larger in size and it has larger fully dark bill compared to Common Teals.

The remaining days of our trip we explored in Lanzarote. The last time, we saw Allen's Gallinule, was 11th when it was again by the fairway #10 and around reservoir. Later on it was not seen anymore in spite of excessive search.

On 10th January late in the afternoon we witnessed on Teguisse plains when around 20 Houbara Bustards were flying around. We wondered the reason why birds rose high up until we saw that a one-man motorized paraglide was probably the reason for their sudden flew-off. It's rather hard to find singles or pairs here and there but suddenly sky had close to 20 flying away. What a sight!