

AZORES

18 12 2005 – 30 12 2005

Pierre-André Crochet & Eric Didner (& Joël Bried from 23/12 to 28/12)

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Introduction

After a visit in early August, I was keen on visiting the Azores again at a better time for American vagrants. Various reasons (mainly money shortage) prevented me to visit with Frédéric Jiguet and Maxime Zucca in early November. That was hard to swallow... Then, my parents decided to spend Xmas in French Polynesia, which meant no family event... That was it. I didn't have a hard time deciding Eric Didner to join me to try our luck with the left-over of this exceptional autumn. Joël Bried was also spending Xmas on the Azores, but due to field work could not join us for the whole trip. So we decided to organise a small party on Corvo for Xmas...

Itinerary

Eric and I arrived from France in different planes (Eric from Marseille, me from Barcelona which is really cheap to flight to Lisbon) and met at Lisbon airport. From there we flew directly to Faial where we arrived on 18/12/05. Slept at Joël's place.

On 19/12 we took the first boat in the morning to Pico. We rented a car for the day near the harbour in Madalena (the car rental office is 200 metres from the harbour). We came back with the last boat in the evening.

20/12 flew from Faial to Graciosa via Terceira. We had to try our luck on the Belted Kingfisher that Joël had found early December. Night on Graciosa (in Santa Cruz).

21/12 flew to Terceira. Picked up a car at the airport. Night on Terceira (Residencial Branca, in Praia de Vitoria, cheap and correct).

22/12: birding on Terceira, with dense fog and strong rain inland... Night in Residencial Branca.

23/12: flight from Terceira to Corvo via Faial where we met with Joël. Checked in at Manuel Rita's hotel and he immediately took us up to the forested Ribeiras. I had my Xmas present (Ovenbird in Ribeira da Ponte) but I was alone as we had split up for birding. Despite many hours spent in the vicinity, Eric never connected with the bird. It's the first time since we're travelling together than one of us misses a lifer seen by the other. Let's hope it's not going to be me next time!

24/12 Day on Corvo. Manuel left us on the edge of the Caldeira. Birded the caldeira then walked down to Ribeira de Entre as Cance (= de Entre as Cancelas) and birded our way back to the village. Xmas eve was not given full attention. We were the only customer in the only restaurant in the only village on the island. All local customers had been thrown out by the owners who were celebrating Xmas in family. They knew we could not find anywhere else to eat so they kept us and served us dinner, but we did not stay longer than necessary...

25/12 No Xmas present under the orange trees...

26/12 Flight from Corvo to Flores. The shortest but most impressive of our flights due to landing in strong wind in the very small plane that is the only one able to use Corvo's short

airstrip... We took a room and rented a car in the small hotel next to the post-office in Santa Cruz de Flores. The cheapest car and the cheapest room available on Flores apparently, but not the best (car or room).

27/12 Flores.

28/12 flight from Flores to São Miguel via Faial where we left Joël. Picked up a car at the airport. Night in the car at Mosteiros (hearing Macaronesian Shearwater from the car).

29/12 birded São Miguel. Night at Ponta Delgada youth hostel (the only affordable place in Ponta Delgada apparently, and nearly empty in winter). You don't need to be actually young to sleep there.

30/12 after a last tentative to connect with a Franklin's Gull in Ponta Delgada harbour (in vain), we left the car at the airport and flew back from Ponta Delgada to Lisbon.

(Hopefully) helpful information

Booking: compared with August, the Azores are quite "empty" in December. We did not have any problem to find cars and rooms even if nothing was really booked in advance.

One word of caution: flights can be full around Xmas and we had actually to change slightly our plans because when I booked the flights to Corvo (3 weeks in advance) one date was already full! Apparently this was due to Xmas holidays.

Flights with SATA (all the flights within islands are run by SATA) are less expensive if you buy the DIRECTLY from SATA. TAP will sell SATA flights but won't have the same price. So I advise booking directly with SATA (they have an internet site) and asking for the special tourist fares. These fares are reduced but you can't change your flights without a fee. You will need to show your ticket from abroad to have these species fares.

Flights to Corvo are not every day (usually 3 flights a week). Check on SATA web page before and organise your trip according to the flight schedules.

Birds (complete list but no details for resident species). (* = lifer for me)

Pied-billed Grebe *Podilymbus podiceps*

19/12/05: Pico, Lajes do Pico; 1 (photo)

29/12/05: São Miguel, Sete Cidades, L. Verde; 1

29/12/05: São Miguel, Lagoa de Furnas; 1

Great Northern Diver *Gavia immer*

22/12/05: Terceira, Praia da Vitoria bay ; 1

Manx Shearwater *Puffinus puffinus*

29/12/05: São Miguel, Mosteiros; 50-100

Macaronesian Shearwater *Puffinus baroli*

28/12/05: São Miguel, Mosteiros; 1 heard calling at night

Great Shearwater *Puffinus gravis*

26/12/05: Flores, Santa Cruz; 1 with Cory's

Cory's Shearwater *Calonectris diomedea*

20/12/05: Graciosa, Praia, 2-5.

26+27/12/05: Flores, Santa Cruz; > 2000

26/12/05: Flores, Ponta Delgada; 5-10

27/12/05: Flores, Lajes ; > 200

Gannet *Morus bassanus*

26/12/05: Flores, Santa Cruz; 1 (2 or 3 cy) with Cory's

Cormorant sp *Phalacrocorax* sp.

19/12/05: Pico, Madalena (islets in front of the harbour); 1

A very distant immature with pale chest and uniform dark underbody, a pattern typical of Doubler-crested but possible in Great also.

Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea*

19/12/05: Pico, Lajes do Pico; 2-3. Lagoas; 2

20/12/05: Graciosa, Praia islet; 3

21/12/05: Terceira, Cabo de Praia quarry ; 1

22/12/05: Terceira, Praia da Vitoria ponds ; 5

24/12/05: Corvo, Rib. do Cantinho; 1

26/12/05: Flores, Ponta Delgada; 2

27/12/05: Flores, L. Funda; 2

29/12/05: São Miguel, Mosteiros; 1

29/12/05: São Miguel, Sete Cidades; 3

29/12/05: São Miguel, Lagoa de Furnas; 2-5

Great Blue Heron *Ardea herodias* *

27/12/05: Flores, Lagoa Branca; 1 ad/subad

American Great White Egret *Egretta alba egretta* (*)

29/12/05: São Miguel, Mosteiros; 1 (all black legs)

Little Egret *Egretta garzetta*

19/12/05: Pico, Lajes do Pico; 2 (1 photo). Madalena; 1

20/12/05: Graciosa, Santa Cruz de Graciosa; 2

21/12/05: Graciosa, Santa Cruz ; 1

21/12/05: Terceira, Cabo de Praia quarry ; 1

28/12/05 : Flores, Santa Cruz ; 1

28+29/12/05: São Miguel, Ponta Delgada harbour ; 3

29/12/05: São Miguel, Mosteiros; 1

29/12/05: São Miguel, Villafranca do Campo; 1

Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis*

18/12/05: Faial, Horta, Porto Pim; 2

22/12/05: Terceira, near Lagoa do Junco along the road Angra - Praia ; 1

28/12/05: São Miguel, Ponta Delgada harbour, 2

29/12/05: São Miguel, Villafranca do Campo; 1

29/12/05: São Miguel, Ponta Delgada harbour, 4

Mallard *Anas platyrhynchos*

24/12/05: Corvo, Caldeira; 7

American Black Duck *Anas rubripes*

27/12/05: Flores, Poço de Alagoinha; 1 m

American Back Duck X Mallard hybrid *Anas rubripes* X *platyrhynchos*

24/12/05: Corvo, Caldeira; 3 m

26+27+28/12/05: Flores, Lagoa Branca; 3 m + 2 f (+ 4 ind seen in bad conditions 26/12, apparently hybrids also: pale tertials).

Wigeon *Anas penelope*

24/12/05: Corvo, Caldeira; 1 m + 2 f

26+27+28/12/06: Flores, Lagoa Branca ; 1 m + 1 f

29/12/05: São Miguel, Sete Cidades, L. Verde; 1 1cy m

American Widgeon *Anas americana*

26/12/06: Flores, Lagoa Branca ; 1 m

27+28/12/06: Flores, Lagoa Branca; 1 m + 1 f

Wigeon sp. *Anas penelope/americana*

22+23/12/05: Terceira, Praia da Vitoria ponds ; 1 1cy fem

Eurasian Teal *Anas crecca*

27/12/05: Flores, puddles near L. Rasa; 4 m (+ 5 f teal sp)

27/12/05: Flores, Poço de Alagoinha; 1 m (with 6 female teals)

Teal sp *Anas crecca/carolinensis*

22+23/12/05: Terceira, Praia da Vitoria ponds ; 2 fem (wholly white wing bars on greater coverts => prob. *crecca*)

27/12/05: Flores, puddles near L. Rasa; 5f (+ 4 m Eurasian Teals)

27/12/05: Flores, Poço de Alagoinha; 6 (all with wholly white greater coverts bars, even when very broad (adult types) => prob. *crecca*)

29/12/05: São Miguel, Lagoa de Furnas; 1 f (much yellow on bill => prob *crecca*)

Blue-winged Teal *Anas discor* *

29/12/05: São Miguel, Sete Cidades, L. Verde; 1 1cy m + 1 f

Pintail *Anas acuta*

24/12/05: Corvo, Caldeira; 1 f

Tufted Duck *Aythya fuligula*

29/12/05: São Miguel, Lagoa de Furnas; 1 1cy m

Ring-necked Duck *Aythya collaris*

27/12/05: Flores, Poço de Alagoinha; 2 m + 2 f

29/12/05: São Miguel, Sete Cidades, L. Verde; 4 f + 3 m

Lesser Scaup *Aythya affinis*

29/12/05: São Miguel, Sete Cidades, L. Verde; 1 1cy f

Greater Scaup *Aythya marila*

22+23/12/05: Terceira, Praia da Vitoria ponds ; 2 (1 1cy fem & 1 1cy male) (photo)

Osprey *Pandion haliaetus*

29/12/05: São Miguel, Villafranca do Campo; 1

Common Buzzard *Buteo buteo*

Common Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus*

21/12/05: Graciosa, between Faja and Limeira ; 1 female or 1cy

Peregrine *Falco peregrinus*

23+24+25/12/05: Corvo, 1 (1cy, prob. fem).

28/12/05: Flores, near Lomba; 1 1cy

28/12/05: Flores, Lagoas; 1 (same???)

29/12/05: São Miguel, Mosteiros; 1 1cy

Quail *Coturnix coturnix*

Moorhen *Gallinula chloropus*

22+23/12/05: Terceira, Praia da Vitoria ponds ; 5

29/12/05: São Miguel, Sete Cidades, c. 10

Common Coot *Fulica atra*

22+23/12/05: Terceira, Praia da Vitoria ponds ; 1

22/12/05: Terceira, reservoir near Angra; 3

29/12/05: São Miguel, Sete Cidades, L. Azul; 11

29/12/05: São Miguel, Lagoa de Furnas; 10-20

American Coot *Fulica americana* *

19/12/05: Pico, Lajes do Pico; 1 1cy (photo)

Grey Plover *Pluvialis squatarola*

19/12/05: Pico, Lajes do Pico; 1

20/12/05: Faial, Porto Pim; 3

20/12/05: Graciosa, Praia islet; 7

21/12/05: Terceira, Cabo de Praia quarry ; 5

Ringed Plover *Charadrius hiaticula*

18/12/05 + 19/12/05: Faial, Horta harbour; 1

21/12/05: Terceira, Cabo de Praia quarry ; 3-5 (photo)

29/12/05: São Miguel, Mosteiros; 1

Semipalmated Plover *Charadrius semipalmatus*

21+22/12/05: Terceira, Cabo de Praia quarry ; 1 (photo)

Kentish Plover *Charadrius alexandrinus*

21/12/05: Terceira, Cabo de Praia quarry ; 20-50

Ruddy Turnstone *Arenaria interpres*

19/12/05: Pico, Lajes do Pico; 5-10. 5-10 elsewhere around the island of Pico

20/12/05: Graciosa, Santa Cruz de Graciosa; 2-10. Praia harbour; 13

21/12/05: Terceira, Cabo de Praia quarry ; 20-50

24/12/05: Corvo, airport ; 10-15

Curlew Sandpiper *Calidris ferruginea*

21/12/05: Terceira, Cabo de Praia quarry ; 2 (photo)

Red Knot *Calidris canutus*

21/12/05: Terceira, Cabo de Praia quarry ; 3

Dunlin *Calidris alpina*

21/12/05: Terceira, Cabo de Praia quarry ; 5-10

24/12/05: Corvo, airport ; 1 1cy

Little Stint *Calidris minuta*

21/12/05: Terceira, Cabo de Praia quarry ; 3 (photo)

Sanderling *Calidris alba*

19/12/05: Faial, Horta harbour; 5-10

19/12/05: Pico, Lajes do Pico; 2

21/12/05: Terceira, Cabo de Praia quarry ; 20-50 (photo)

Least Sandpiper *Calidris minutilla*

21+22/12/05: Terceira, Cabo de Praia quarry ; 1 (photo)

Purple Sandpiper *Calidris maritima*

20/12/05: Graciosa, Praia harbour; 1 (photo)

Spotted Sandpiper *Actitis macularius*

19/12/05: Pico, Lajes do Pico; 1

Greenshank *Tringa nebularia*

19/12/05: Pico, Lajes do Pico; 1

29/12/05: São Miguel, Sete Cidades, L. Azul; 1

Ruff *Philomachus pugnax*

21/12/05: Terceira, Cabo de Praia quarry ; 2 (photo)

Eurasian Whimbrel *Numenius [phaeopus] phaeopus*

19/12/05: Faial, Horta harbour; 1

19/12/05: Pico, Lajes do Pico; 2

20/12/05: Graciosa, Santa Cruz de Graciosa; 2

21/12/05: Graciosa, Santa Cruz ; 2-5

21/12/05: Terceira, Cabo de Praia quarry ; 2

27/12/05 : Flores, Faja Grande, 1

29/12/05: São Miguel, Mosteiros; 1

29/12/05: São Miguel, Villafranca do Campo; 1

Hudsonian Whimbrel *Numenius [phaeopus] hudsonicus* (*)

24/12/05: Corvo, airport ; 1 (prob 2cy) (photo)

Black-tailed Godwit *Limosa limosa*

21/12/05: Terceira, Cabo de Praia quarry ; 6 (1 ad + 3 1cy + 2) (photo)

Bar-tailed Godwit *Limosa lapponica*

21/12/05: Terceira, Cabo de Praia quarry ; 1

Woodcock *Scolopax rusticola*

Seen daily on Corvo

23/12/05: Corvo, Rib. da Ponte ; 1

24/12/05: Corvo, 2

25/12/05: Corvo, 6

27/12/05: Flores, lagoas; 2

Common Snipe *Gallinago gallinago*

23/12/05: Terceira, Lagoa do Junco ; 3

27/12/05: Flores, puddles near L. Seca; 1

Great Skua *Stercorarius skua*

26/12/05: Flores, Santa Cruz; 2

26/12/05: Flores, Faja Grande; 1

28/12/05: Flores, Santa Cruz; 1

28/12/05: Flores, Lajes; 1

Black-headed Gull *Larus ridibundus*

19/12/05: Pico, Lajes do Pico; 1 ad

21/12/05: Terceira, Praia da Vitoria bay; several hundreds

26/12/06: Corvo, airfield; 1 1cy

26/12/06: Flores, Ponta Delgada; 1

27/12/06: Flores, Santa Cruz; 1 ad

27/12/06: Flores, Lajes; 2 1cy

28/12/05: São Miguel, Ponta Delgada harbour, 1 1cy

Mediterranean Gull *Larus melanocephalus*

21/12/05: Terceira, Praia da Vitoria harbour; 1 1cy

22/12/05: Terceira, Lagoa do Junco ; 1 1cy

30/12/05: São Miguel, Ponta Delgada harbour, 1 1cy

Laughing Gull *Larus atricilla*

18/12/05 + 19/12/05: Faial, Horta, Porto Pim; 2 (1 ad + 1 1cy ringed, the bird released)

20/12/05: Graciosa, Praia harbour; 2 1cy (photo)

21/12/05: Graciosa, Santa Cruz ; 1 1cy

21+22/12/05: Terceira, Praia da Vitoria harbour; 1 1cy (photo)

28/12/05: São Miguel, Ponta Delgada harbour, 2 1cy

29/12/05: São Miguel, Ponta Delgada harbour, 2 1cy + 1 >1cy (= 3 ind)

American Herring Gull *Larus smithsonianus* *

27/12/05: Flores, L. Rasa; 1 2cy + 1 ad

28/12/05: Flores, L. Rasa; 1 ad.

European Herring Gull *Larus argentatus*

22/12/05: Terceira, landfill near Angra ; 2 1cy (photo)

Yellow-legged Gull *Larus michahellis*

Lesser Black-backed Gull *Larus fuscus*

21/12/05: Terceira, Praia da Vitoria bay; several tens (photo)
27/12/05: Flores, L. Rasa; 10-20 (ad, 1cy, 2cy and 3cy)
28/12/05: Flores, L. Rasa; 20-30 (ad, 1cy, 2cy and 3cy)
28/12/05: São Miguel, Ponta Delgada harbour, several tens, all ages

Great Black-backed Gull *Larus marinus*

21+22/12/05: Terceira, Praia da Vitoria harbour; 5 1cy (photo)
26/12/06: Flores, Santa Cruz; 1 ad + 3 1cy
27/12/06: Flores, Santa Cruz; 2 1cy
27/12/05: Flores, L. Rasa; 12 1cy + 1 ad
28+29/12/05: São Miguel, Ponta Delgada harbour, 1 1cy

Ring-billed Gull *Larus delawarensis*

21/12/05: Terceira, Praia da Vitoria harbour; 1 1cy (photo)
22/12/05: Terceira, Praia da Vitoria beach ; 17 (3 1cy, others 2cy and ad)
28/12/05: São Miguel, Ponta Delgada harbour, 1 2cy

Sandwich Tern *Sterna sandvicensis*

20/12/05: Graciosa, Praia harbour; 1
21/12/05: Terceira, Praia da Vitoria harbour; 1

Common Tern *Sterna hirundo*

18/12/05: Faial, Horta, Porto Pim; 1.

Wood Pigeon *Columba palumbus*

Belted Kingfisher *Ceryle alcyon* *

20/12/05: Graciosa, Santa Cruz de Graciosa; 1 1cy (photo)

Grey Wagtail *Motacilla cinerea*

Blackcap *Sylvia atricapilla*

Chiffchaff *Phylloscopus collybita*

23+24+25/12/05: Corvo, Rib. da Ponte ; 1
29/12/05: São Miguel, Sete Cidades, L. Azul; 1

Goldcrest *Regulus regulus*

Robin *Erithacus rubecula*

Blackbird *Turdus merula*

Fieldfare *Turdus pilaris*

21/12/05: Graciosa, W slopes of Serra Branca; a flock of 16

European Starling *Sturnus vulgaris*

House Sparrow *Passer domesticus*

Common Waxbill *Estrilda astrild*

29/12/05: São Miguel, Sete Cidades; 50-100

Chaffinch *Fringilla coelebs*

Goldfinch *Carduelis carduelis*

25/12/05: Corvo, 3

Greenfinch *Carduelis chloris*

Canary *Serinus canaria*

Ovenbird *Seiurus aurocapilla* *

23/12/05: Corvo, Rib. da Ponte ; 1 (seen by PAC only)

25/12/05: Corvo, Fojo; 1 (seen by JB only)

Snow Bunting *Plectrophenax nivalis*

20/12/05: Graciosa, Santa Cruz de Graciosa; 1 male