

Porto Moniz Aug-Oct 2010

From 23 August until 20 October 2010 several birders visited Madeira with the intention of seawatching at Porto Moniz. This report is an aggregation of their sightings and only covers the seawatching at Porto Moniz.

Porto Moniz

Contrary to what was stated in the 2009 trip report by Michel de Lange the round platform near the entrance of the western swimming pool as well as the lower part of the boulevard are not the best spots for seawatching. The best freely accessible spot for seawatching is a lawn overlooking Calhau (still closed) which can be reached by the **Vereda das Pocas** which starts at the entrance of Calhau. This spot is much higher and gives you more birds and cetaceans and more prolonged views. M. de Lange experienced a small landslide there in the



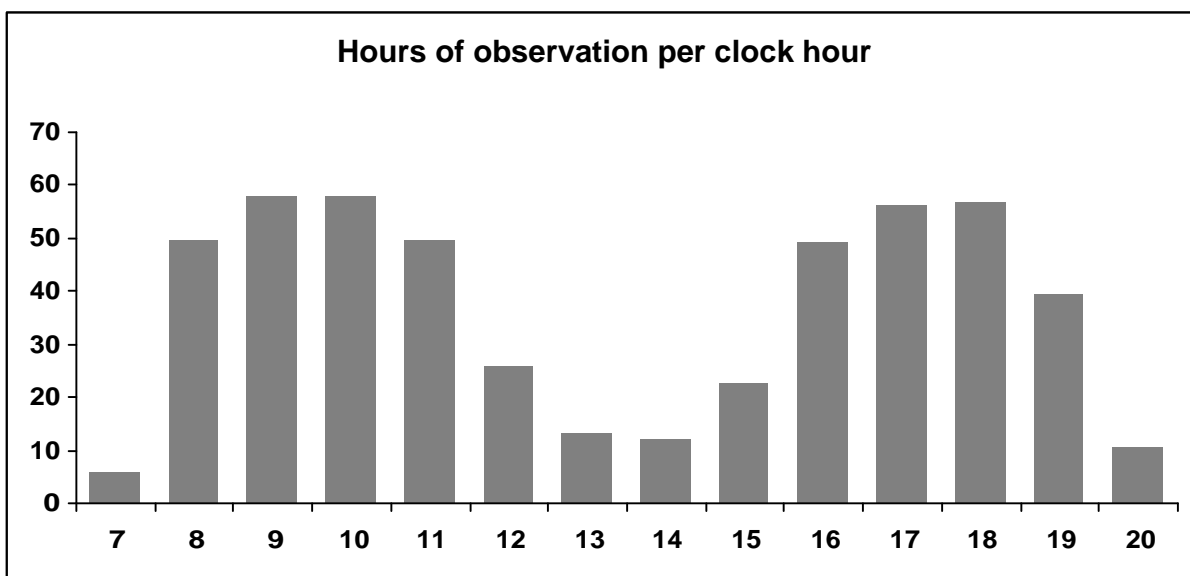
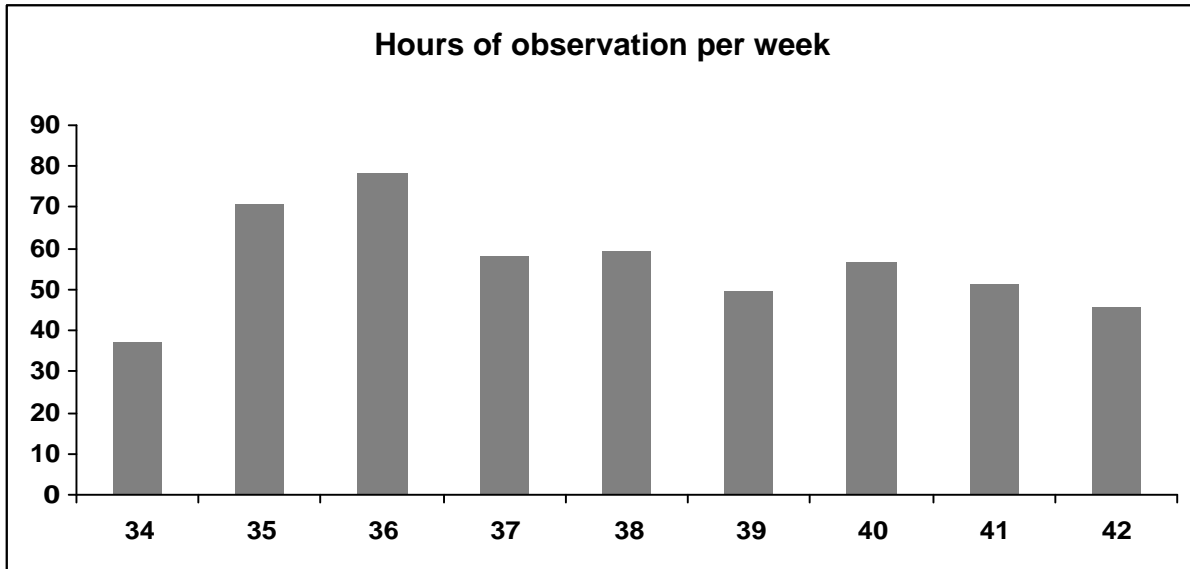
1: Seawatch spot. 2: Entrance to Calhau. 3: Round platform.

beginning of 2011 when part of the coast close to the lawn fell into the ocean but the forefront of the lawn can be considered save. During rain the swimming pool (part of which has a roof) is a good (but low) alternative. Entrance is 1.25 euro.

There is a small colony of Cory's Shearwaters in the mountains above the police station at the beginning of the coastal road (ER101) when you leave Porto Moniz. They can be best viewed and heard from the petrol station.

Observer effort and weather

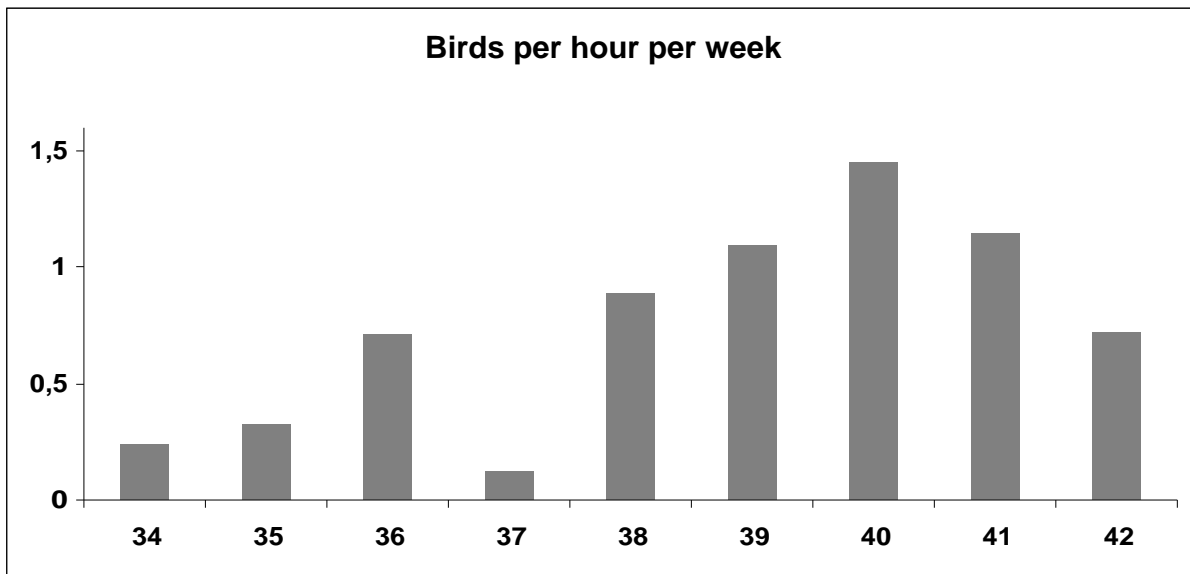
Most observers seawatched in the morning and from late afternoon into the evening. This gave time for some relaxation or birding elsewhere in between.



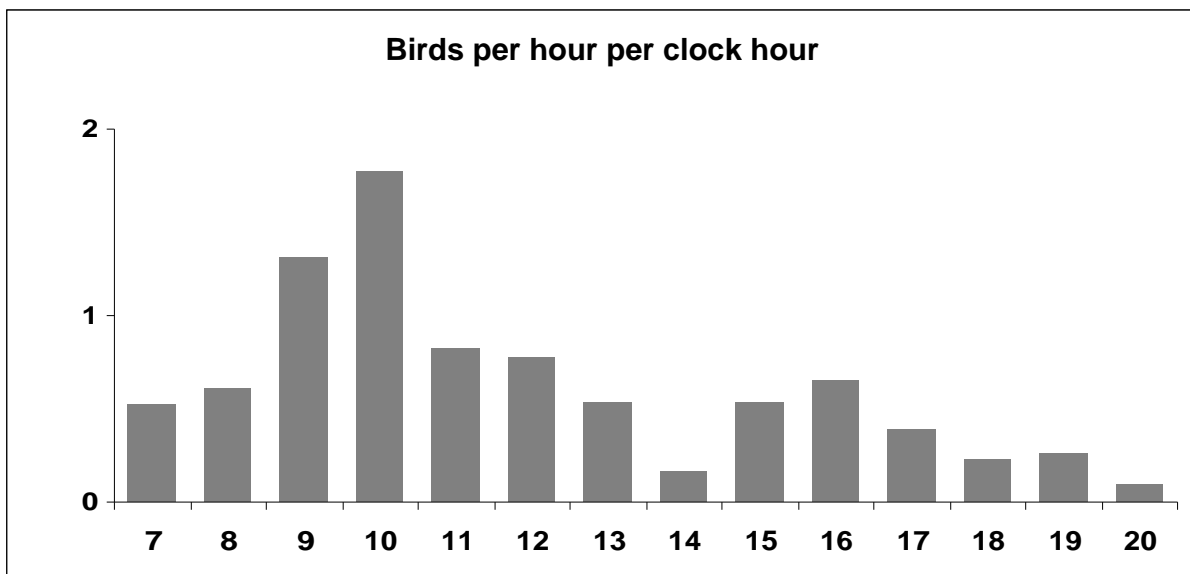
In August and September the wind blew usually from the northeast but this changed in October when the prevailing direction was from the west. There was not much difference in wind strength (usually between 3 and 5 B) between these periods. All graphs below are based on 2010 data unless otherwise stated.

Fea's/Desertas/Zino's Petrel.

Due to distance not a single bird could be identified at (sub) species level. In two months 376 birds were observed with 81% flying to the west. There was an increase in observed birds until week 40 after which numbers began to drop again. This might be caused by the arrival of immature Desertas Petrels (their numbers peak in October) but the drop in numbers after week 40 is then hard to explain. Maybe other factors are involved (Cory's Shearwater shows a similar pattern) and the graph below is based on very little data yet.



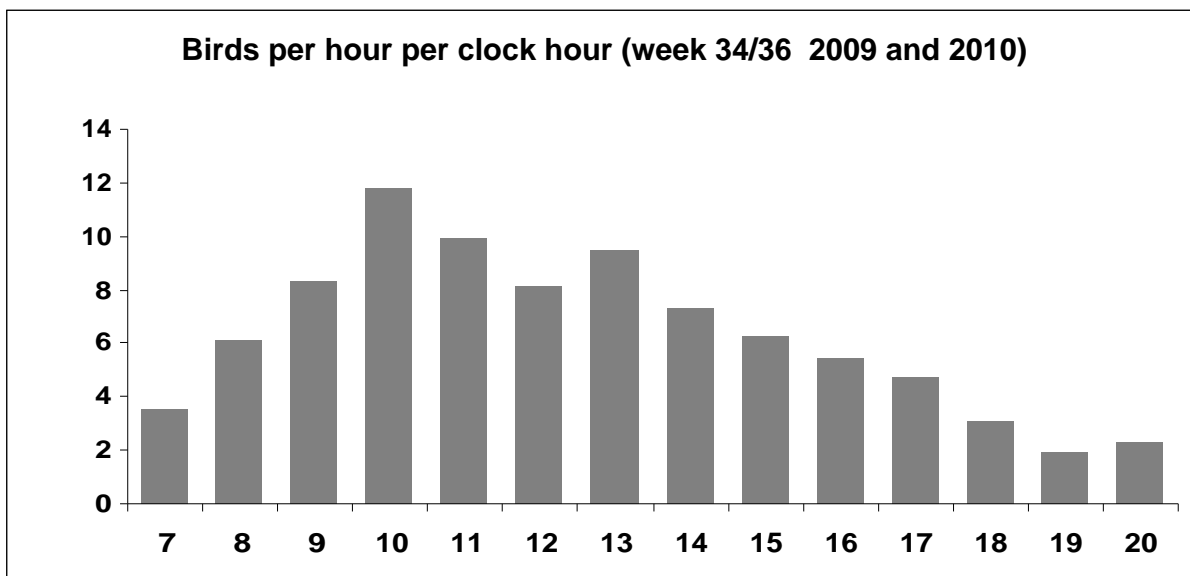
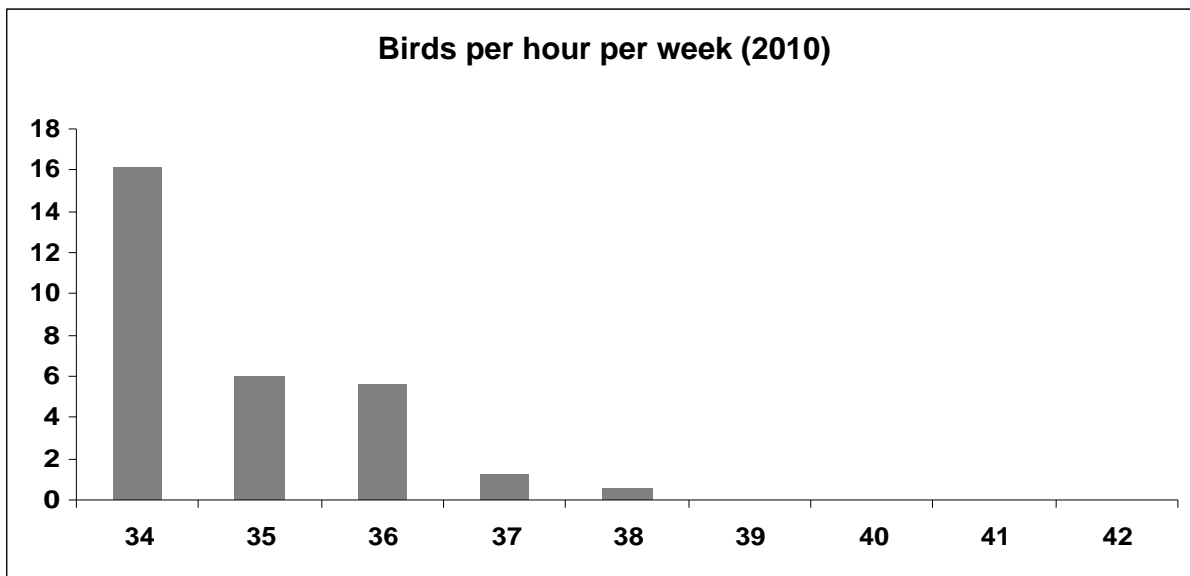
Most birds fly to the west in the morning. There is no preferred direction in the afternoon and evening.



At 14 October at 15.45 M. de Lange observed at a distance of 1000 meters a petrel that was in general appearance similar to the petrels of the Fea's-group but had a much lighter uppertail, a lighter cap and mostly white underwings. During changing lenses the bird was lost and was only found again when serious backlight made it impossible to take a good look at the underwing. This bird probably was "the" snowy-winged petrel described by Shirihai and Zino in *Birding World* 23-6.

Bulwers Petrel

In the weeks 35 and 36 of 2010 the number of birds per hour was significantly higher then in 2009 (5,8 versus 3,6 per hour). The last birds were seen 23 September. Most birds were seen in the late morning and early afternoon.



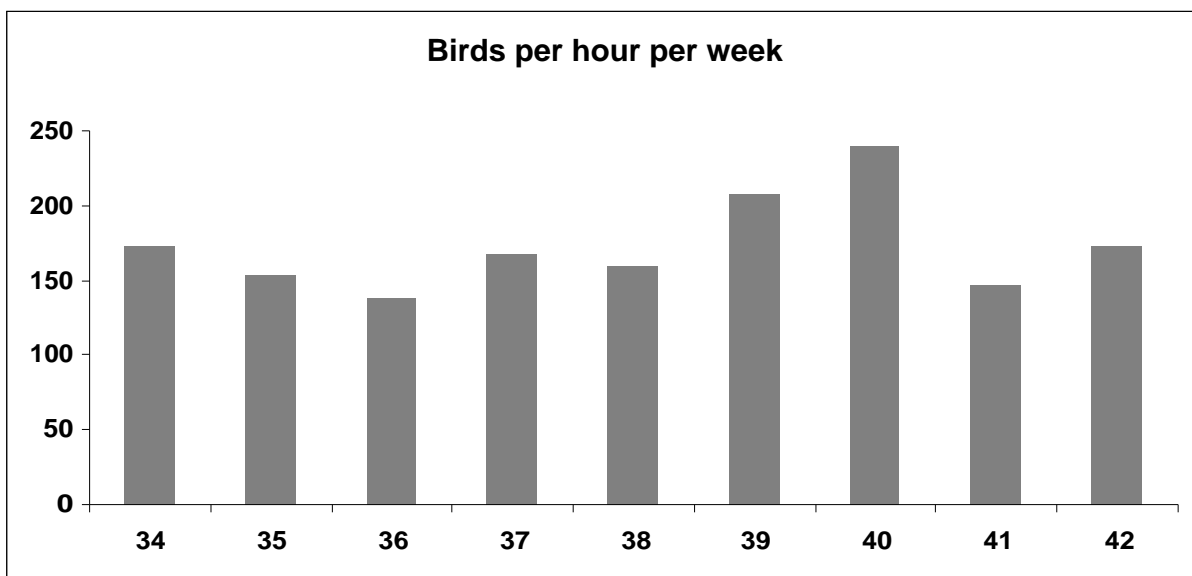
Cory's/Scopolis Shearwater

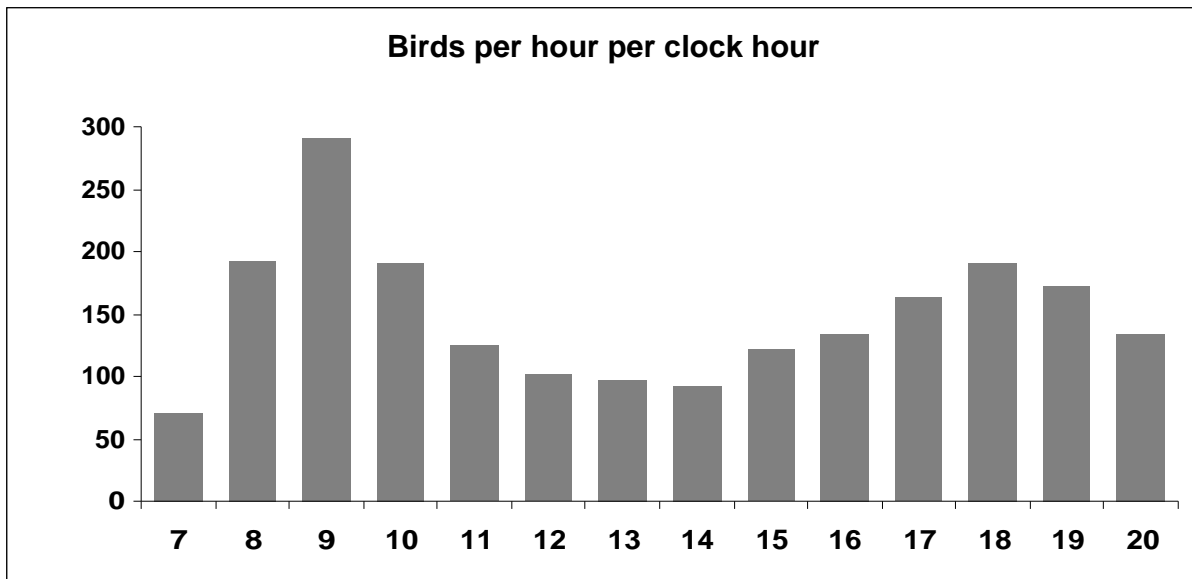
Few birds were checked and as in 2009 no Scopoli's Shearwaters were suspected. That this taxon does occur around Madeira was proved during a pelagic trip by Windbirds on 30 August 2010.



Cory's Shearwater photographed from the swimming pool. Michel de Lange.

The observed Cory's Shearwaters might concern only local movements. Later in the year the local birds leave the Archipelago and in the first 3 weeks of 2011 Michel de Lange observed only 3 Cory's Shearwaters.





The average number of birds per hour in week 35 and 36 this year was much lower than in 2009 (145 birds per hour versus 277).

Great Shearwater

Like in 2009 the majority of birds passed in a single week. This year the “big bang” occurred on 8 September when almost all birders had left Porto Moniz.



Great Shearwater photographed from the harbour. Knud Pedersen

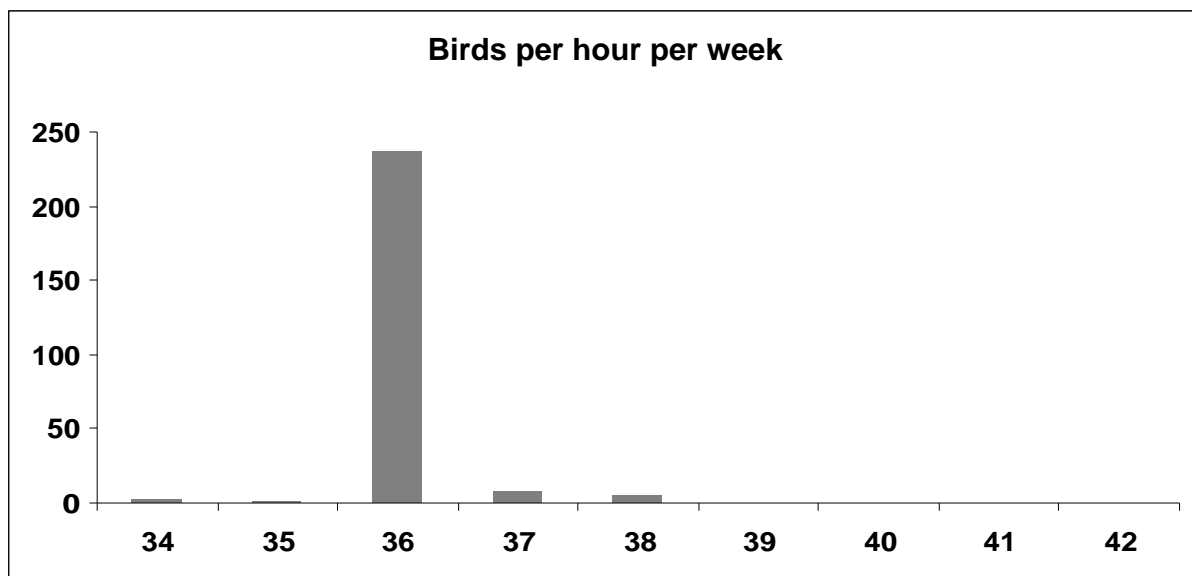
At 10.00h when some 5000 Great Shearwaters had passed Knud Pedersen and Torben Sorensen were the last birders leaving to catch their flight. At the end of the day after 11,5 hours 10865 Great Shearwaters were counted.

Hour	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
Number	1013	2497	1381	1460	927	199	288	260	178	202	626	1034	694	106

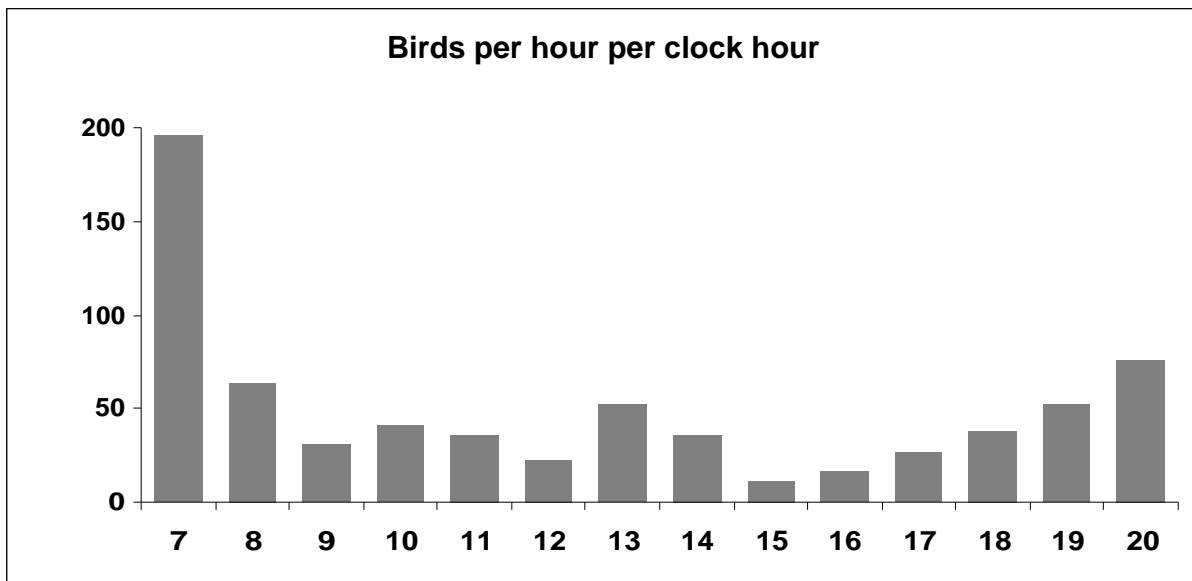
Like in 2009 the migration was already underway at daybreak and was preceded with good migration of Great Shearwaters the evening before which in both instances continued until darkness set in. This might suggest that at night more migration of Great Shearwaters took place.

This is probably the best day in the North East Atlantic second to a group of 28.000 Great Shearwaters observed on 29 August 1990 in the Canal de Sao Jorge in the Azores. In two months 19510 birds were seen. The last bird was seen at 4 October.

In preceding years migration with more then 1000 birds has occurred from 24 august until 11 September. In 2010 95% of all birds passed in a single week.

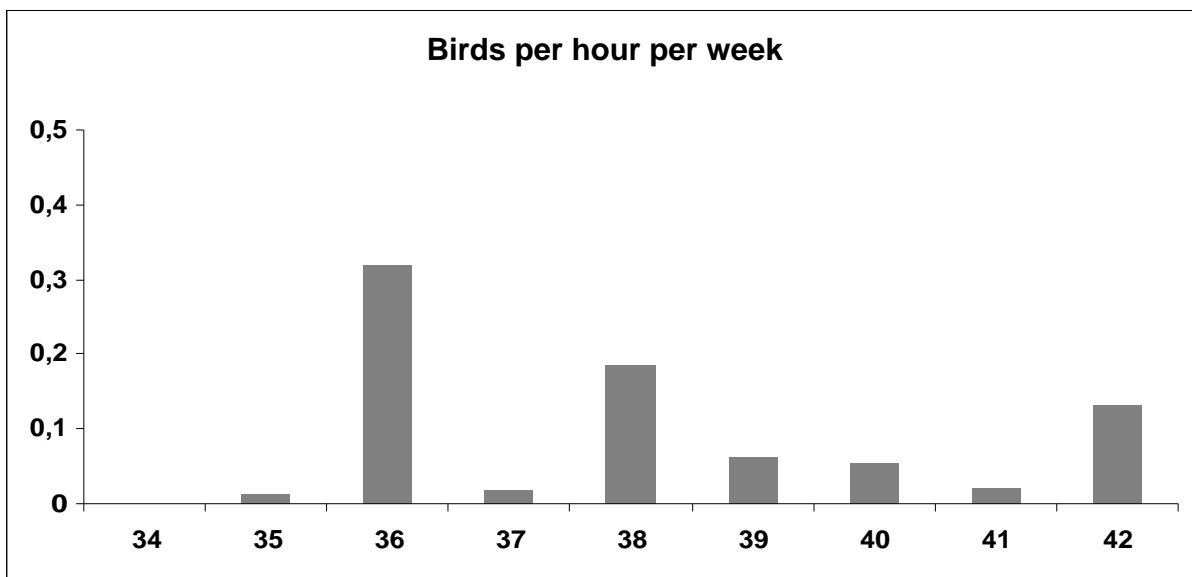


Most Great Shearwaters passed in the morning and evening hours.



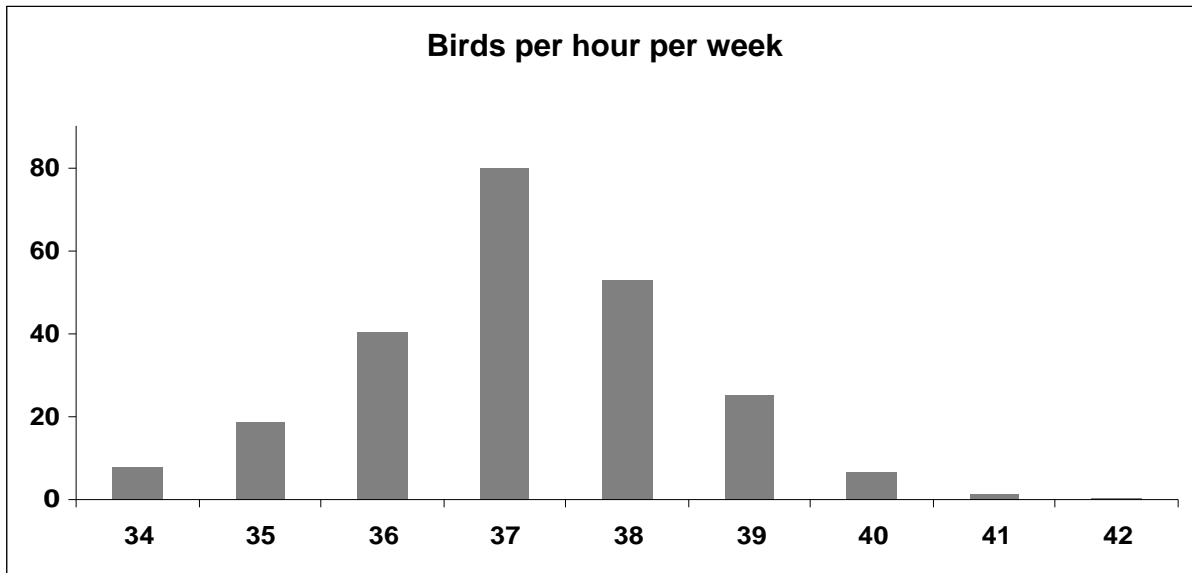
Sooty Shearwater

Birds were seen well into October. Their occurrence was positively correlated to that of Great Shearwater in September (Spearman Rank 0,82) but there was much less correlation in October. In two months 51 Sooty Shearwaters were seen with 22 September being the best day with seven birds. Due to strong sunlight one bird was briefly identified as a Balearic Shearwater a species that is sometimes reported around Madeira but which still has not made it on the official list.

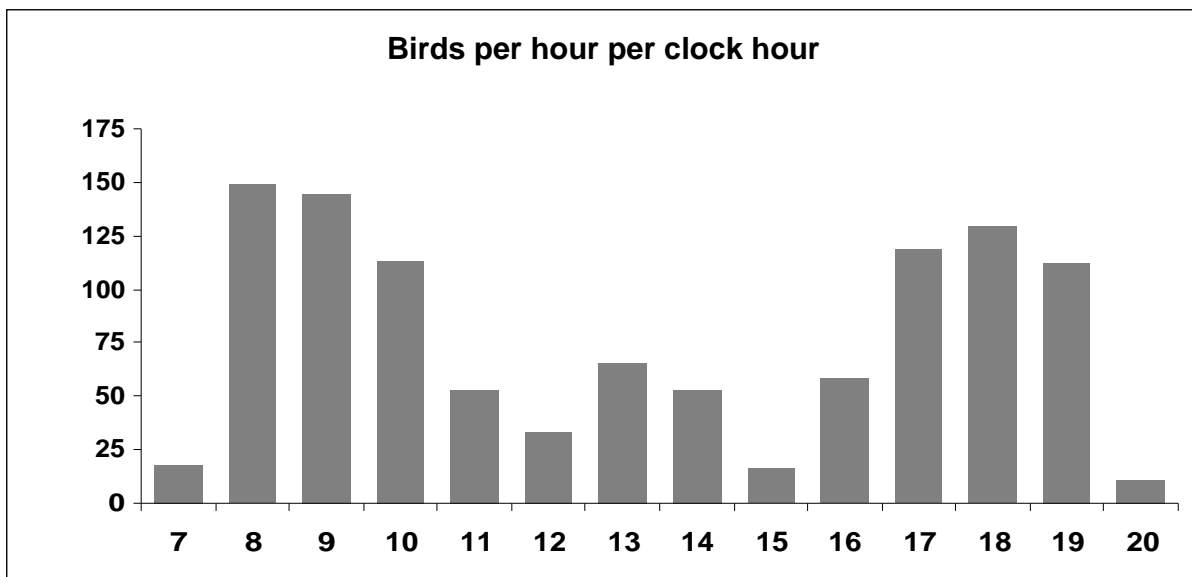


Manx Sheawater

A total of 14187 Manx Shearwaters were seen with 99,4% flying to the west (96,3% in 2009). Best day was 17 September with 2163 birds.



Like in 2009 most birds passed in the morning and evening hours.



Due to strong sunlight many Manx Shearwaters show a very pale face reminiscent of Barolo Shearwater.



Barolo Shearwater

In total ten birds were reported all of which were seen before 8 September. Due to distance separating Barolo Shearwater from Manx Shearwater was not that easy and the reported numbers should be interpreted with caution.

Unidentified Storm Petrel

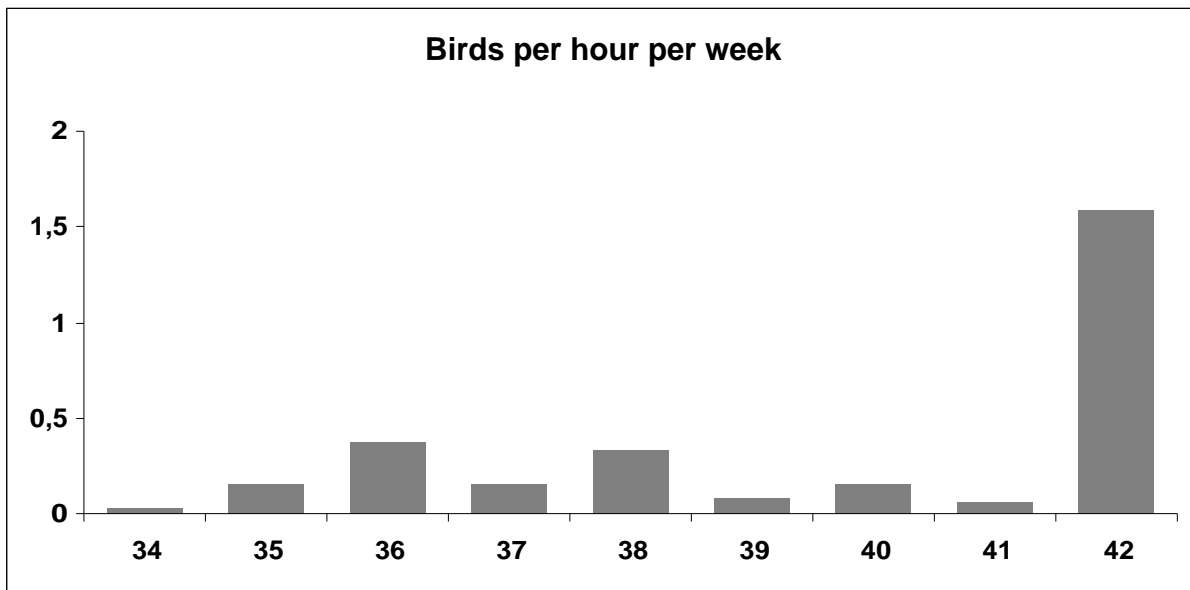
Porto Moniz is not a good spot for observing Storm Petrels. Single birds were seen 3 September and 18 October. Both birds passed at great distance.

Northern Gannet

An early bird was seen 28 August. Subsequently four more birds were seen with the last bird on 20 October. All were immature birds.

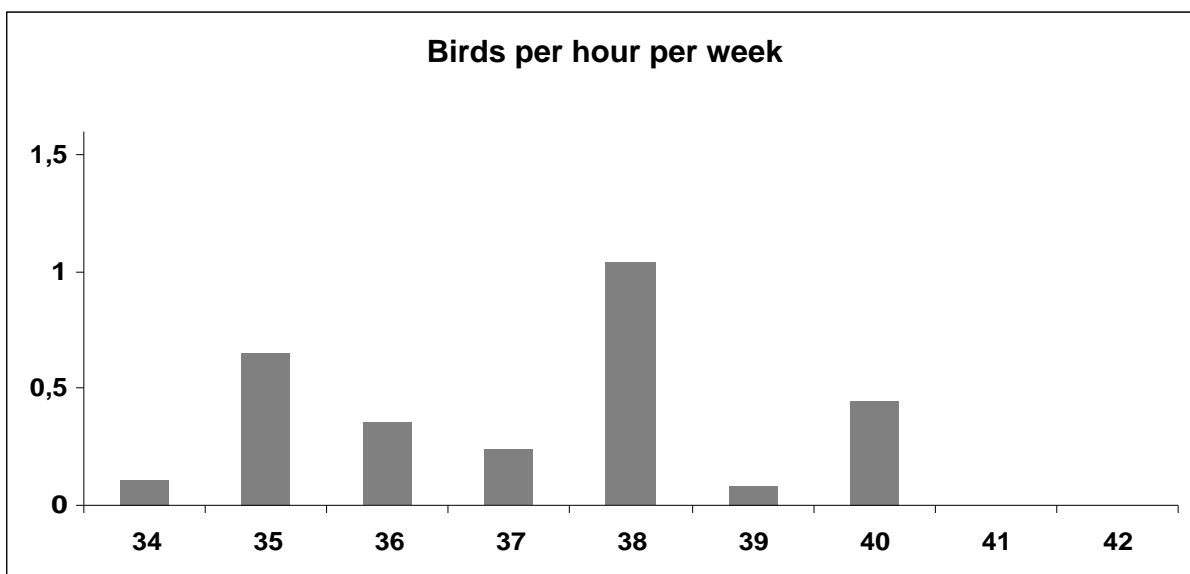
Pomarine Skua

Most skua's probably pass Madeira at high altitude due to the northeast trade wind and many groups of Pomarines and Artics were discovered when flying well above the ocean's surface. In total 158 birds were seen of which the majority was seen in the late afternoon and evening. Of 57 birds that were aged 9 were second calendar year birds and 1 was a third calendar year bird. Not a single first year bird was seen. In week 42 many Pomarine Skua's were flying to the east instead of to the west what was usual.



Arctic Skua

In two months 183 birds were seen. Best day was 23 September with 57 birds including a group of 52. One first year bird was seen 7 September.

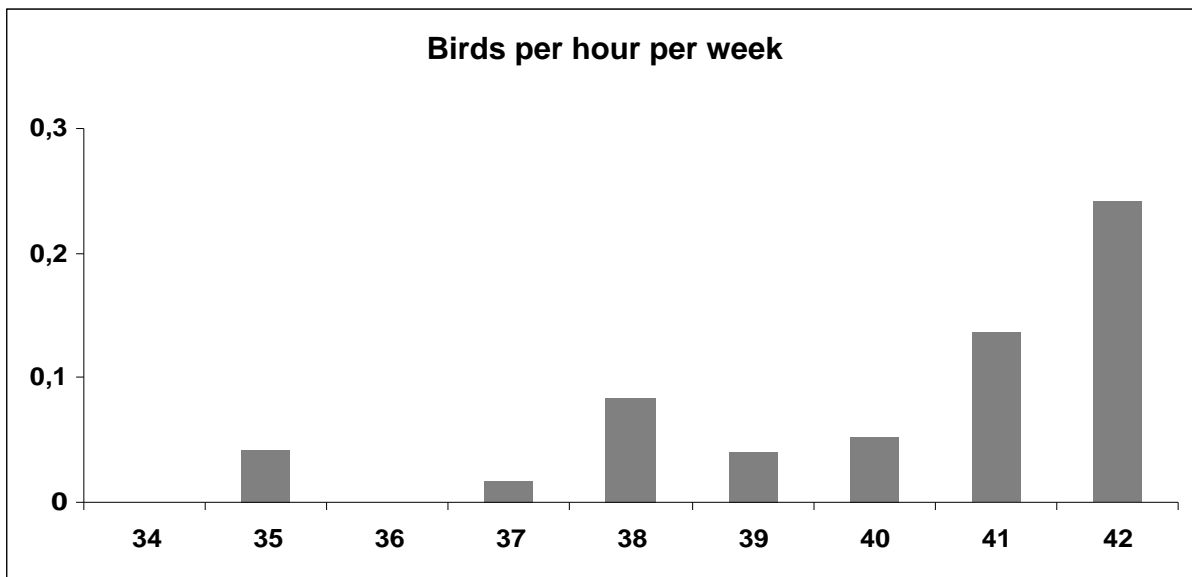


Long-tailed Skua

In two months 24 birds were seen. Most birds concerned adults. Three second calendar year birds were seen 7 September. No first year birds were seen.

Great Skua

No South Polar Skua's were suspected. In total 32 birds were seen with 16 October being the best day with five birds.



Lesser Blackbacked Gull

An adult bird was seen in the harbour on 22 September.

Common Gull

Five birds were seen on 15 and 16 October.

Black-headed Gull

Three birds were seen with two adults and one second calendar year bird.

Mediterranean Gull

Three birds were seen in October with one second calendar year and two first calendar year birds.

Sabines Gull

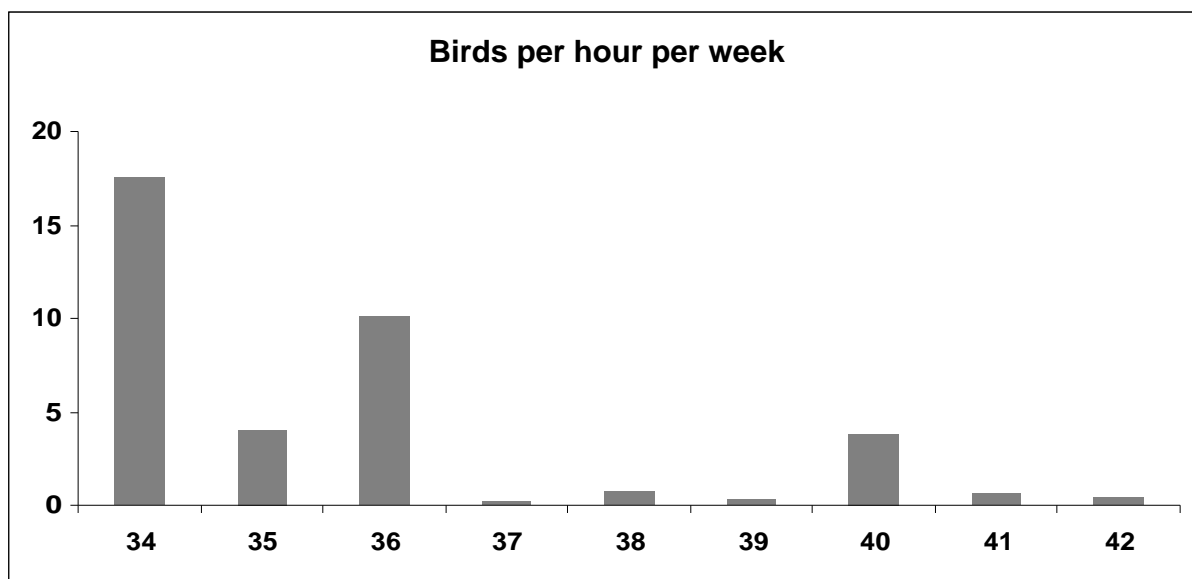
An adult bird was seen on 3 September by Knud Pedersen.

Common Tern

Several individuals were present in the harbour during the entire period.

Arctic Tern

Best day was 26 August with 469 birds (presuming all far out unidentified birds to be Arctic Terns as well). Most birds passed in the late afternoon and evening.



Sandwich Tern

Several birds were seen flying back and forth and were present in the harbour from 21 September until 28 September.

Other Birds

The only two ducks seen were a **Northern Pintail** on 2 October and an **unidentified teal** on 28 August. **Little Egrets** were seen during the whole period but peaked in the third week of October (48 birds). The best day for **Grey Heron** was 28 September with 13 birds. A **Peregrine Falcon** was seen on 19 October. Three **Pied Avocets** on 11 September and 40 **Bar-tailed Godwits** on 26 August were a nice surprise. The **Hudsonian Whimbrel** was seen a few times in the fourth week of August and on 28 September and 16 October.



Hudsonian Whimbrel photographed from the round platform. Michel de Lange.

Common Ringed Plover and **Sanderling** were regularly seen in the harbour of Porto Moniz. A **Common Sandpiper** and a **Dunlin** were seen there on 3 September. A **Short-Eared Owl** flew to the west over the ocean on 18 October. One **Eurasian Reed Warbler** was present in a garden from 21 September until 26 September. A **Northern Wheatear** was seen in the harbour on the rainy morning of 18 September. In the third week of October a **White Wagtail** was regularly seen flying over the village.

Unidentified Whale

31 during the whole period.

Unidentified Rorqual

39 with the majority in September.

Sperm whale

19 with the majority in the third week of October.

Unidentified Beaked whale

One on 6 September and 3 on 21 September.

Cuvier's Beaked whale

Two by Hugo Romano on 7 October.

Short-finned Pilot Whale

Twelve on 28 September and 10 on 29 September probably concerned the same group.

Unidentified Dolphin

219 with the majority in September.

Bottlenosed Dolphin

113 with the majority in August and September.

Atlantic Spotted Dolphin

18 dolphins on 31 August.

Common Dolphin

93 Common Dolphins were seen with the majority in September.

Monk Seal

One was seen by 2 groups of observers on 31 August and one was seen on 11 October.

Unidentified Sea turtle

One was seen on 3 September.

Unidentified Tuna fish

10 were seen during the whole period.

Unidentified Flying fish

32 were seen during the whole period.

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