

Porto Moniz Aug-Sept 2009

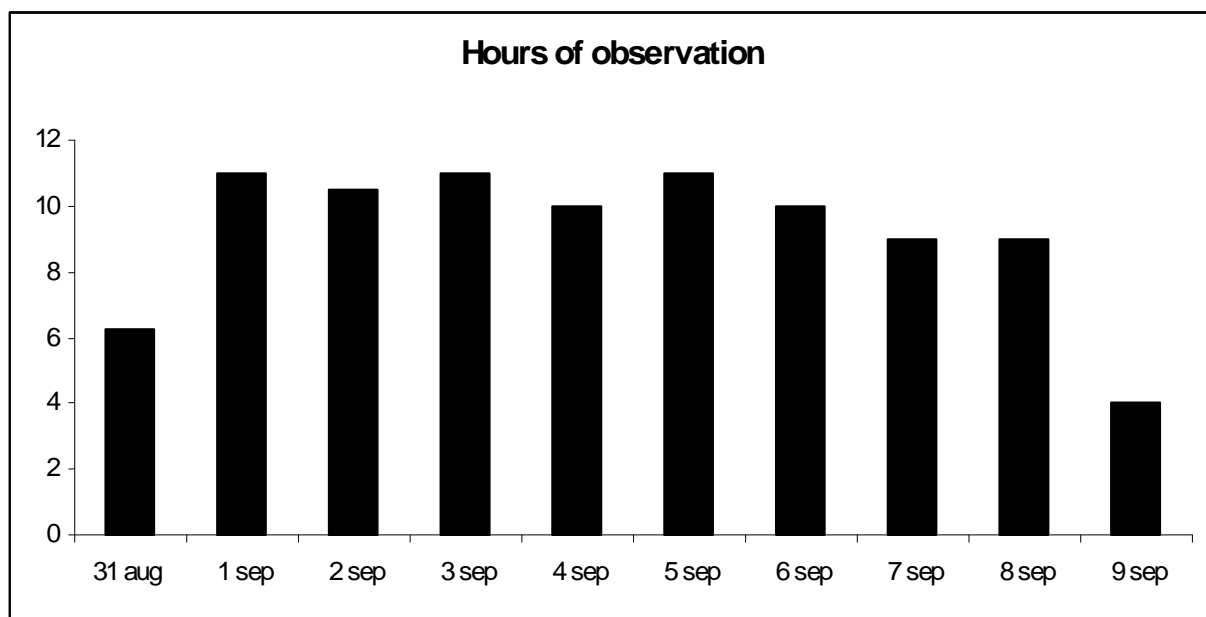
From 31 August until 9 September I visited Porto Moniz, Madeira to indulge myself with some good seawatching. Apart from a short visit to Ribera de Janela on 6 September and a dolphin trip on 9 September at Funchal all available time was spent seawatching. This report only covers the sea watching at Porto Moniz.

Porto Moniz

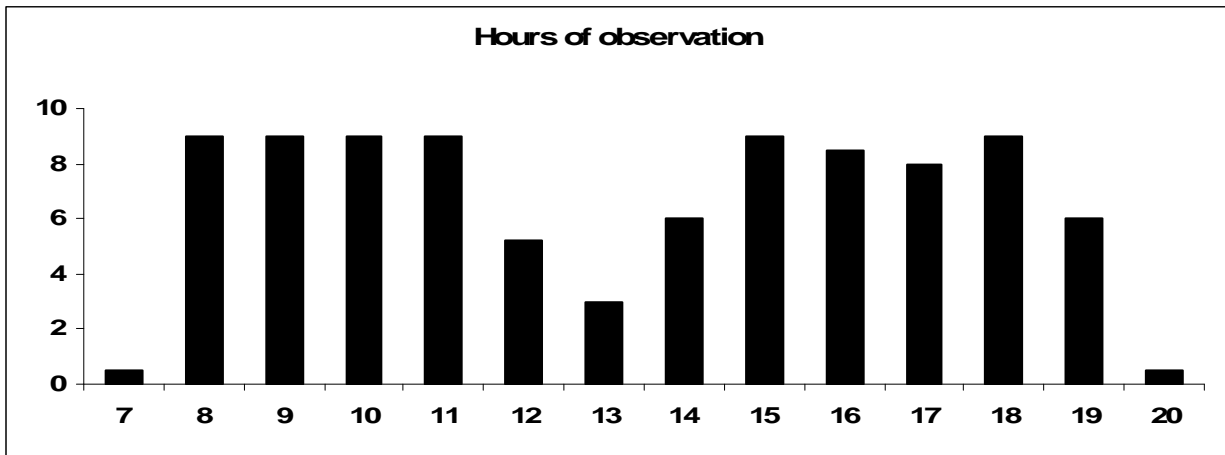
As recommended (www.madeira.seewatching.net) I tried to book a room at Residencial Calhau but was unable to contact the hotel. On arrival it turned out the hotel was closed due to renovations. Afterwards this turned out to be a good thing because I don't think I would have liked continuous observation from a balcony without being able to sit in the sun in the morning. Furthermore this gave me the opportunity to meet other visiting birders. Almost all seawatching was done from the round platform near the entrance of the southern swimming pool but when the wind was stronger or when the waves were higher than usual I moved to the lower part of the boulevard 50 metres to the north (no bother of wind during the prevailing wind directions and some 5 metres higher). I don't think these spots are inferior to Calhau (especially its first floor).

Observer effort and weather

I usually started at 8.00 and stopped at 20.00 having lunch somewhere around 13.00. I experienced no problems with heat haze. Even birds far out on sunny



Hours of observation versus observation date.



Hours of observation versus daily hour.

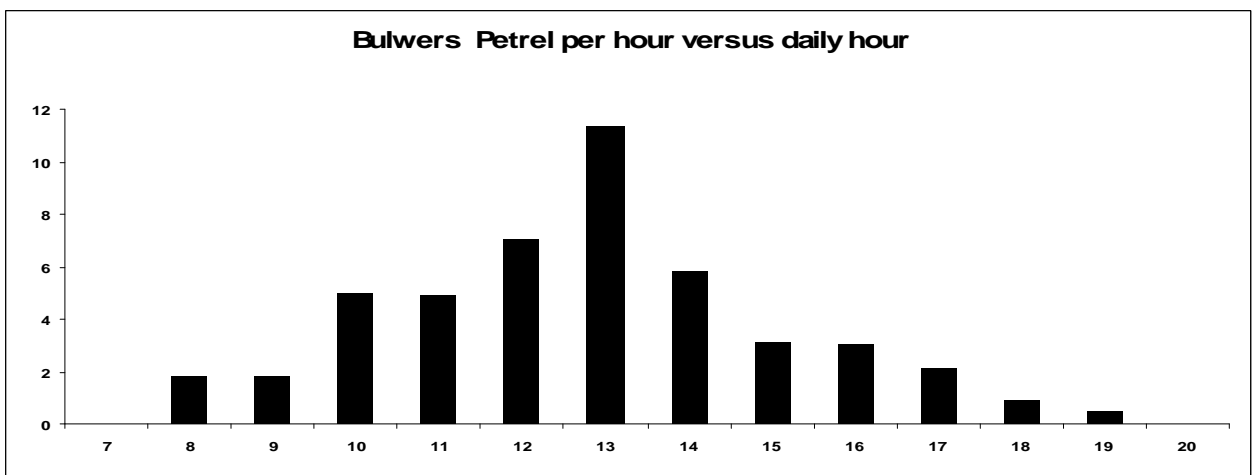
days gave no problems. No daily logs were made of wind-direction or –strength. During my visit there was a moderate wind from N to ENE.

Zino’s Petrel/Bugio Petrel/Fea’s Petrel

In total 16 birds were seen with 31 August being the best day when 7 birds were observed. Of these 16 birds only 2 birds flew in northeast direction. After 4 September no more birds were seen. Not a single bird could be identified at (sub) species level.

Bulwers Petrel

This local breeding bird was always flying back and forth without a noticeable directional pattern. In total 331 birds were seen with 172 flying to the southwest. Best day was 2 September with 112 birds. With numbers increasing during the day and dropping at the end of the day it seems that at least some of the birds observed at Proto Moniz are visiting their colony at night.



Bulwers Petrel per hour versus daily hour.

Cory's/Scopoli's Shearwater

Only a few hundred birds passed close enough to check for possible Scopoli's Shearwaters but even the most useful character (more white on the inner webs of the primary's) proved difficult to apply with almost all birds flying very horizontally. No Scopolis' were suspected. With Cory's Shearwater being the most numerous local breeding bird it was present in every hour. In total 25.276 birds were seen with 5 September being the best day with 3.566 birds (2.638 southwest). Numbers of Cory's Shearwater seemed to drop during my visit.



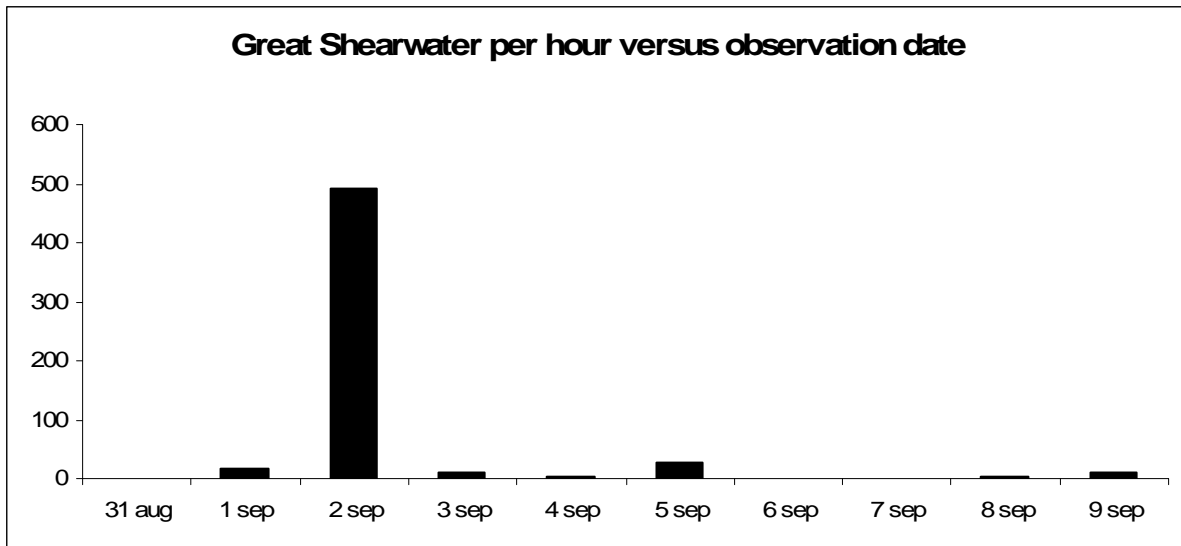
Great Shearwater

One of the great attractions of sea watching at Porto Moniz is the migration of Great Shearwaters between the end of August and mid-September. For me this was one of the reasons for visiting and I was disappointed when after the first day I had only seen just one. But 193 birds in the last 3 hours of the second day gave notice of what turned out to be an explosion of Great Shearwaters on 2

8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18
312	835	588	675	404	228	604	1170	151	74	118

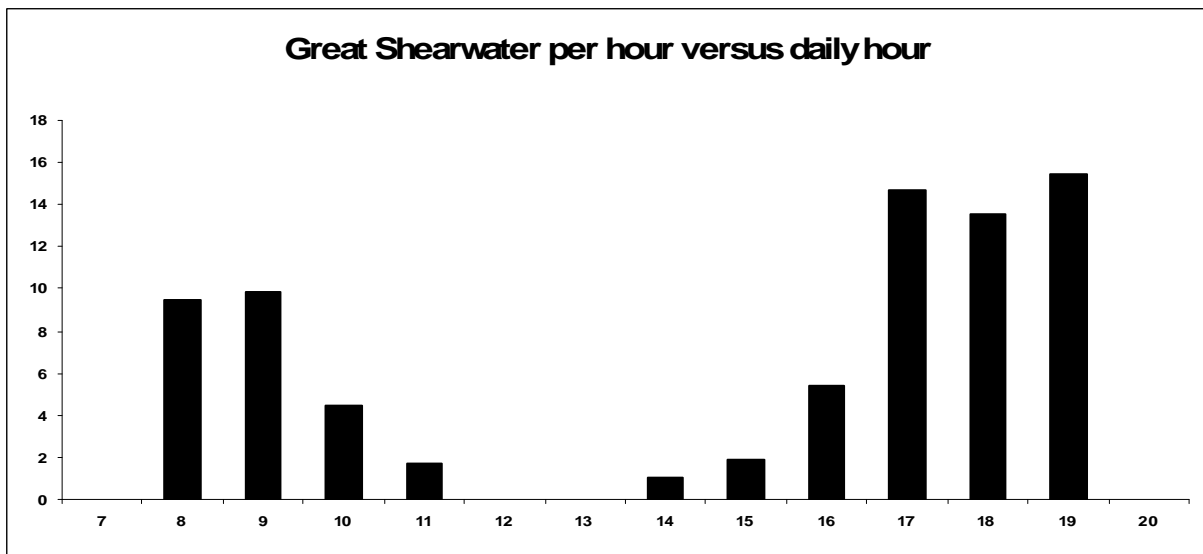
Number of Great Shearwaters per daily hour on 2 September.

September when in 10,5 hours 5159 flew south. Numbers peaked around 15.00 when a rain front came in from the ocean and 1000 Great Shearwaters passed in just half an hour at a distance of 500 meters.



Number of Great Shearwaters per hour versus observation date.

In 10 days 5846 birds were seen and with the exception of 2 September most Great Shearwaters passed in the morning and evening hours.



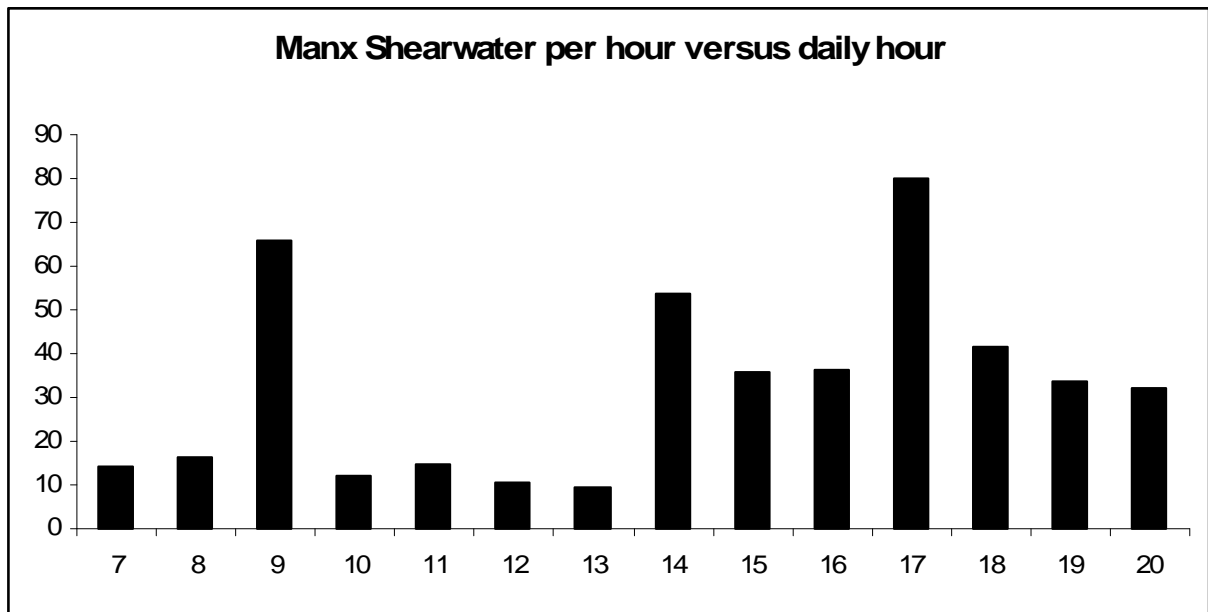
Great Shearwater per hour versus daily hour (excluding 1-sep and 2-sep).

Sooty Shearwater

In total 10 birds were seen with 2 September being the best day with 5.

Manx Shearwater

Present in 90 out of 94 hours of observation, a total of 3254 Manx Shearwaters were seen with most birds flying southwest. Best day was 6 September with 961 birds. Most birds were seen in the afternoon and evening.



Manx Shearwater per hour versus daily hour.

Balearic Shearwater

A distant shearwater seen in the morning of 8 September probably concerned this species.

Little Shearwater

It turned out that separating Little Shearwater from Manx Shearwater was more difficult than I suspected. I was only sure of single birds on 1 and 2 September. Numbers of Little Shearwater might be underestimated.

Wilson's Storm Petrel/Madeira Storm Petrel

On 3 September around 10:30 a small storm petrel was observed flying in a south western direction at a distance of 2000 meters. Not many details could be seen of the bird. Since there was a influx of Wilson's Storm Petrels in the NE-Atlantic at the time and since the composition of species past Porto Moniz with its many migrating birds is different from the rest of the island Wilson's Petrel could be a possibility.

Little Egret

4 birds were seen. Local birds.



Whimbrel

59 birds were seen. Local birds.

Pomarine Skua

3 birds were seen.

Arctic Skua

48 birds were observed flying south. 32 were adult white morphs and 8 were adult dark morph birds. Best day was 2 September with 15 Arctic Skuas flying southwest. Many birds were discovered flying up to 40 metres above the surface or during gaining height and made the impression as if they were orientating themselves. After this they prolonged their flight at lower altitudes.

Longtailed Skua

6 birds were seen (all of them adults). Best day was 3 September with 3 birds flying south.

Great Skua

1 bird was seen on 2 September.

Black headed Gull

1 second calendar year was seen 8 September.

Atlantic Yellow-legged Gull

302 birds were seen. Local birds.

Roseate Tern

4 adult birds were seen. 31 August, 3 September (2) and 7 September.

Common Tern/Arctic Tern

In total 1067 birds were seen. Local birds concerned Common Terns and most of the other birds passed in large flocks at very large distance and probably concerned Arctic Terns.

Large unidentified whale

16 were seen.

Unidentified dolphin

73 were seen.

Bottlenose Dolphin

13 were seen.

Unidentified shark

1 was seen at 6 September.

Totals per day (several species)

	31-aug	1-sep	2-sep	3-sep	4-sep	5-sep	6-sep	7-sep	8-sep	9-sep
	6,25h	11h	10,5h	11h	10h	11h	10h	9h	9h	4h
Zino's/Bugio/Fea's Petrel	7		4	4	1					
Bulwers Petrel	21	16	112	78	41	22	8	2	26	5
Cory's/Scopoli's Shearwater	2.462	3.499	2.955	3.194	2.977	3.566	1.787	1.577	1.656	1.603
Great Shearwater	1	193	5.159	99	26	302	7	5	18	36
Sooty Shearwater	1	5		3				1		
Manx Shearwater	141	182	137	71	253	523	961	226	739	21
Balearic Shearwater									?	
Little Shearwater		1	1							
Pomarine Skua		1		2						
Arctic Skua	2	1	15	6	1	8	8	4	2	1
Longtailed Skua		1	1	3		1				
Great Skua			1							
Blackheaded Gull									1	
Atlantic Yellowlegged Gull	1	10	8	1	7	32	82	74	66	21
Roseate Tern	1			2				1		
Wilson's/Madeiran Stormpetrel				1						
Common/Arctic Tern	121	218	242	40	65	41	28	42	173	40
Common Tern	22	6	2	11	6	6	1	1	1	
Arctic Tern				1						
Large unidentified whale		2		3	2		2	2	2	
Unidentified dolphin		1		27				44	1	
Bottlenose Dolphin	11	2								
Unidentified shark							1			

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