

# Birding in Pedra Badejo/Santiago, Cabo Verde

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There are two main birding spots in the area: the lagoons on the beach and the last nesting colony of an endemic purple heron about 10 km away in Riberia Montanha.

Ask for the local guides in the hotels or in the harbour restaurant. The young students have a fair command of English and French and can help you a lot. They have been trained to spot and identify bird species. They will help you find most the birds you have come to see. They even know the Latin names to enable international identification. They can also provide you with a local bird book which you will find very useful!

During September - March even a short walk on the beach will let you see Sanderling (*Calidris alba*) and Kentish Plover (*Charadrius alexandrinus*) rolling along the dark sand like little white balls. Whimbrel (*Numenius phaeopus*) and Ruddy Turnstone (*Arenaria interpres*) are other winter guests there. The lagoons feed a large variety of waders over our winter, if only in small numbers: Black-winged Stilt (*Himantopus h.*) which nests in the salt pans of Sal Island, Grey Plover (*Pluvialis squatarola*), Common Ringed Plover (*Charadrius hiaticula*), Greater Yellowshank (*Tringa flavipes*), Common Greenshank (*Tringa nebularia*), Wood Sandpiper (*Tringa glareola*), Curlew Sandpiper (*Calidris ferruginea*) and Little Stint (*Calidris minuta*) are some of the species you can expect to see there.

Black-crowned Sparrow-Lark (*Eremopterix nigriceps*) live in drier country but come to the lagoon to drink. So do Helmeted Guineafowl (*Numida meleagris*). Herons might also be there: Little Egret (*Egretta garzetta*), Cattle Egret (*Bubulcus ibis*), Grey Heron (*Ardea cinerea*). Spoonbills (*Platalea leucorodia*) possible. The Osprey (*Pandion haliaetus*) patrols the beach, Kestrel

(*Falco tinnunculus*) circles over the village garbage dump. Also 4 of the 6 endemic bird species can be found during this little excursion: Grey-headed Kingfisher (*Halcyon leucocephala*), Cape Verde Warbler (*Acrocephalus brevipennis*), Cape Verde Sparrow (*Passer iagoensis*) and Cape Verde Swift (*Apus alexandri*).

The "passerinho", the White-headed Kingfisher is Cabo verde's national bird and the equivalent to Australia's Laughing Jack. You will find several of these noisy chaps if you walk inland from the lagoon. They nest in the old deep wells and in the sandy walls of the riverbed. Some individuals are used to people working in their vicinity and might let you get close enough for full-format shots of a 400mm-lens.

The endemic warbler is easier to be heard than seen. Stand in the shade of the riverside shrubbery and wait for the liquid, melodious winter song of this grey, unobtrusive speciality. In nesting time its song is a loud outburst. Blackcap (*Sylvia atricapilla*) and Spectacled Warbler (*Sylcia conspicillata*) will also be there!

Cape Verde Sparrow poses some identification problems to newcomers. Look for a "black beard" and a light over-eye stripe!

Alexander's Swift is a completely black swift.

The excursion to see *Ardea purpurea bournei*, the endemic Purple Heron is described in detail in the Riberia Montanha section.

Our winter is not the best time for shorebirds. Only an occasional Brown Booby (*Sula leucogaster*) might be seen. Breeding time in our summer might be much better!

Barn Owl (*Tyto alba*) is frequent, but during day time you will normally only find its feathers. At the entrance of Ribeira Kumba (see this chapter) there is a little cave high up in the cliff, where the guides can always show you a Barn Owl as it guards the entrance to the canyon.

Common Waxbill (*Estrilda astrild*) forage in large groups through the shrubs.