

Identification of second-cycle Azores Gull in autumn

Mariano Martínez

Over the past few decades, the identification and taxonomic status of Azores Gull *Larus michahellis atlantis* have been much debated. Since Dwight (1922) first described this form, several papers have been published. Authors such as Vaurie (1965), Cramp & Simmons (1983) and Grant (1986) provided interesting data and, more recently, longer papers have focused on its identification, including Dubois (2001) and Adriaens et al (2020). *Atlantis*, according to Dwight (1922), Mayaud (1940) and Cramp & Simmons (1983), is found in the Macaronesian Islands: the Azores, Madeira and Canary Islands. However, authors such as Beaubrun (1988), Dubois (2001) and Yésou (2002) suggested restricting the name *atlantis* only to the birds breeding on the Azores, arguing that the gulls of the Canary Islands and Madeira are intermediate between nominate Yellow-legged Gull *L m michahellis* (hereafter *michahellis*) and the 'true *atlantis*'. Olsen (2018) and Adriaens et al (2020, 2022) share this view. Stoddart & McInerney (2017) reviewed the different names that have been used in English language literature: 'Azorean Gull', 'Atlantic Gull' and 'Azorean Yellow-legged Gull' – the latter being the one adopted by them and the British Ornithologists' Union Records Committee. Adriaens et al (2020) opted for the name Azores Gull, which will be used here to refer to the gulls of the Azores. This paper discusses the second autumn plumage of Yellow-legged Gulls from the Azores and Canaries. To ensure clarity, the name 'Canary Gull' will be used for birds originating from the Canary Islands. On 4 November 2020, a second-cycle gull was observed on Tenerife showing features indicative of Azores Gull but the published identification criteria for birds of this age class were inconclusive, as they focused primarily on winter plumage. After two years of studying the second-cycle gulls of Macaronesia during autumn, this paper was written to address that gap. This work aims to provide more information on the identification of Azores Gull, focusing on plumages shown by second-cycle gulls between September and mid-December.

Description of plumage variability in second autumn (September to mid-December)

Azores Gulls have been described as somewhat smaller than *michahellis*, with shorter wings and shorter legs but, due to sexual and individual variation, structure is not a reliable feature when identifying a vagrant bird (Dubois 2001, Olsen & Larsson 2004). Moulting is another trait that has been discussed, and although it has been shown to be more delayed on average in Azores Gulls compared with *michahellis* (Dubois 2001, Howell 2001), it is not that useful either since 'Canary Gulls' can show delayed moulting and very retarded plumage, too. Moulting is, therefore, not that helpful in a vagrant context.

Material and methods

From 21 to 28 October 2023, a visit was made to São Miguel, Azores, with a primary focus on observing second-cycle individuals to document their features. Based on the data analysis, these gulls could be classified into three distinct plumage groups. During the week, a total of 357 second-cycle Azores Gulls were counted, which could be divided into the following groups (see also table 1):

GROUP 1 (REFERRED TO AS 'DIRTY TYPE'; PLATE 136, 140) Head is heavily streaked, including lore and chin; side and rear of neck are very marked, giving shawl-like effect; breast and flank are heavily marked; wing-coverts, particularly greater coverts, are plain dark brown, almost blackish, like in Lesser Black-backed Gull *L fuscus graellsii*, with hardly any pale markings on the outer greater coverts.

GROUP 2 (REFERRED TO AS 'RETARDED TYPE'; PLATE 137-139) Head is heavily streaked; solid shawl on neck, and typically dirty brown colour on breast, flank and belly. However, their wing-coverts show some beige markings, unlike those in group 1, which have more uniform dark brown coverts. This group shows retarded plumage aspect (moulted feathers have patterns similar to those of first-winters, so at first glance they look like first-winters) and this, along with overall appearance, makes them also look like 'dirty type' gulls.

GROUP 3 (REFERRED TO AS 'MICH TYPE'/'CLEAN TYPE'; PLATE 141-142) Reduced head streaking; shawl effect on rear of neck is fainter; breast and flank have only faint streaking; and wing-coverts are mixture of uniform dark



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136 Azores Gull / Azorengelpootmeeuw *Larus michahellis atlantis*, second-cycle, Vila Franca do Campo, São Miguel, Azores, 23 October 2023 (Mariano Martínez). Dark gull with very 'dirty' appearance, typical example of group 1. **137** Azores Gull / Azorengelpootmeeuw *Larus michahellis atlantis*, second-cycle, Terceira, Azores, 28 September 2025 (Mariano Martínez). Dark brown plumage, including scapulars, typical of group 2. **138** Azores Gull / Azorengelpootmeeuw *Larus michahellis atlantis*, second-cycle (arrow), Ponta Delgada, São Miguel, Azores, 25 October 2023 (Mariano Martínez). This gull from group 2 has very retarded plumage aspect,

quite similar to first-winter at first glance. **139** Azores Gull / Azorengelpootmeeuw *Larus michahellis atlantis*, second-cycle, Ponta Delgada, São Miguel, Azores, 22 October 2023 (Mariano Martínez). Bird with (very) retarded plumage aspect, typical of group 2.

TABLE 1 Simplified summary of key characters of each plumage type in second-autumn Azores Gull *Larus michahellis atlantis*. Note that only birds of Group 1 are sufficiently distinct to be identified in vagrant context.

Group 1 'dirty type'	Group 2 'retarded type'	Group 3 'mich type'/'clean type'
Overall rather dark and brown, with: Streaked lores/chin Brown 'shawl' on hindneck Extensive brown underparts Very dark and uniform greater coverts	As group 1, but with even browner scapulars/mantle, and with some distinct pale spotting or barring on greater coverts	Rather more similar to second-cycle nominate <i>michahellis</i>



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140 Azores Gull / Azorengeelpootmeeuw *Larus michahellis atlantis*, second-cycle, Arico landfill, Tenerife, Canary Islands, 4 November 2020 (Mariano Martínez). Bird fitting well into group 1. Head very strongly streaked (including lore and chin); very obvious ‘shawl’ on rear neck; breast and flank very marked; wing-coverts rather plain dark brown, almost blackish like Lesser Black-backed Gull *L. fuscus graellsii*, especially greater coverts, which lack any paler internal markings. In foreground ‘Canary Gull’ / ‘Canarische’ Geelpootmeeuw *Larus michahellis*. **141** Azores Gull / Azorengeelpootmeeuw *Larus michahellis atlantis*, second-cycle, Vila

Franca do Campo, Azores, 25 October 2023 (Mariano Martínez). Example of group 3 with moderate streaking on head, neck and breast, and extensive whitish pattern on wing-coverts and tertials. These features are also found in ‘Canary Gulls’ and such birds can therefore not be confirmed as Azores Gull outside their normal range. **142** Azores Gull / Azorengeelpootmeeuw *Larus michahellis atlantis*, second-cycle, Ponta Delgada, São Miguel, Azores, 22 October 2023 (Mariano Martínez). Typical example of group 3. Such individuals have no diagnostic features and cannot be identified as Azores Gulls outside their normal range.

brown feathers and lighter brown ones, with some dark spots and streaks on latter. This group of gulls has no strong characteristics, and they look much cleaner than birds of group 1 and 2.

Note that a few individuals may show mixed traits, and could be difficult to assign to any of the described groups.

Selection of photographs showing main features of ‘dirty type’ Azores Gulls (group 1)

Head (figure 1)

Second-cycle Azores Gulls from this group typically have a heavily streaked head, with streaking extending onto the lore and chin, showing just as much streaking in front of the eye as behind it. This creates quite a different impression from the ‘white head – dark eyemask’ of other Yellow-legged Gulls.

The pale ‘boa effect’ is very characteristic of the gulls of the Azores, which is created by the whitish neck side contrasting with both the very marked head and the very solid ‘shawl’ on the lower

hindneck. It can be clearly seen in the last two images of figure 1 (individuals from Tenerife and Vila Franca do Campo).

Breast and flank (figure 2)

Some birds show strongly marked breast and flanks with little white feathering but other individuals have less streaking in these areas. The streaks are usually coarser than in ‘Canary Gulls’.

Wing-coverts (figure 3)

The coverts are dark, with many individuals having uniform, very dark brown greater coverts. At most, there is limited and indistinct pale stippling on these feathers.

Birds from group 1 (‘dirty type’) that combine all of the above features (streaked head, marked ‘shawl’, heavily streaked breast and flank and uniformly dark wing-coverts) can be identified with certainty outside the Azores (cf plate 143-145). This combination of features was not found among several 1000s of local, second-autumn

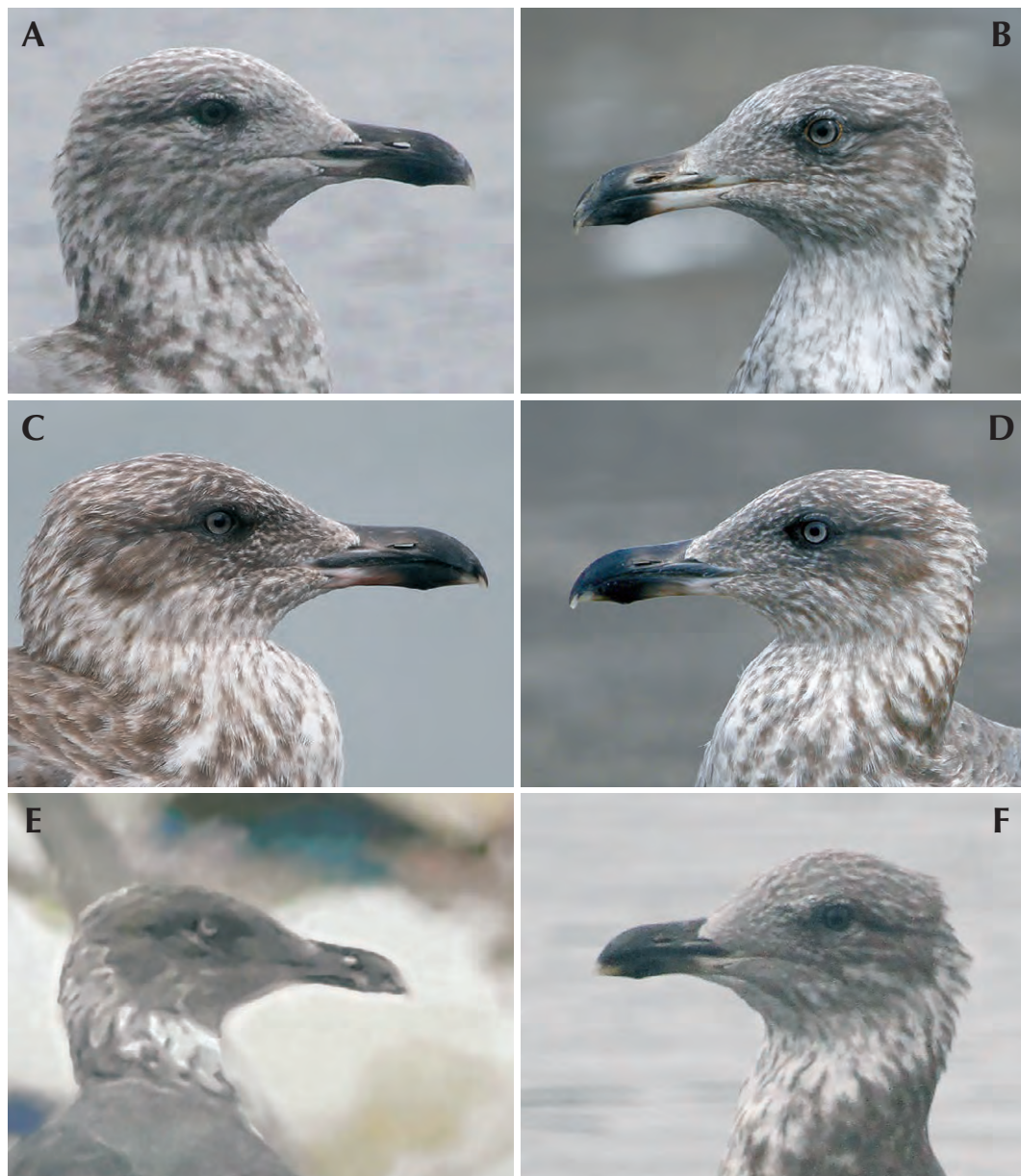


FIGURE 1 Azores Gull / Azorengelpootmeeuw *Larus michahellis atlantis*, second-cycle, typical head patterns of group 1 ('dirty type') (Mariano Martínez). **A** Vila Franca do Campo, São Miguel, Azores, 24 October 2023; **B** Terceira, Azores, 28 September 2025; **C-D** Terceira, Azores, 28 September 2025; **E** Arico, Tenerife, 4 November 2020; **F** Vila Franca do Campo, Azores, 23 October 2023.

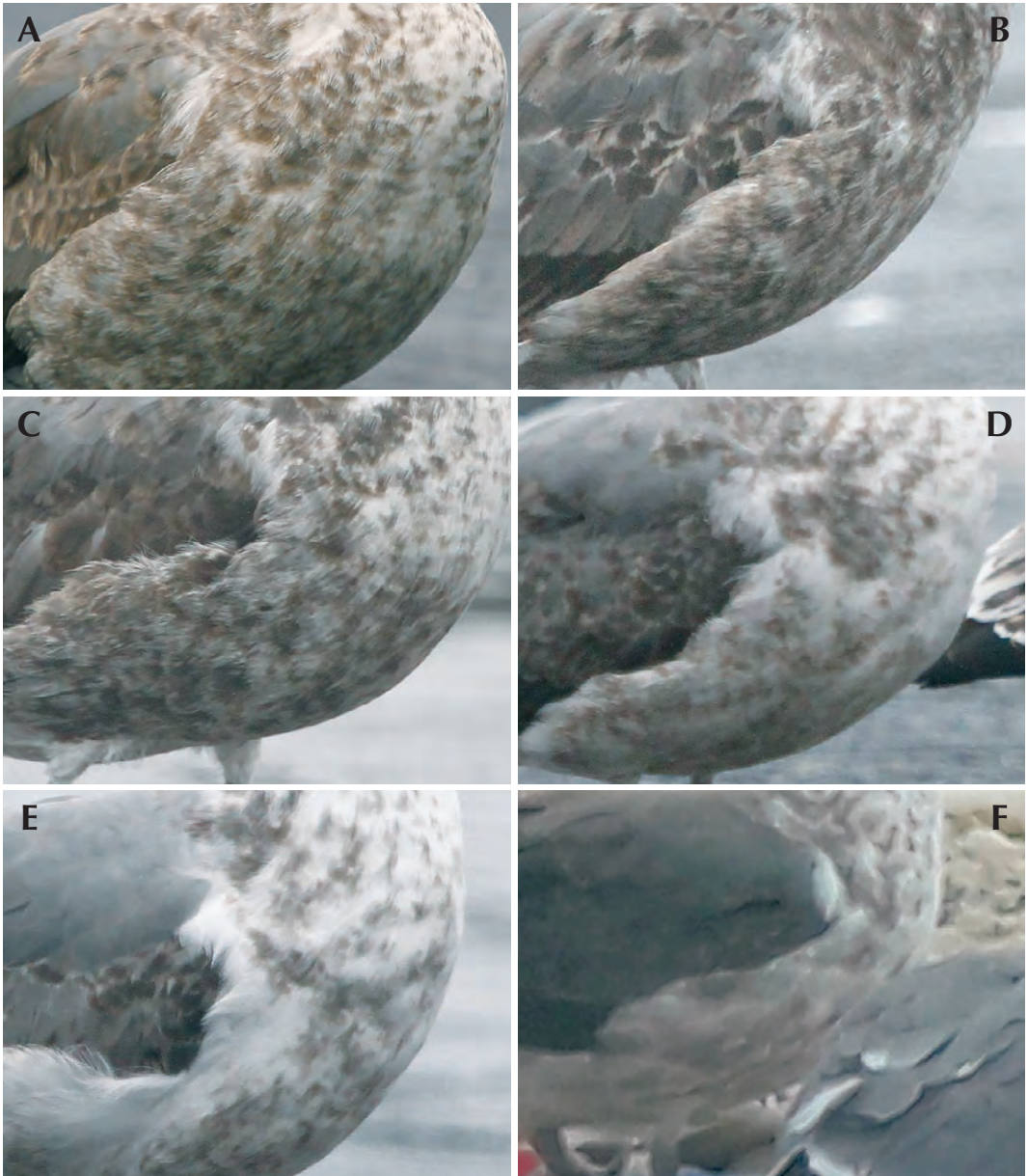


FIGURE 2 Azores Gull / Azorengelpootmeeuw *Larus michahellis atlantis*, second-cycle, typical breast and flank patterns of group 1 ('dirty type') (Mariano Martínez). **A** Vila Franca do Campo, São Miguel, Azores, 8 September 2025; **B** São Miguel, Azores, 24 October 2023; **C-D** Vila Franca do Campo, São Miguel, Azores, 23 October 2023; **E** São Miguel, Azores, 26 October 2023; **F** Arico, Tenerife, 4 November 2020.



FIGURE 3 Azores Gull / Azorengelpootmeeuw *Larus michahellis atlantis*, second-cycle, typical wing-coverts of group 1 ('dirty type') (Mariano Martínez). Note very dark greater covert panel, with no more than some beige stippling. **A-B** São Miguel, Azores, 26 October 2023; **C** Terceira, Azores, 28 September 2025; **D** São Miguel, Azores, 23 October 2023.



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143 Azores Gull / Azorengelpootmeeuw *Larus michahellis atlantis*, second-cycle, Vila Franca do Campo, São Miguel, Azores, 9 October 2025 (Mariano Martínez). Typical bird, showing all features of group 1 ('dirty type'). **144** Azores Gull / Azorengelpootmeeuw *Larus michahellis atlantis*, second-cycle, Terceira, Azores, 2 October 2025 (Mariano Martínez). Classic example of group 1 ('dirty type'). **145** Azores Gull / Azorengelpootmeeuw *Larus michahellis atlantis*, second-cycle, Vila Franca do Campo, São Miguel, Azores, 9 October 2025 (Mariano Martínez). Very dark bird with full combination of typical Azores Gull traits (group 1).



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146 'Canary Gull' / 'Canarische Geelpootmeeuw' *Larus michahellis*, second-cycle, Las Galletas port, Tenerife, Canary Islands, 12 November 2022 (Mariano Martínez). Typical example of group A. **147** 'Canary Gull' / 'Canarische Geelpootmeeuw' *Larus michahellis*, second-cycle, Las Galletas port, Tenerife, Canary Islands, 12 November 2022 (Mariano Martínez). Typical example of group B. **148** 'Canary Gull' / 'Canarische Geelpootmeeuw' *Larus michahellis*, second-cycle, Las Galletas port, Tenerife, Canary Islands, 12 November 2022 (Mariano Martínez). Example of group C with spotted wing-coverts. **149** 'Canary Gull' / 'Canarische Geelpootmeeuw' *Larus michahellis*, second-cycle, Las Galletas port, Tenerife, Canary Islands, 29 September 2024 (Mariano Martínez). Bird with overall retarded appearance typical of group D.

Yellow-legged Gulls studied in Tenerife and the Iberian Peninsula in the last four to five years. The other groups show overlap with 'Canary Gulls' or even some nominate *michahellis* types, and are therefore problematic in a vagrant context.

Overview of 'Canary Gulls'

'Canary Gulls' have been studied by me in Tenerife, Canary Islands, since 2019. Following the observation of a gull with Azores Gull features at Arico landfill in November 2020, attention was directed towards second-cycle birds over the next two years, with data collected intensively for two months in 2022. During the data collection period (15 October to 15 December 2022), a total of 30 visits were made to Las Galletas port, Los Cristianos beach, and Arico landfill. On each visit, an estimated 2000-3000 gulls were observed, with peak counts reaching 6000-7000 individuals. Of

the 30 visits, 26 were conducted under very good light conditions (late afternoon or early morning), one in moderate rain, and three under overcast skies. Across all visits, a total of 764 second-cycle birds were recorded. These were divided into the following groups (plate 146-149; see also table 2):

GROUP A (REFERRED TO AS 'WHITE WITH SHAWL'; PLATE 146) Slight to moderate head streaking; hindneck has well-marked 'shawl' of streaks; breast and flank are either white or show slight streaking; wing-coverts are brown with pale markings.

GROUP B (REFERRED TO AS 'ALMOST WHITE'; PLATE 147) White or faintly streaked head; neck lightly streaked or white; breast and flank white or slightly streaked; wing-coverts brown with pale markings.

GROUP C (REFERRED TO AS 'STREAKED'; PLATE 148) Moderate to strong streaking on head; neck moderately to strongly marked; breast and flank also moderately to strongly streaked; wing-coverts brown with white markings.



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150 'Canary Gull' / 'Canarische Geelpootmeeuw' *Larus michahellis*, second-cycle, Las Galletas port, Tenerife, Canary Islands, 12 October 2022 (*Mariano Martínez*). This bird shows heavy streaking on head and underparts, although not as extensive as in typical Azores Gull *L m atlantis*. Marked 'shawl' and breast but finer streaks than in Azores Gull. Wing-coverts, tertials and overall plumage with many white markings. **151** 'Canary Gull' / 'Canarische Geelpootmeeuw' *Larus michahellis*, second-cycle, Arico landfill, Tenerife, Canary Islands, 20 November 2020 (*Mariano Martínez*). This bird shows head streaking and very marked 'shawl' on neck. In Azores Gull *L m atlantis*, both areas usually more heavily marked, creating even stronger, characteristic 'boa effect'. Clean white lower breast of this bird would be unusual for second-autumn Azores Gull. **152** 'Canary Gull' / 'Canarische Geelpootmeeuw' *Larus michahellis*, second-cycle, Arico landfill, Tenerife, Canary Islands, 1 December 2020 (*Mariano Martínez*). This bird shows very streaked head similar to Azores Gull *L m atlantis*, with marked 'shawl', creating 'boa effect', but white markings on greater coverts rule out typical group 1 Azores Gull. **153** 'Canary Gull' / 'Canarische Geelpootmeeuw' *Larus michahellis*, second-cycle, Las Galletas port, Tenerife, Canary Islands, 14 September 2024 (*Mariano Martínez*). This bird shows heavily streaked head and hindneck, compatible with Azores Gull *L m atlantis*, but streaks on lower breast vague, tertials with white markings, and greater coverts show bold white spotting.

TABLE 2 Simplified summary of key characters of each plumage type in second-autumn 'Canary Gull' *Larus michahellis*

Group A 'white with shawl' (69%)	Group B 'almost white' (16%)	Group C 'streaked' (10%)	Group D 'delayed' (5%)
Lightly streaked head Distinct streaking on hindneck	Mainly whitish head No strong neck streaking	Strongly streaked head, neck and underparts	Overall brown plumage, including scapulars/mantle



154 'Canary Gull' / 'Canarische Geelpootmeeuw' *Larus michahellis*, second-cycle, Arico landfill, Tenerife, Canary Islands, 15 September 2022 (Mariano Martínez). This bird looks quite similar to Azores Gull *L. m. atlantis* but chin is unstreaked, and wing-coverts show bold whitish spotting.



155 'Canary Gull' / 'Canarische Geelpootmeeuw' *Larus michahellis*, second-cycle, Arico landfill, Tenerife, Canary Islands, 15 September 2022 (Mariano Martínez). Differs from typical group 1 Azores Gull *L. m. atlantis* in thinner head streaking, with pale loreal area contrasting against dark eye mask, and large white areas on lower breast.

GROUP D (REFERRED TO AS 'DELAYED PLUMAGE'; PLATE 149) Can present traits similar to all other groups but most characteristic feature of this group is general brown appearance, similar to first-winter birds at first glance.

Note that a few individuals may show mixed traits, and could be difficult to assign to any of the described groups.

Birds that are perhaps most similar to the distinctive group 1 Azores Gulls would be those of group C, which represents 10% of my sample of second-cycle 'Canary Gulls'. However, none of the 764 individuals observed in the Canary Islands showed the full combination of features described for group 1 Azores Gulls ('dirty type'). Group 1 Azores Gulls can be identified without any doubt outside their range because the described features all combined do not occur in 'Canary Gulls', not even in the most problematic birds, group C.

Some examples of extremely marked 'Canary Gulls' are shown in plate 150-155; except for one (plate 151), all of these belong to group C. These extreme examples of 'Canary Gulls' can look very similar to Azores Gulls but they still fall short of the complete, diagnostic set of features seen in group 1 Azores Gulls.

Identification of Azores Gulls in second autumn

In figure 4-6, the head, breast and flank and wing-coverts of both forms are compared. As can be seen, second-cycle 'Canary Gull' can show similar traits to Azores Gull, such as strong head streaking, dark wing-coverts, brown 'shawl' on

hindneck, or heavily mottled breast. However, the following combination of features does not occur in 'Canary Gull' and is typical of group 1 Azores Gull: heavily streaked head (including lore and chin), extensive brown 'shawl' on hindneck, strongly marked breast and flank, and dark brown, almost blackish wing-coverts (like Lesser Black-backed Gull) with no or hardly any white markings on greater coverts. Second-cycle gulls that display this combination of traits can be safely identified as Azores Gull.

Examples of records from European mainland

Plate 166-169 show a compilation of vagrant, second-cycle Azores Gulls that were found in various parts of Europe. These birds all belonged to a diagnostic type: either the 'dirty type' (plate 166-167) described here and mainly seen in early autumn, or the so-called 'dunlin type' described by Adriaens et al (2020), which is more common in late winter (plate 168-169).

Discussion

This paper provides additional information on the identification of second-cycle Azores Gull. It complements the paper by Adriaens et al (2020), who described a type of second-winter birds with a diagnostic combination of features, the so-called 'dunlin-type', consisting of birds with a distinct hood and belly-patch, dark brown wings and grey saddle. It focuses on a very specific plumage ('second-autumn') between September and mid-December. Three types of plumage are

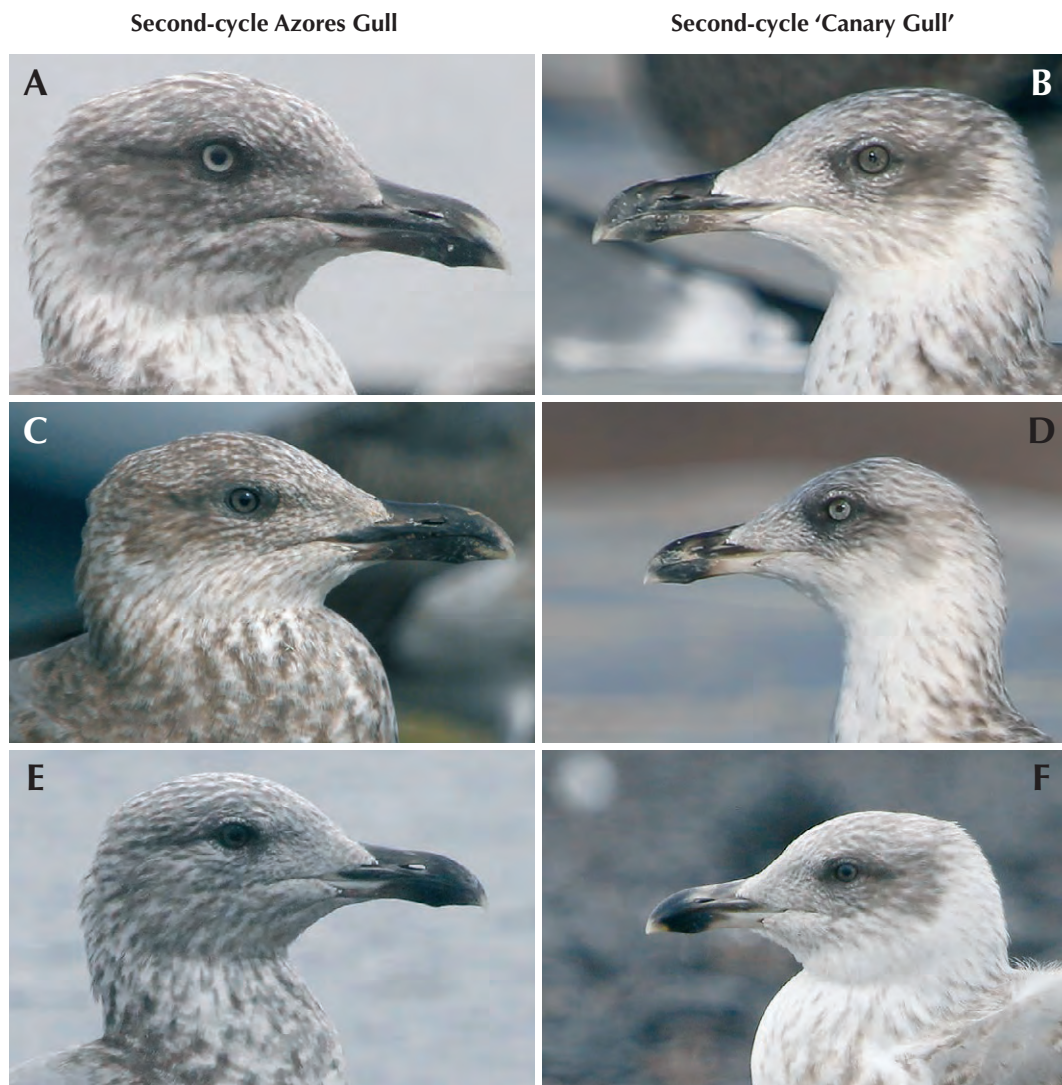


FIGURE 4 Comparison of head patterns of second-cycle Azores Gull / Azorengeelpootmeeuw *Larus michahellis atlantis* (left) and second-cycle 'Canary Gull' / 'Canarische Geelpootmeeuw' *L. michahellis* (Mariano Martínez). **A** Vila Franca do Campo, São Miguel, Azores, 26 October 2023; **B** Arico landfill, Tenerife, Canary Islands, 15 September 2022; **C** Ponta Delgada, São Miguel, Azores, 26 October 2023; **D** Arico landfill, Tenerife, Canary Islands, 15 September 2022; **E** Vila Franca do Campo, São Miguel, Azores, 23 October 2023; **F** Las Galletas port, Tenerife, Canary Islands, 12 November 2022.

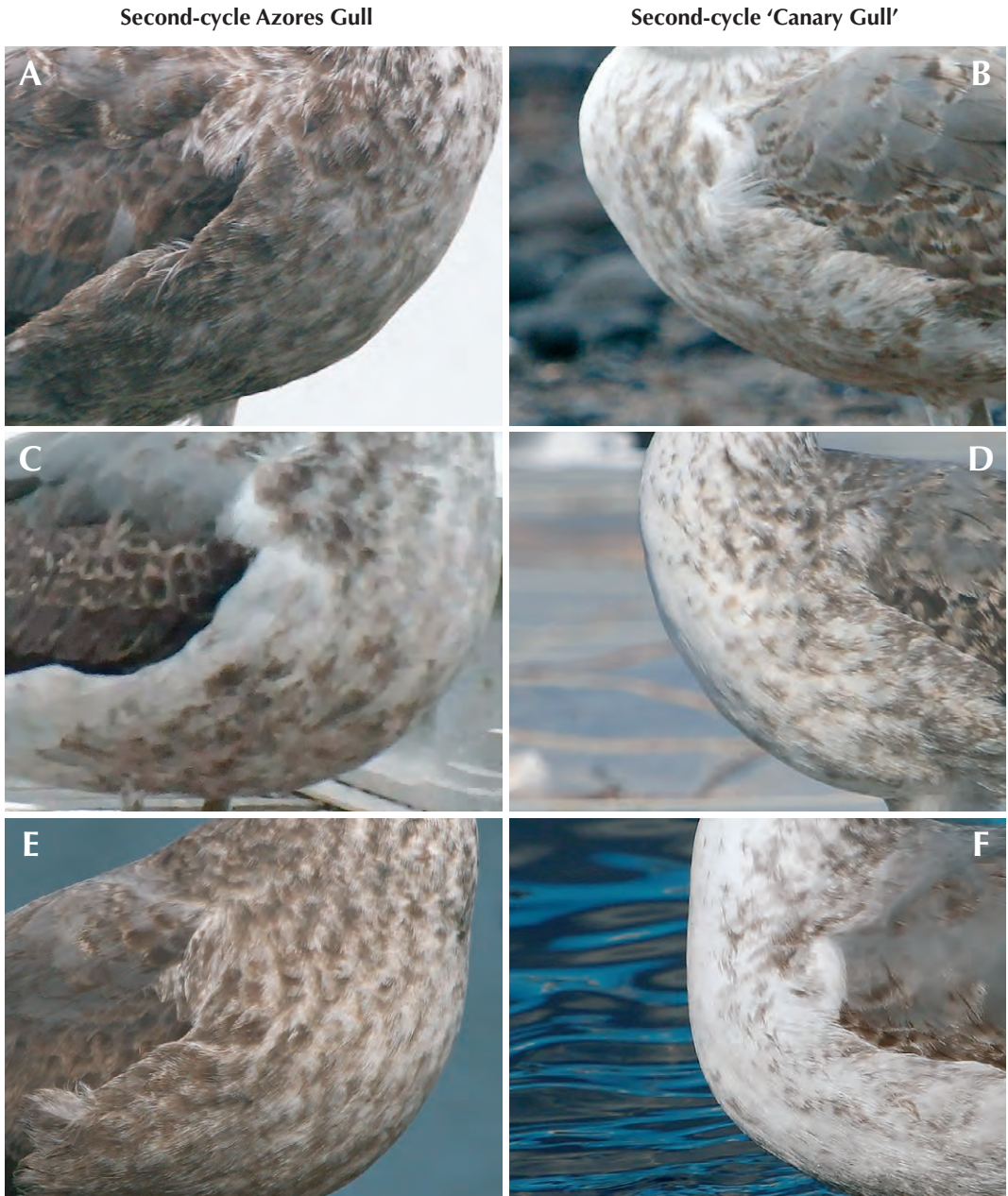


FIGURE 5 Comparison of breast and flank patterns of second-cycle Azores Gull / Azorengeelpootmeeuw *Larus michahellis atlantis* (left) and second-cycle 'Canary Gull' / 'Canarische Geelpootmeeuw' *L. michahellis* (Mariano Martínez). **A** Terceira, Azores, 28 September 2025; **B** Las Galletas port, Tenerife, Canary Islands, 12 November 2022; **C** Vila Franca do Campo, São Miguel, Azores, 26 October 2023; **D** Arico landfill, Tenerife, Canary Islands, 15 September 2022; **E** Terceira, Azores, 2 October 2025; **F** Las Galletas port, Tenerife, Canary Islands, 2 December 2022.

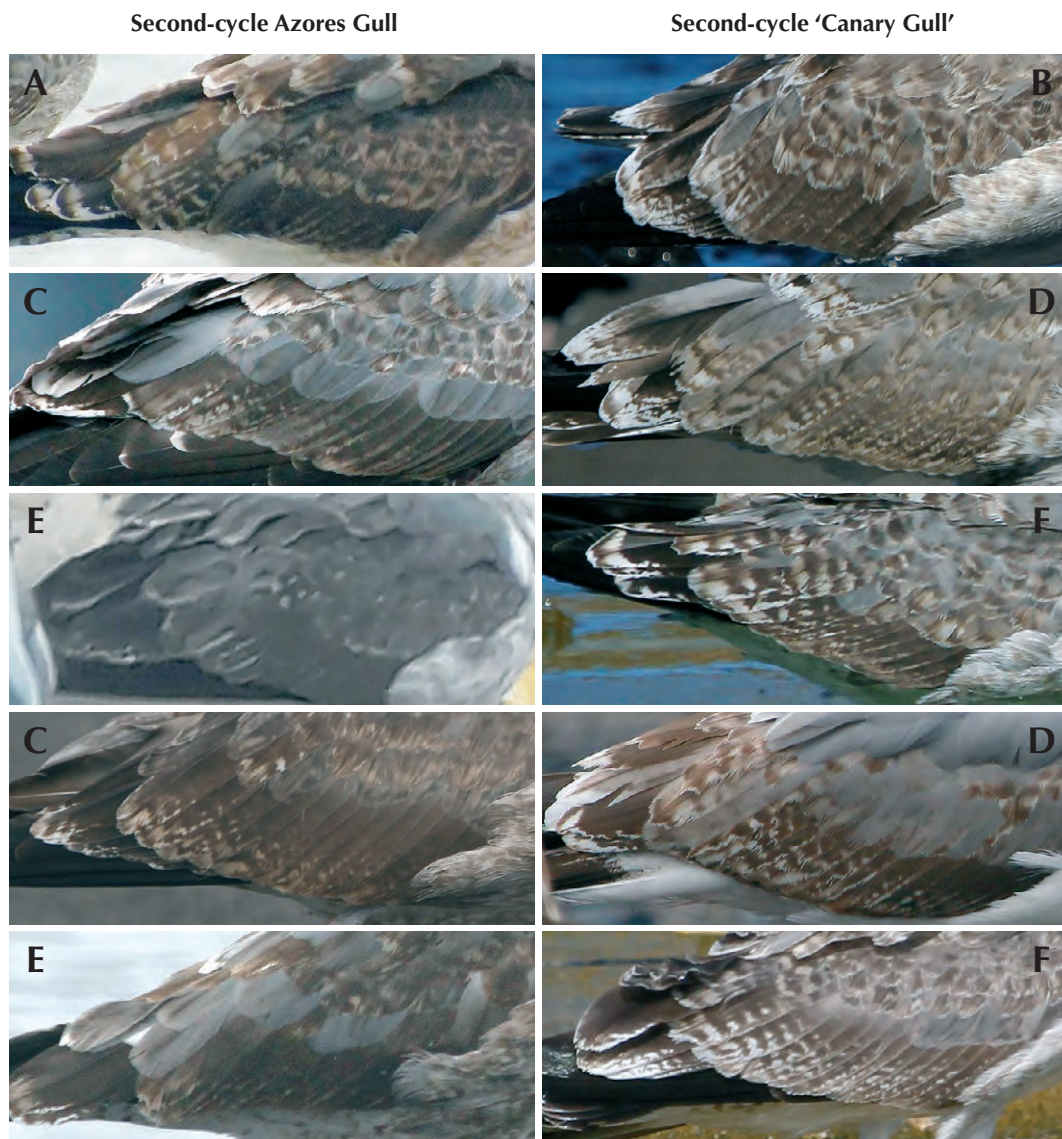


FIGURE 6 Comparison of wing-coverts of second-cycle Azores Gull / Azorengelelpootmeeuw *Larus michahellis atlantis* (left) and second-cycle 'Canary Gull' / 'Canarische Geelpootmeeuw' *L. michahellis* (Mariano Martínez). **A** Ponta Delgada, São Miguel, Azores, 25 October 2023; **B** Las Galletas port, Tenerife, Canary Islands, 21 September 2022; **C** Vila Franca do Campo, São Miguel, Azores, 23 October 2023; **D** Las Galletas port, Tenerife, Canary Islands, 21 September 2022; **E** Arico landfill, Tenerife, Canary Islands, 4 November 2020; **F** Las Galletas port, Tenerife, Canary Islands, 12 September 2022; **G** Terceira, Azores, 2 October 2025; **H** Las Galletas port, Tenerife, Canary Islands, 12 October 2022; **I** Vila Franca do Campo, São Miguel, Azores, 23 October 2023; **J** Las Galletas port, Tenerife, Canary Islands, 15 September 2022.



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156 Azores Gull / Azorengeelpootmeeuw *Larus michahellis atlantis*, second-cycle, Ponta Delgada, São Miguel, Azores, 22 October 2023 (Mariano Martínez). This bird shows typical combination of extensively dark wing-coverts lacking any pattern on outer greater coverts, heavily streaked lower breast, strong dark 'shawl' on hindneck, and uniformly streaked head. **157** Azores Gull / Azorengeelpootmeeuw *Larus michahellis atlantis*, second-cycle, Vila Franca do Campo, São Miguel, Azores, 22 October 2023 (Mariano Martínez). Another classic dark bird, with plain wing-coverts and very noticeable pale 'boa effect' on neck side. **158** Azores Gull / Azorengeelpootmeeuw *Larus michahellis atlantis*, second-cycle, Terceira, Azores, 2 October 2025 (Mariano Martínez). Very dark bird with full combination of typical Azores Gull traits. **159** Azores Gull / Azorengeelpootmeeuw *Larus michahellis atlantis*, second-cycle, Vila Franca do Campo, São Miguel, Azores, 23 October 2023 (Mariano Martínez). Dark bird, with uniformly dark greater coverts, as well as obvious pale 'boa' between streaked head and solid brown 'shawl' on hindneck. **160** Azores Gull / Azorengeelpootmeeuw *Larus michahellis atlantis*, second-cycle, Ponta Delgada, São Miguel, Azores, 25 October 2023 (Mariano Martínez). Although this bird shows brown hindneck and heavy breast streaking of Azores Gull, head pattern (clearly darker behind eye than in front) and pale spotting present on all greater coverts make it similar to some 'Canary Gulls', and render it unsafe to identify outside its normal range. **161** Azores Gull / Azorengeelpootmeeuw *Larus michahellis atlantis*, second-cycle, Vila Franca do Campo, São Miguel, Azores, 22 October 2023 (Mariano Martínez). Despite rather heavily streaked head, hindneck and strongly streaked breast, extensive white spotting on wing-coverts make this bird problematic to tell from 'Canary Gull' in vagrant context.



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162 Azores Gull / Azoregeelpootmeeuw *Larus michahellis atlantis*, second-cycle (in back), Ponta Delgada, São Miguel, Azores, 26 October 2023 (Mariano Martínez). Many second-cycle Azores Gulls show uniformly dark, almost black panel on greater coverts, rendering them quite distinctive even outside of their usual range. **163** Azores Gull / Azoregeelpootmeeuw *Larus michahellis atlantis*, second-cycle, Ponta Delgada, São Miguel, Azores, 28 October 2023 (Mariano Martínez). Bird with completely streaked head and extremely marked hindneck and underparts. **164** Azores Gull / Azoregeelpootmeeuw *Larus michahellis atlantis*, second-cycle, Vila Franca do Campo, São Miguel, Azores, 8 October 2025 (Mariano Martínez). Another bird with very dark plumage and very dark, almost plain blackish greater coverts. **165** Azores Gull / Azoregeelpootmeeuw *Larus michahellis atlantis*, second-cycle, Terceira, Azores, 28 September 2025 (Mariano Martínez). Another classic bird from group 1.

described: a 'dirty type' that is distinctive even in a vagrant context, a 'retarded type' and a 'mich type'/'clean type' lacking any striking characteristics. The latter two cannot be identified with complete certainty as Azores Gulls outside of their normal range.

Based on my own observations and photographs from the Azores, the 'dirty type' is the more common type in autumn (September to mid-December), while, as stated by Adriaens et al (2020), in winter (mid-December to April) the 'dunlin type' becomes the dominant one. Plumage variation in Yellow-legged Gulls is now fairly well understood. For example, it is clear that the plumage of second-cycle 'Canary Gulls' in September-December is quite different from that of Yellow-legged Gulls from mainland Europe but becomes

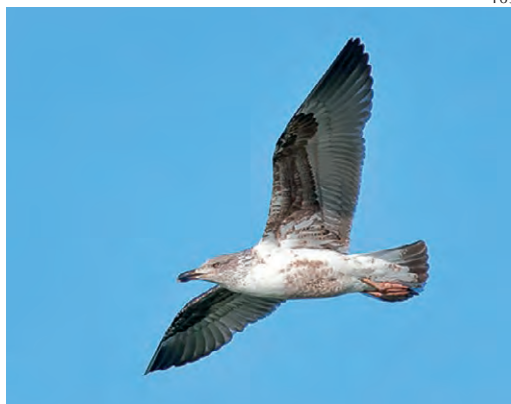
more similar from December onwards. Therefore, it can be concluded that Azores Gulls present the most distinctive second-cycle plumages within the *michahellis* complex, as already suggested by Adriaens et al (2020). Olsen (2018) stated that the gulls of the Canary Islands and Madeira are 'almost identical' to Yellow-legged Gulls from mainland Europe. However, after an exhaustive analysis, Adriaens et al (2020) concluded that the 'Canary and Madeira Gulls' are 'intermediate' between Azores Gulls and the Yellow-legged Gulls from mainland Europe and that there could be one or two intergradation zones, as is the case in European Herring Gull *L. argentatus* subspecies. After five years of studying the plumages of 'Canary Gulls', this hypothesis is supported by my observations.



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166 Azores Gull / Azorengelpootmeeuw *Larus michahellis atlantis*, second-cycle, Naujac-sur-Mer, Bordeaux, Gironde, France, 14 February 2025 (Guillaume Rey). Even though this bird is from late winter, it still shows very dark plumage and exhibits all features described for group 1. Note generally 'dirty' appearance, heavily streaked head including lore and chin, strongly marked 'shawl', heavily marked breast and flank and uniformly dark wing-coverts, with just few beige markings restricted to inner greater coverts. This bird has been submitted to the French rarities committee. **167** Azores Gull / Azorengelpootmeeuw *Larus michahellis atlantis*, second-cycle, Sennen, Cornwall, England, 28 October 2008 (Martin Elliott). Very striking bird due to generally very 'dirty' appearance, completely uniform, dark brown greater covert panel and, although neck is somewhat streaked, pale 'boa effect' is obvious and characteristic of Azores Gull. This bird has been accepted by British Birds Rarities Committee provisionally, since committee could not exclude origin from Canary Islands or Madeira at the time. However, as this paper clearly shows, it can be confidently identified as Azores Gull. **168-169** Azores Gull / Azorengelpootmeeuw *Larus michahellis atlantis*, second-cycle, Santoña Port, Cantabria, Spain, 31 January 2025 (Gonzalo Pardo). Bird with strongly marked head, dark greater coverts with minimal beige stippling and isolated belly patch recalling Dunlin *Calidris alpina*. It perfectly matches 'dunlin type' described by Adriaens et al (2020). First seen as first-winter on 31 December 2023 by Gonzalo Pardo, this bird returned, then in second-winter plumage, to same location late December 2024 and stayed until April 2025. It has been accepted by Spanish rarities committee.

Samenvatting

HERKENNING VAN TWEEDE-CYCLUS AZORENGEELPOOTMEEUW IN NAJAAR Dit artikel levert nader bewijs voor de stelling dat veel tweede-cyclus Azorengeelpootmeeuwen *Larus michahellis atlantis* een opvallend verenkleed hebben dat ook herkenbaar is bij een dwaalgast. Het bespreekt de variatie in verenkleed bij tweede-cyclus Geelpootmeeuwen van de Macaronesische eilanden en benoemt de specifieke kenmerken van Azorengeelpootmeeuwen van deze leeftijd in het najaar. Daarmee vult het een hiaat aan in eerdere literatuur (zoals Adriaens et al 2020). In tegenstelling tot vogels van de Azoren kunnen ongeringde Geelpootmeeuwen van de Canarische Eilanden en Madeira buiten hun normale verspreiding niet met zekerheid herkend worden, noch in hun tweede cyclus, noch op andere leeftijden. Hoogstens kunnen exemplaren van deze eilanden in een dwaalgastcontext gedetermineerd worden als 'Macaronesische meeuwen'. Er is brede consensus dat de naam *atlantis* uitsluitend beperkt moet blijven tot de Geelpootmeeuwen van de Azoren (Azorengeelpootmeeuw). Daarmee blijft de vraag bestaan waartoe de Geelpootmeeuwen van de Canarische Eilanden en Madeira behoren. Hopelijk kan verder onderzoek in de nabije toekomst nader licht werpen op dit vraagstuk.

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Mariano Martínez, Tenerife, Spain (malvasia76@gmail.com)