

Argentine Patagonia

Naturetrek Tour Report

21 October - 9 November 2007



Patagonia Grey Fox by Bob Brown



Andean Condor by Tony Mainwood

Report compiled by Bob Brown
Photo by Tony Mainwood



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Day 1

Sunday 21st October

London (Gatwick) – Madrid – Buenos Aires

We flew to Buenos Aires, and because of the very short stopover in Madrid, also virtually flew around its airport in order to make the connection with the main overnight flight.

Day 2

Monday 22nd October

Buenos Aires – Parque Pereyra y Iraola – Punta Lara

Arrival in Buenos Aires was more or less on time, but a few hassles awaiting luggage and meeting Diego Gallegos – the local guide, due to airport reconstruction. We headed outside, almost immediately seeing two Chimango Caracaras mobbing a Crested Caracara perched on a car park floodlight, a scene that would be played out in various forms almost every day of the trip.

We drove into the city centre, and because of the early morning rush hour, paused to have a look for birds by the highway into town. This brought more than we bargained for; in addition to good views of Rufous Hornero, Great Kiskadee, Shining Cowbird, Southern Lapwing and Fork-tailed Flycatcher, we were bitten by hordes of mosquitoes hovering over the dewy grass. A quick turnaround at our hotel, and we headed off to woodlands on the edge of the city (Costanera Sur was closed this day, and reserved for visiting on the return journey).

Parque Pereyra y Iraola is a fine woodland planted with a wide variety of species, and it served as a good introduction to many species we would encounter during the trip. Rufous Hornero nests, and their occupants, were in many of the trees. In addition we saw numerous Bay-winged Cowbirds, Narrow-billed Woodcreeper, excellent views of Field Flickers with their splendid yellow heads, and many parakeets (mostly monk), and a pair of nesting Tropical Parulas half way up a eucalyptus tree. By the time we had sampled a fair part of the park's birdlife it was lunchtime, and Diego had assembled a fine picnic of meats, cheeses, etc, which kept us happily occupied when not being distracted by Saffron Finches moving through the tree tops.

From there we headed towards Punta Lara which is situated in an impressive wide area of wetlands to the SE of Buenos Aires, crossed by numerous drainage ditches, pools and small pockets of damp woodland. Thousands of well fed cattle grazed throughout this expanse. The early afternoon was quite warm and humid, and although some birds probably were less active at this time, there was much to see. Brown and Yellow Marshbirds and Spectacled Tyrants perched on many reeds and pampas grasses. A pair of White-browed Blackbirds displayed over a field, whilst Maguari Storks and Snail Kites flew high overhead. Perhaps one of the most dramatic birds was the Whistling Heron, creeping gingerly through the reeds, probably in search for frogs and small fish. Further down the road a small lake offered us views of Rosy-billed Pochard – their bills far brighter than even the name suggests.

After a fine afternoon's birding we returned to Buenos Aires and the Hotel Castelar, got washed and fed, and headed for rest quite early, in preparation for a very early start the next day.

Day 3

Tuesday 23rd October

Ushuaia & environs

Assembling in the hotel at 4.00am was made a little easier by the jet lag from UK, and after a minimal breakfast we made our way to Aeroparque Newberry, the domestic airport, taking off at about 5.40. We saw little of the landscapes as we flew south because of increasing cloud, and finally landed in Ushuaia on time in rain and wind. Esteban Daniels who would be our Argentina guide for the rest of the trip was there to meet us, and we were soon in the Hotel Recodo, situated on the edge of the very rapidly (and randomly) growing town. Having extracted our birding kit, we explored the nearby shores overlooking the Beagle Channel, backed by snow clad mountains just showing through the mist and driving rain. Despite the conditions, we were soon seeing species typical of the area: Flightless Steamer-ducks, Crested Duck, Magellanic and Blackish Oystercatchers, and Kelp and Upland geese.

Everyone visiting this part of Patagonia loves the striking Dolphin Gulls with their brilliant red bills, and we were immediately visited by them, presumably on the hunt for scraps. Passing near the airport we found a series of shallow pools occupied by White-rumped Sandpipers, Yellow-billed Pintail, Ashy-headed Geese, Rufous-backed (Austral) Negrito, and Wilson's Phalarope, the latter a relatively scarce visitor to this area. A Long-tailed Meadowlark posed helpfully on a speed limit sign.

A good lunch was enjoyed in the centre of Ushuaia, in a friendly and cheerily chaotic Chilean restaurant, opposite a nightclub offering "shows". By the time we had eaten the weather had begun to lift, and as we worked our way along the shores to the east of town, it got positively sunny, although there was still a chill wind. Here we had views of Imperial Shag/King Cormorant, provoking interesting discussions on the similarities and differences between the two, and how to separate them. More on this later.... Other species were Chilean Skuas, Turkey Vulture, and Chiloé Wigeon.

As we worked further east along the shore, we came closer to Mount Olivier and its neighbouring mountains, which hang over the town and dominate the scene. Here, circling as a tiny dot in the bright sky, we saw our first condor, high over the slopes of snow and dark crags, revealing its distinctive white collar and upper wing pattern before drifting over the channel towards the Chilean shore.

Evening was spent in an asado restaurant – a Parilla – specialising in the typical barbeques that Argentina is so famous for. We were not disappointed. By the time we had consumed mountainous helpings of local sausage and lamb hacked off by a swashbuckling gaucho-type who was in charge of the fire and roasting, most of us were fit to explode.

Day 4

Wednesday 24th October

Ushuaia – Tierra del Fuego National Park

Departure was slightly delayed by late arrival of packed lunches, but we soon made up the time, and headed to the west of town, to the National Park. On the way we stopped overlooking a wide meander of the Rio Pipo, and getting fine views of Black-faced Ibis and Patagonian Sierra-finches, as well as more distant views of Chiloé Wigeon. Weather then, and throughout the day was cool, dull and occasionally light rain, but mercifully the wind, which can be ferocious in this area, was light. Later in the day the clouds lifted somewhat, revealing the mountains of the National Park in all their glory, fringed on their lower slopes by the dark forests of southern beech (*Notofagus* spp.).

Our progress through the National Park was delightfully slow as we stopped in numerous places to seek out birds, notably the dramatic Magellanic Woodpecker. During these stops we had views of Thorn-tailed Rayaditos, Austral Negritos, numerous Chimango Caracaras, Fire-eyed Diucons and a pair of Dark-bellied Cinclodes nesting on a small pier, commuting back and forth to rocks where they hunted small crustaceans. Two condors were seen during these stops. We heard Austral Parakeets but did not see them at this stage.

At one location a substantial area of the *Notofagus* forest had been impacted by beavers and whilst we never saw the animals, we had to plodge through watery ground and fallen trees created by their dams, and in many places fresh gnawings and gouged trees spelt further falls. At many locations Esteban played recordings of Magellanic Woodpecker in an effort to tease them into the open (there were many ancient trees with holes), but to no avail. However, views of White-throated Treerunner, White-crested Elaenias, and lots of Patagonian Sierra-finches were some compensation.

Lunch was welcome, as many of us were feeling somewhat cold and damp, and even more welcome was warm coffee and a roaring log fire in a small Park café. Nearby, on grassy outcrops in a fast flowing local river, there were Upland Geese nesting, and several Great Grebes fishing nearby. The former were subject to attack by chimangos, and we saw once nest's clutch of eggs being destroyed, the fraught parents floating a short distance away, calling ineffectually.

After further unsuccessful searches for woodpeckers, we headed back, and then followed the main 'Ruta 3' to its ultimate conclusion as the end of the pan-American highway. This was intended to be just a quick photo-stop, but ended very differently. Shortly after we arrived, four condors appeared circling over a cliff exceeding 1000ft in height, and almost immediately they were joined by five more, (including immature birds) all nine circling in a truly wonderful display, often swooping low over nearby woodland, and then back, sometimes carrying food items, towards a ledge that seemed to be developing as a nest site. If this were not enough, the condors were joined by a pair of Black-chested Buzzard-eagles that circled really low above us, giving excellent views.

Finally, a return to the hotel, tired but happy, and surprisingly sunburnt after this relatively dull day thus emphasising the need for special care in this part of the world.

Day 5

Thursday 25th October

Ushuaia – Beagle Channel – Harberton

This day, much of which was spent afloat, dawned gloriously bright and calm with deep blue skies offsetting the brilliant snows on the mountains. We had a slightly early breakfast in preparation for embarking on one of the regular boat cruises. As we sailed east out of Ushuaia we had fine views of the mountainous fringes, and along much of the length of the Beagle Channel, famous for Darwin's travels and the hydrological survey work undertaken by Fitzroy in the 1830's (navigational charts still use his data). We had fine views of seabirds, soon picking up sightings of Black-browed Albatross, Southern Giant Petrel, Magellanic Diving Petrels, Dolphin, Kelp, Brown-hooded Gulls and Southern Fulmar. These were followed shortly after by sighting of numerous South American Terns.

The boat soon closed with the Bridges Islands in the main channel, and by lying a few yards off, we were afforded excellent views of the Imperial Shag/King Cormorant colonies, as well as large numbers of sea lions – almost sixty during the trip. In many of these, enormous grunting males were keeping an eye on their harems. Between these colonies a number of snowy sheathbills were foraging for scraps of waste food and other less savoury materials. Discussions with other birders on the boat elicited the fact that recent Chilean authors now consider the Imperial Shag and the King Cormorant to be the same species, and merely exhibiting some variation in plumage – a point that found favour with the participants of our own debate. Lunch was held in the cabin below the main deck.

At one cluster of islands the skipper brought our boat (catamaran construction and suitable for this) right up onto a beach where Magellan Penguins were beginning to establish their colony for the season; the birds appeared to take no notice of the boat, but lay basking on the shingle, or quietly swimming in the adjacent water. A few yards away, on the other side of the island, a small colony of Gentoo Penguins is established (since 2000) and after various re-counts we considered 14 birds were present.

From there it was a short cruise to Harberton, the famous estancia established by the Bridges family in the late 19th century (and still managed by them) where some of us continued birding around the vicinity, whilst others went on a tour of the farm itself. The birders had good views of Turkey Vulture, Kelp, Upland and Ashy-headed Geese, White-throated Caracara, Dark-bellied and Bar-winged Cinclodes, Black-chinned Siskin and many Austral Thrushes.

As we left Harberton and its safe inlet, it was clear there was a change in the weather. As our boat weaved tightly through the archipelago off the Isla Grande shore of the channel, it began to cloud over, wind strengthened sharply from the SE, then veered SW/W, and conditions became cold and unpleasant as the rain started to lash down, coupled with spray from the boat's bows. Some folk elected to remain on deck, but with poor visibility there was little reward for this effort, apart from a dolphin briefly sighted and a few diving petrels, and they eventually retreated to the warmth of the lounge with its little coffee bar. Evening meal back in the hotel.

Day 6

Friday 26th October

Ushuaia, Glacier Martial & environs – El Calafate

We checked out of the Hotel Recodo after some resolution of their random drinks bill system, and headed to Glacier Martial which hangs over the west of Ushuaia, and is the basis for a winter ski resort. Leaving the minibus at the base of the ski slope, and pausing to obtain good views of White-throated Treerunner, we walked up – initially quite steep and then levelling off somewhat. The weather was bright, but overcast at times and always chilly with a breeze blowing – near the glacier this was predictably much colder.

Just below the glacier at a height of about 1880ft, a relatively level area of ground just above the *Notofagus* tree line, supports low heath, grasses and bog, interspersed with patches of deep snow, whilst above the mountains and glacier hang, forming a sort of icy amphitheatre. It was on this area we wanted to concentrate for its birds, and we were not disappointed. Lots of Dark-faced Ground-tyrants flitted about the low bushes and rocks, and several Yellow-bridled Finches. A White-throated Caracara circled close by giving us excellent views, and often it was mobbed by a pair of chimangos who seem to be capable of occupying an enormous range of habitats. The only species we expected and did not see were White-bellied Seedsnipe, despite considerable searching.

After lunch back in the ‘Chile’ restaurant, we headed out of a last bit of birding in the Ushuaia area. First stop was an area of mature *Notofagus* woodland overhanging cliffs to the E of the town, and here Esteban played his woodpecker calls; after a few moments a female Magellanic Woodpecker darted out from the trees onto a nearby trunk and watched us, occasionally turning to knock the tree with a pronounced hollow sound before moving to further trees nearby. We all got excellent views of it, and as we were leaving the wood, we saw possibly another, rooting into the dead bark of a fallen branch.

Finally we visited Ushuaia’s famous municipal dump in hope of raptors, but this did not produce anything new, possibly because (sadly for birders) the operators appear to be running a more hygienic process than formerly. We did however get good views of a juvenile Black-crowned Night-heron and two Ringed Kingfishers beside a nearby stream, as well as a glimpse of a Patagonian Grey Fox.

Our flight to El Calafate was slightly delayed but uneventful, and daylight lasted long enough for us to see the vast windswept landscapes of open grasslands, distant Andes, and the aquamarine hues of Lago Argentina stretching away to the west, as the plane descended. Easy transfer to the friendly *Hostería Los Barrancos* on the edge of town, and a fine meal, settled us all in.

Day 7

Saturday 27th October

El Calafate – Laguna Los Escarchardos

After a leisurely start to allow a bit of recovery from the previous day’s travel we headed east from El Calafate across the wide open expanse of valley, dominated by grasslands swept by a dry icy wind that brought tears to the eyes. Eventually the road climbed up the escarpment on the south side of the valley, rising some 1000 feet on to an open plain that was even more windswept than the lower levels. We had numerous stops along the route, viewing Lesser Rheas, Guanacos, condors, Black-chested Buzzard-eagles at several locations, as well as smaller birds – Scale-throated Earth-creepers, Common Miner, Lesser Canastero and Correndera Pipit.

In a lake off in the distance we saw numerous Chilean Flamingos, and these were to be a regular feature of many of the lakes in this area. At the point where we had to leave the bus and start a long walk to Laguna Los Escarchardos, we fortified ourselves with the very substantial packed lunches provided by the hotel, eating these tucked in any hollow near the road in order to be out of that stinging wind.

Our walk to the lake was along the old dirt road, now largely disused, but as we found, the haunt of many Least Seedsnipe foraging on or around it. These little birds enchanted us; on several occasions they undertook outstandingly graceful display flights, each soaring high over the coirón grassland, and then gliding gracefully through the wind down to the nest site, descending in one lingering, leisurely and effortless arc. The lake is much dried up now, the water's edge over 300yards from the old strandline, and a spit is now revealed, which divides the lake in two. We were therefore not surprised to find no Hooded Grebes for which the lake, as discovery site for this species, is famous. Compensation did come in the good views of Magellanic Plover, Two-banded Plover, Baird's and White-rumped Sandpipers, numerous American Golden Plover, and on the heath the stunning Chocolate-vented Tyrant posing majestically on a bush.

It took us some time to make our way back to the bus, finding a more direct route across the heath, but at least the wind was behind us during this walk, and we then returned by bus to El Calafate for a brief spell of shopping and consuming local ice creams of architectural proportions. It was here in this little tree-lined town that we predicted (correctly as it turned out) that both Rufous-collared Sparrow and the introduced European House Sparrow could be found at all stages of our trip, the musical calls of the former making a delightful accompaniment to all our explorations.

Day 8

Sunday 28th October

El Calafate – Glacier Perito Moreno

We woke to a fine dusting of snow on all the mountains and the rocky ridges behind the hotel, whilst the grounds of our hotel were frosted like iron. However the wonderful view across Lago Argentina from the dining room showed the weather bright and sunny, Lago Argentina gleamed a brilliant turquoise blue, and above it, Cerro Castillo, named by Darwin because of its castle-shape, projected into the sky.

We left about nine, travelling west to the upper reaches of Lago Argentina where it divides into two complex arms, the southern one reaching to the Moreno glacier itself and extending yet further south to form two fjords that periodically are isolated from the main lake by extensions of the glacier. We were accompanied by Alejandro Capelli, an immensely knowledgeable local guide who briefed us about the geomorphology of the area, and many other aspects.

As we headed west, we almost immediately encountered two Black-chested Buzzard-eagles perched by the roadside, presumably awaiting road kills. As always, stops for such sightings produce other species, and we recorded Mourning Sierra-finches, Cinnamon-bellied Ground-tyrant, four condors, and re-sightings of other species in the nearby bushes. Further on into the National Park, other stops gave us views of Aplomado Falcon and Chilean Flicker, Austral Parakeets, White-crested Elaenias, the latter flitting amongst Chilean fire bushes and the calafate bushes which give the town its name.

Rounding a bend in the road we came across the stunning first view of the glacier and its surrounding ring of mountains swept by snow storms from the not-so-distant Pacific. Everyone agreed this was a real 'wow' of a view, the massive glacier taking the form of a precipitous curtain of splintered ice extending into the lake. Below us was a small pool off the main lake where we had our only view of Spectacled Duck, and over the lake we saw more condors. We had lunch at a view point barely yards from the closest part of the glacier, where it was possible, sheltered from much of the cold breeze by the *Notofagus* trees packed densely around us, to watch and hear the glacier calf off massive icebergs. The trees also supported numerous birds, and the Fire-eyed Diucons and Rufous-collared Sparrows were particularly confiding.

Below the lunch spot, and near a small quay where a small boat was attempting to nudge ice fragments out of the way, we embarked on an effort to see more Magellanic Woodpeckers. Esteban's recorder worked marvellously, and within a few minutes a fine male descended from the trees and shot like a missile over our heads and into the tree behind where it posed for about a hundred photographs. We all felt this was an ultimate birding moment – the brilliant scarlet and black woodpecker watching us from the tree to a background thunderous roar as the calving glacier shattered the calm of the lake.

We returned to the hotel for rest, showers, and another classic Argentinean barbeque; for many this washed down with the usual Mendoza wines.

Day 9

Monday 29th October

El Calafate – Estancia 9 de Julio area – Trelew

Departure from the Hostería Los Barrancos and all bags packed in rear of bus. We spent about half an hour checking out the birds at a small wet hollow near the hotel and beneath the cliffs. This proved productive in giving us sightings of Lesser Canastero, Grey-hooded Sierra-finch, and Blue and white Swallows in abundance.

From there we headed west again, this time on an unmade 'upper' road, provincial route No 15, that leads very close to the border with Chile. This road, relatively unused, gave us many opportunities for useful stops in the bright clear weather that at least initially, was wind-free. Everywhere the wide open plain of coirón grassland extended for miles across to the mountains and the distant Lago Argentina. At these stops we obtained good sightings of Black-chested Buzzard-eagle, condor, Mourning Sierra-finches, Scale-throated Earth-creeper, Patagonian Yellow-finch, as well as numerous Southern Lapwing (with young), and of course Crested and Chimango Caracaras.

Turning right, and northwards towards the estancia, we stopped after several miles for birding and lunch (once dust clouds from our bus had subsided). The breeze, reflecting squalls running through the Chilean Andes to our west, picked up, but visibility was still excellent across the nearby lagoons. Perhaps one of the most enchanting views was of a Patagonian Grey Fox (possibly two) which observed us from near some bushes, and was confiding enough to allow really close photography.

Beyond, on the lagoons, we had excellent views of Chilean Flamingo, Coscoroba and Black-necked Swans, Upland Geese, Yellow-billed Pintail, Speckled Teal, Andean Ruddy Duck, White-tufted and Silvery Grebes, White-winged Coot, whilst numerous Black-faced Ibis flew over us. A party of condors also offered us close sightings as they were attracted to a carcass nearby.

Back in Calafate, we visited two lagoons near the town. The first and largest, Bahía Redonda was occupied by a large flock of Chilean Flamingos, some two hundred Baird's Sandpipers and Common (Wilson's) Snipe. The latter, Laguna Nímez, is a nature reserve, and now distinguished by the newly elected 'Presidente Cristina Kirchner' having a holiday home next door. Here we were treated to some of the best views of Cinereous Harrier of the trip, several pairs holding nesting territories and constantly defending these in the face of their neighbours and harassing caracaras. On the other side of a spit there was the shore of the main lake, and this provided us with views of no less than four Magellanic Plovers – a real treat given the scarcity of this species.

Finally, after a brief stop in town for postcards and further ice creams (their reputation having spread amongst the group), we headed for the small airport, and in a short time were flying to Trelew. Here we were met by Ruben Henriquez, our local guide for the Trelew/Valdes area. A short drive into town and we were installed in the Hotel Libertador.

Day 10

Tuesday 30th October

Trelew – Punta Tombo – Gaiman

A prompt departure saw us heading to Punta Tombo, a very large coastal estancia to the south of Trelew some way off Route 3 that heads like an arrow across the pampas to Rio Gallegos. The weather was (relatively) mild and dry with only a light breeze. As we turned off on to the dirt road that leads to the estancia and its rocky headland, we had numerous sightings of Elegant-crested Tinamous, Guanacos and Lesser rheas running across the scrubland.

Punta Tombo is most famous for its enormous colony of Magellan Penguins which were just at the laying stage during our visit. Apparently holding some 250,000 pairs, the very prominent headland is dominated by glacial sandy scrubland underlain by reddish porphyry rock outcrops, and the former is densely riddled with penguin burrows, many with their occupants snoozing at the entrance. Other species there included the usual Chimango Caracaras, Southern Giant Petrel, Neotropic Cormorant, Magellanic and Blackish Oystercatchers, Southern Martin, Patagonian Mockingbird, and the notable Chubut White Flightless Steamer-duck, markedly more white-headed than its close relatives, even though we only got rather distant views.

We headed back to Trelew by way of Gaiman, famed for its supposed "Welshness". Outside that little town, on its southern side, was a useful little area of lake and wetland. Here we found burrowing owl close to the road and offering lovely views, Red-gartered and White-winged Coot, South American Stilt, Red Shoveler and Rosy-billed Pochard. The town itself has actually very few signs of Welshness remaining, except a couple of suitably named cafés, a chapel and some monuments, but it was a friendly little place with a nice park. We then returned to Trelew to the accompaniment of darkening skies and spots of rain, but these didn't amount to much and Ruben remarked to us that the area is experiencing a considerable water shortage.

Day 11

Wednesday 31st October

Trelew – Puerto Pyramide

We headed out of Trelew, initially to a cluster of lagoons (the 'Ornithologist's Laguna') just south of the town. It is a habitat rich in reed beds, wet woodland, dead trees and mud banks, and we had a useful half hour looking at

Rosy-billed Pochard, Red Shoveler, some 300 South American Stilts, Lake Duck, and in some of the bushes, very fine views of Spectacled Tyrant, last seen near Buenos Aires.

From here we drove north back through the town, and on towards the Peninsular Valdes, eventually swinging east in a long drive over wide open pampas plains, variously dominated by coirón grasslands or scrubland. Everywhere was dominated by a strong dry breeze, though nothing so piercing as we had experienced further south. At one stage Ruben called the bus to a halt, and around a dry gorge that wound its way down to the sea (Golfo Nuevo), we encountered some 30 Burrowing Parrots, their nest holes excavated in some of the softer rock layers of the gorge. This area also produced more Burrowing Owls, Elegant-crested Tinamous, Red-backed Hawk nesting near the road, and three White-winged Black-tyrants also in the gorge.

We continued to Puerto Pyrámide, and got established in the Motel Puerto Pyrámide, an establishment whose eccentric management was amply compensated for by a spectacular view over the bay, including southern right whales from time to time. Here we had lunch on the terrace, and took things a little easier until it was time for us to embark on a boat into the bay. Initially we wondered why so many of the local children were kitted out in fancy dress, until we realised that this was Halloween. At the appointed time we climbed on board as the boat sat on the beach, and then it was nudged into the water with a tractor, the boat floated off its trailer, and away we went.

The views of Southern Right Whales were spectacular. All the boats adhere to a code of conduct requiring a distance to be maintained for avoiding disturbance, but what is the skipper to do when the whales actively visit the boat? We had stunning views of a mother and her calf, so close that their plumes of exhaled spray drifted over the boat, these massive, gentle creatures diving, tail flukes rising high over the sea, and then re-surfacing with a resonant snort immediately beside us. In all we recorded about eleven whales that trip, but this is likely to be an underestimate due to the difficulties of counting. In addition there were views of sea lions on the low lying rocks below the cliffs, Magellanic Penguin, Southern Giant Petrel, two Cape Petrel (surprising this far north) Rock Cormorants and Imperial Shag/King Cormorant.

We returned happily to shore as the evening crept in, and after a brief rest we ventured to a local restaurant for dinner. During the course of the evening's discussions many of us decided we'd like to undertake another whale trip the following day, if it could be arranged. Ruben's 'fix it' skills were called into action!

Day 12

Thursday 1st November

Puerto Pyrámide – Punta Delgado – Estancia Elvira

We left at 8.30 for the long drive on mainly straight dirt roads to Punta Delgado on the SE corner of the Peninsular Valdes, all in a very strong wind which didn't help the birding by toppling 'scopes and swirling sand everywhere. However, Ruben spotted a pair of Red-backed Hawks nesting on top of a large bush near the road, and as we watched they changed over brooding responsibilities, and we had excellent views of them. Other sightings included many Patagonian Hares ('maras'), European Hares (seen on many days in the trip) and over 50 Guanacos. The point is notable for its important little lighthouse, and for a colony of Elephant Seals on the beach below the cliffs, amongst which we also saw some sea lions. Because the tide was far out they were quite dispersed, but we had good views of them although at this time of the year most males move offshore.

A well rotted carcass of a Southern Right Whale brought in numerous scavenging birds, most notably three Northern Giant Petrels and some Turkey Vultures. Other species seen along this section of coast were Snowy Sheathbill, Brown-hooded Gull, Common Tern, Cayenne and Royal Terns.

After a superb lunch of barbequed local lamb and empanadas (plus suitable vegetarian alternative as in most other establishments), we headed on to Estancia Elvira where we encountered more sea lions and many Elephant Seals, including a massive, freshly battle-scarred male, sprawled across the sand.

The route back to Puerto Pyrámide was largely uneventful except for very good views of no less than 12 Tawny-throated Dotterels and another Red-backed Hawk. There were many Guanacos grazing in the scrub, and occasionally dashing across the road. At one point a very small round body sprinted across on tiny legs, and we got just enough of a view to conclude it was a Hairy Armadillo before it disappeared into the bushes.

Back at the port, the wind having subsided, Ruben's skills had born fruit, and most of us opted to buy a further trip to see the whales. This time it was on a smaller boat, skippered by an engaging old salt called Raphael ('Rafa') who spent considerable time on the way out sharing his knowledge of the whales with us. He also took us out considerably further than the previous trip, and throughout we saw some 30 whales, many of which again approached the boat and cavorted around us to such an extent he was obliged at one point to retreat slightly. Nonetheless we were so close that several people commented on the whales' rather fetid breath as they surfaced.

The return journey was further enhanced by a wonderful lingering sunset that lit up the buff coloured cliffs of the Valdes coast and glinted off the massive tail flukes as these giants dived for food.

Day 13

Friday 2nd November

Puerto Pyrámide – Buenos Aires & Costanera Sur

We had an early start into a cold clear dawn, and a long drive to Trelew airport, helped for some by sharing of the maté beloved of many Argentines. At the airport there was a flight delay – the first significant one of the trip, due to industrial problems at the Buenos Aires domestic airport.

As a result we only made it to our hotel in Buenos Aires for about 3.30 in the afternoon, which constrained our times somewhat. After a quick snack we drove round to Costanera Sur, and as the evening approached, finally got some decent birding in.

Out on the waters in the complex of lagoons we got good views of White-tufted and Pied-billed Grebes, a probable Rufescent Tiger-heron; Great, Snowy and Cattle Egrets, Black-crowned Night-heron, and both Fulvous and White-faced Tree-ducks. Amongst the shore-side reeds we found Spot-flanked Gallinule and Wattled Jacana, whilst in the higher vegetation we spotted Guira Cuckoo, Tropical Kingbird and Great Kiskadee, Yellow-billed Cardinal, and several Shiny Cowbirds.

Dinner was in a parilla joint across the road which fed us royally, and we retired in expectation of a full day's birding the next day.

Day 14

Saturday 3rd November

Buenos Aires – Otamendi – Costanera Sur

A slightly later start than normal allowed people to have a leisurely breakfast before our day's birding. From there we headed out to the SE from the city to Otamendi, a nature reserve adjacent to a quaint little railway station, still used, and level crossing gates operated by local lad in response to shouts and hoots.

The main area is dominated by a wonderfully rich wetland of damp pastures, reed beds, shallow pools and pockets of woodland. Having crossed the railway line, we spent the remainder of the morning slowly wandering down the road, and it is a measure of the wealth of birds that we only managed about 1km or less. Almost immediately we had a stunning view of Long-winged Harrier lifting off from near us and leisurely quartering the pastures for prey. Scarlet-headed Blackbirds, Brown and Yellow Marshbirds, Snail Kites, Spectacled Tyrant, Whistling Heron, Southern Screamers, Maguari Stork, Green Kingfisher, some 50 Bare-faced Ibis, Golden-breasted/Green-barred Woodpecker, Sooty Tyrannulet, all followed in succession. An unusual looking tyrant with buff primaries and long legs caused considerable perplexity and thumbing of bird guides, until it was eventually observed in close association with a mate, one of the omnipresent male Spectacled Tyrants, causing us some hilarity.

Esteban had obtained a fine picnic for us from a local shop, of empanadas, drinks and fruit which went down well in the warmth of the midday. Then we returned to Buenos Aires to have a second go at Costanera Sur, and by this time the day had become hot and dusty with a strong off-shore wind blowing. After admiring a large monitor lizard near the entrance, we walked through the reserve, which this time was very busy with weekend joggers, cyclists and sunbathers. However we got good views of a number of species: Glittering-bellied Emerald, Guira Cuckoo, Chalk-browed Mockingbird, many Rufous-bellied Thrush, Masked Yellowthroat, Red-crested Cardinal and Yellow-winged Blackbird.

Dinner was back in the Hotel Castelar, and then we said goodbye to Derek and Prue who left to catch the plane to London.

Day 15

Sunday 4th November

Buenos Aires – El Destino – San Clemente

We said goodbye to Eric and Gail who were staying on Buenos Aires for the delights of Argentina's vibrant football scene, and headed south from the city for the Pampas extension of the holiday which most clients opted for.

Gradually the suburbs died away, and we crossed a flat landscape of farmlands, grading eventually into a more intimate countryside of small fields, hedges and pockets of woodland. In the midst of this is El Destino, an estancia established over a hundred years ago, and now populated by a lush garden, very much in the English style, but sheltered by woodland of high trees, many of them eucalyptus. We hoped to find the rare White-throated Hummingbird here, for which the site is famed, but despite searching we were out of luck, although we did see a number of Glistening-bellied Emeralds, brilliant in the sunshine. There were also large numbers of Rufous-bellied Thrush, and on a bend in the lane out of the estancia we were treated to fine views of two Streaked Flycatchers.

Onwards for a long drive to San Clemente, initially along a dirt road, but then onto a major highway that led across an enormous expanse of flat, open farmlands, dotted with thousands of cattle. It became overcast. As we progressed south, these flatlands became evidently damper and criss-crossed by a number of meandering rivers. It was during this phase that we had our first Roseate Spoonbill sightings, Great Rhea views, lots of Maguari Storks, Southern Screamer, Limpkin and White-tailed Kite.

We arrived in San Clemente early in the evening after the 540 km drive, and settled into Hotel Morales. Then we walked round the corner to a local parilla joint where some serious steak eating ensued.

Day 16

Monday 5th November

San Clemente – Punta Rasa – Estancia Ynglesas

The day dawned overcast but bright, with a ferocious wind coming off the sea – however at least it was mild. We drove the short distance (ca 12 Km from the centre) to Punta Rasa, and battled our way across the beach and stinging sands. The area is low lying, spread with salt marsh and sand dunes, and dotted with brackish pools. On the sands, and on an offshore sandy island, numerous birds were roosting, head to wind. Neotropic Cormorants were there in abundance, and also of greater significance to us, Band-tailed Gulls (Olog's) were along the shore, the majority being juveniles or second winter birds. Several large roosts of terns were out on the sands, and we noted numbers of Snowy-crowned, Common, South American, and Cayenne Terns, together with a single Black Skimmer which eventually braved the wind to skim very gracefully over the more sheltered waters in a creek. American Golden Plovers and Hudsonian Godwit were also present.

After empanadas and pizza in town we travelled out in the opposite direction to Estancia Ynglesas, giving us the opportunity to explore in more detail the bird life of the estancia wetlands. A number of species we had seen already, but these were excellent views, including Roseate Spoonbills, Greater Rheas, Chilean Flamingos, South American Stilts, American Golden Plover, Pectoral and White-rumped Sandpipers, Greater Yellowlegs. Overhead we had a virtually uncountable stream of White-faced Ibis flying across the marshes. During the return journey we encountered Vermillion Flycatcher, gleaming like a traffic light from some bushes.

Finally, near the big roundabout on the edge of town we stopped by a reed bed to obtain views of the secretive Wren-like Rush Bird, with its regular 'tick, tick, tick' calls, often followed up with a sharp 'zzzzzt!'. We only had occasional glimpses, and we failed on the other target species, the Many-coloured Rush-tyrant. Dinner was back in the previous night's restaurant, with yet more challenging steaks – for some.

Day 17

Tuesday 6th November

San Clemente – Punta Rasa - Estancia Palenque

This, our last full day in the field, proved ideal for birding. The wind had dropped, it was sunny and dry without excessive heat, and visibility was excellent, although dotted with literally millions, if not billions, of dragonflies. We returned to Punta Rasa, and worked our way through identifying the flocks of terns still roosting on the sands, and concluded that the variety of moult stages present offered a more complex series of possibilities than immediately appeared, although the majority were likely to be those listed previously, with possibly the addition

of two Arctic Terns. Also, interestingly, a small flock of Monk Parakeets was present, roosting in some marram-type grasses out on the sands, and clearly very much at home here.

Lunch was in the fishing harbour, out in the sun and looking over a muddy creek being foraged by Lesser Yellowlegs and egrets, and dotted with crab tracks in the mud. Also of great interest and delight was the local empanada made from a speciality fish, Lisa, cooked in delicious sauce. It took some time to get going again with all the eating to be done, but eventually we headed out to Estancia Palenque, which is further out from yesterday's foray, but roughly in the same direction.

This enormous wetland, dominated by a wide reed-fringed lake gave us good sightings of many species now quite familiar to us, but also we had particularly good views of Burrowing Owl, Warbling Doradito, better views of Wren-like Rush Bird, and seven Banded Armadillo. Finally, we stopped by yesterday's roundabout reed bed in hope of Many-coloured Rush-tyrant, and this time we struck lucky, with good views of this dramatically coloured little bird working its way through the stems quite near us. A good end to the day...

At this stage we received message from Aerolíneas Argentinas that tomorrow's flight to Madrid and London was at least four hours late, meaning we would miss our connection in Madrid, and at the airline's expense have to stay overnight there before continuing on to London Gatwick. This news did not prevent another onslaught on the restaurant, to the crackling background of local tango recordings.

Day 18

Wednesday 7th November

San Clemente – Buenos Aires

After a brief sortie back to Punta Rasa for a last acquaintance with its birds, we set off on the long drive to Buenos Aires, stopping at a roadside cafe to get lunch. The sky darkened noticeably as we entered the city, and it was warm and humid. Despite the hassle of the rush hour, we arrived at the airport in good time and said a final and grateful farewell to Esteban Daniels who has accompanied and supported our trip with excellent humour, professionalism and birding knowledge all the way from Ushuaia.

We checked in, receiving vouchers for an evening meal because of the delayed flight. By this time a heavy thunderstorm had broken out, sheets of rain tumbling down, and thunder and lightning rattling through the airport terminal.

Day 19

Thursday 8th November

Buenos Aires – Madrid

In the end, we finally took off at 04.15, and shortly after we could see the dim light of Argentina's dawn, away to the east. After a breakfast whose timing felt a bit bizarre, most people on the plane slept.

After what seemed like a very brief period of daylight, we landed in Madrid ca 19.00h, and immediately made arrangements for the next day's onward flight, and for accommodation as promised by the airline. All this was duly provided for, and we obtained a transfer to the plush and enormous Auditorium Hotel near the airport, where we managed to obtain supper before the dining room finally closed.

Day 20

Friday 9th November

Madrid – London Gatwick

A leisurely wait for the afternoon flight allowed a lingering breakfast, and for some a spot of birding, so that Sardinian and fan-tailed warblers were theoretically added to the list for a South American trip! The flight left punctually (Tony and Helen opting for a direct flight to Edinburgh), and the rest of us arrived in Gatwick, happily with all luggage present and correct.

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Species Lists

Birds

Figures in parenthesis indicate number of days species seen

GENTOO PENGUIN (*Pygoscelis papua*) (1) Small breeding colony of 14 with Magellanic Penguins, on island near Harberton, Beagle Channel on 25rd Oct.

MAGELLANIC PENGUIN (*Spheniscus magellanicus*) (3) At least 100 in Beagle Channel on Oct 25th and similar numbers at Punta Tombo on 31st, with fewer on Valdes Peninsula on 31 Oct.

GREATER RHEA (*Rhea americana*) (3) Maximum of 40 on pampas on 6 Nov near Estancian Palentque.

LESSER RHEA (PATAGONIAN RHEA) (*Pterocnemia pennata*) (3) Total of 52 birds, 16 near El Calafate and 36 near Trelew and on Valdes Peninsula.

SPOTTED TINAMOU (NOTHURA) (*Nothura maculosa*) (1) Two at Estancia Palenque on 6 Nov.

ELEGANT CRESTED TINAMOU (*Eudromia elegans*) (4) Total of 57 seen in vicinity of Trelew and on the Valdes Peninsula.

WHITE-TUFTED GREBE (*Podiceps rolland*) (5) Lagoons around El Calafate, Valdes Peninsula and in Buenos Aires area.

SILVERY GREBE (*Podiceps occipitalis*) (4) Maximum of 30 near Moreno Glacier and 20 on Valdes Peninsular.

PIED-BILLED GREBE (*Podilymbus podiceps*) (2) ca 21 seen at Costenera Sur over two days.

GREAT GREBE (*Podiceps major*) (7) Total of 22 birds, seen widely in Trelew, Valdes and Buenos Aires areas.

BLACK-BROWED ALBATROSS (*Diomedea melanophrys*) (2) 30 seen in Beagle Channel on 25 Oct, one the following day.

SOUTHERN GIANT PETREL (*Macronectes giganteus*) (7) Fairly common in Beagle Channel and around Puerto Pyramide. One of San Clemente on 5 Nov.

NORTHERN GIANT PETREL (*Macronectes halli*) (1) Three (in company with Southern Giant Petrels) off Puerto Pyramide on 1 Nov.

CAPE PETREL (*Daption capense*) (1) Two seen of Puerto Pyramide on 31 Oct

SOUTHERN FULMAR (*Fulmarus glacialoides*) (2) Up to 60 in Beagle Channel on Oct 25th.

MAGELLANIC DIVING-PETREL (*Pelecanoides magellani*) (1) 10 in Beagle Channel on Oct 25th.

OLIVACEOUS (NEOTROPIC) CORMORANT (*Phalacrocorax olivaceus*) (11) Mainly in Pampas areas, maximum of 50 in Punta Lara area on 22 Oct.

ROCK CORMORANT (*Phalacrocorax magellanicus*) (5) Fairly common Beagle Channel & Valdes, max 50 on Oct 25th.

IMPERIAL SHAG/KING CORMORANT (*Phalacrocorax atriceps/albiventer*) (4) Abundant in Beagle Channel and on breeding islands, max 500 on Oct 25th.

WHITE-NECKED HERON (*Ardea cocoi*) (2) Max of 7 in the Pampas.

RUFESCENT TIGER-HERON (*Tigrisoma lineatum*) (2) One probable at Costanera Sur, and 6 near San Clemente.

WHISTLING HERON (*Syrigma sibilatrix*) (3) Small numbers near Punta Lara and near san Clemente.

GREAT EGRET (*Egretta alba*) (6) 20 near Punta Lara, and max of 15 in Costanera Sur.

SNOWY EGRET (*Egretta thula*) (6) Max 10 at Costanera Sur and in the Pampas.

CATTLE EGRET (*Bubulcus ibis*) (4) Two at Costanera Sur and common in the Pampas.

STRIATED HERON (*Butorides striatus*) (2) 1 at Costanera Sur and two at El Palenque.

- BLACK-CROWNED NIGHT-HERON** (*Nycticorax nycticorax*) (6) Small numbers near Ushuaia, Valdes, Costanera Sur, and 4 at El Palenque.
- MAGUARI STORK** (*Ciconia maguari*) (5) Common in the Pampas.
- BLACK-FACED IBIS** (*Theristicus melanopis*) (8) Very common Ushuaia and around Calafate, fewer in Valdes.
- BARE-FACED IBIS** (*Phimosus infuscatus*) (2) Up to 2 at Costanera Sur near Punta Lara, and ca 50 at Otamendi.
- WHITE-FACED IBIS** (*Plegadis chibi*) (6) Very common in Pampas, max 300 at El Palenque.
- ROSEATE SPOONBILL** (*Platalea ajaja*) (3) Common in Pampas wetlands, max 12 at El Palenque area.
- CHILEAN FLAMINGO** (*Phoenicopterus chilensis*) (5) Common El Calafate area. Valdes and smaller numbers near San Clemente.
- SOUTHERN SCREAMER** (*Chauna torquata*) (5) Otamendi, and in the Pampas, max 20 at El Palenque.
- FULVOUS TREE-DUCK** (*Dendrocygna bicolor*) (3) Up to 10 at Costanera Sur and 30 in Pampas.
- WHITE-FACED TREE-DUCK** (*Dendrocygna viduata*) (2) Max 6 Costanera Sur.
- COSCOROBA SWAN** (*Coscoroba coscoroba*) (6) Max. 90 near El Calafate, smaller numbers Valdes and Costanera Sur.
- BLACK-NECKEDSWAN** (*Cygnus melancoryphus*) (6) Seen widely in El Calafate area (max 50) and in Costanera Sur.
- KELP GOOSE** (*Chloephaga hybrida*) (6) Pairs widely distributed Ushuaia area/Beagle Channel
- UPLAND GOOSE** (*Chloephaga picta*) (7) Locally common, max of 100 near El Calafate.
- ASHY-HEADED GOOSE** (*Chloephaga poliocephala*) (5) Regular in small numbers, Ushuaia area and El Calafate.
- CRESTED DUCK** (*Lophonetta specularioides*) (9) Locally common in all areas visited in S Patagonia.
- SPECTACLED DUCK** (*Anas specularis*) (1) One in Glaciers National Park on Oct 28th.
- SOUTHERN (CHILOE) WIGEON** (*Anas sibilatrix*) (12) Widely distributed in small numbers in all areas, max 20 near Trelew.
- BROWN (YELLOW-BILLED) PINTAIL** (*Anas georgica*) (12) Locally common, occurring throughout trip, max numbers around San Clemente.
- SPECKLED TEAL** (*Anas flavirostris*) (6) Common and widespread in small numbers around Ushuaia and El Calafate.
- SILVER TEAL** (*Anas versicolor*) (3) Small numbers at Costanera Sur and numerous in Pampas wetlands.
- CINNAMON TEAL** (*Anas cyanoptera*) (2) At least on Lagoons near Gaiman, and 10 near El Palenque.
- RED SHOVELER** (*Anas platalea*) (5) Max of 50 seen in lagoons near Trelew 31 Oct, also in Costanera Sur.
- ROSY-BILLED POCHARD** (*Netta peposaca*) (8) 15 near Trelew, good numbers in Costanera Sur and Pampas.
- BLACK-HEADED DUCK** (*Heteronetta atricapilla*) (1) 4 in Costanera Sur on 2 Nov.
- ANDEAN RUDDY DUCK** (*Oxyura ferruginea*) (3) Fairly common around Calafate, 2 at Costanera Sur.
- LAKE DUCK** (*Oxyura vittata*) (3) 45 on lagoons near Trelew on 31 Oct, also at Costanera Sur.
- TORRENT DUCK** (*Merganetta armata*) (1) Two seen near Buenos Aires on 22 Oct.
- FLIGHTLESS STEAMER-DUCK** (*Tachyeres pteneres*) (4) Numerous around Ushuaia/Beagle Channel
- FLYING STEAMER-DUCK** (*Tachyeres patachonicus*) (4) Small numbers around Ushuaia and El Calafate.
- WHITE-HEADED STEAMER-DUCK** (*Tachyeres leucocephalus*) (1) Five at Punta Tombo on Oct 30.
- ANDEAN CONDOR** (*Vultur gryphus*) (6) Fairly numerous Ushuaia (11 on 24 Oct) and around Calafate.

- TURKEY VULTURE** (*Cathartes aura*) (10) See widely throughout trip, largest numbers on Valdes, max 30 on 31 Oct.
- BLACK VULTURE** (*Coragyps atratus*) (1) 3 seen in Buenos Aires area on 3 Nov.
- BLACK-CHESTED BUZZARD-EAGLE** (*Geranoaetus melanoleucus*) (5) In Ushuaia, El Clafate and Trelew areas, max 7 on 29 Oct.
- WHITE-TAILED KITE** (*Elanus leucurus*) (4) Mainly around San Clemente and pampas area, one suspected at El Calafate on 27 Oct.
- SNAIL KITE** (*Rostrhamus sociabilis*) (5) Numerous in Buenos Aires area and in Pampas to south.
- LONG-WINGED HARRIER** (*Circus buffoni*) (2) Numerous in the Pampas, especially Otamendi and near San Clemente.
- CINEREOUS HARRIER** (*Circus cinereus*) (4) Common around Calafate, 10 on Oct 29th, also around Trelew/Valdes.
- SHARP-SHINNED HAWK** (*Accipiter striatus*) (1) One at Otamendi, 3 Nov.
- ROADSIDE HAWK** (*Buteo magnirostris*) (2) 5 seen in Buenos Aires area on 22 Oct, and 2 en route to San Clemente.
- WHITE TAILED HAWK** (*Buteo albicaudatus*) (1) One seen Estancia Palenque on 6 Nov.
- RED-BACKED HAWK** (*Buteo polyzona*) (1) 3 seen, 2 of which nesting, Valdes Peninsula 1 Nov.
- WHITE-THROATED CARACARA** (*Polyborus albogularis*) (3) Max 10 around Ushuaia & Harberton, one near El Calafate.
- CRESTED CARACARA** (*Polyborus plancus*) (12) Widespread and locally numerous, especially Ushuaia, El Calafate and pampas.
- CHIMANGO CARACARA** (*Milvago chimango*) (16) One of the most widespread birds in Argentina, max of 50 on Valdes, 31 Oct.
- HARRIS'S HAWK** (*Parabuteo unicinctus*) (1) One seen near Punta Lara on 22 Oct.
- PEREGRINE FALCON** (*Falco peregrinus*) (1) Single at Punta Delgado on 24 Oct.
- APLOMADO FALCON** (*Falco femoralis*) (1) Two near Calafate on Oct 28th.
- AMERICAN KESTREL** (*Falco sparverius*) (6) Around El Calafate, Trelew, and pampas, max 6 going to San Clemente.
- LIMPKIN** (*Aramus guarauna*) (2) Six near Punta Lara, and six en route to San Clemente.
- GIANT WOOD-RAIL** (*Aramides ypecaha*) (3) 3 near Punta Lara, and in pampas, incl Estancia Ynglesas.
- PLUMBEOUS RAIL** (*Rallus sanguinolentus*) (1?) Possibly heard at El Palenque on 6 Nov.
- RED-GARTERED COOT** (*Fulica armillata*) (5) In Calafate area, Trelew and Valdes, max 20+ Costanera Sur.
- WHITE-WINGED COOT** (*Fulica leucoptera*) (9) Common and widespread, the most widespread coot.
- RED-FRONTED COOT** (*Fulica rufifrons*) (1) Only recorded at El Palenque.
- COMMON MOORHEN** (*Gallinula chloropus*) (1) near Punta Lara.
- SPOT-FLANKED GALLINULE** (*Porphyriops melanops*) (1) One at Costanera Sur on 2 Nov.
- WATTLED JACANA** (*Jacana jacana*) (2) Up to four at Costanera Sur.
- AMERICAN OYSTERCATCHER** (*Haematopus palliatus*) (5) Up to 12 Valdes Peninsula and 20 at Punta Rasa.
- MAGELLANIC OYSTERCATCHER** (*Haematopus leucopodus*) (6) Locally numerous around Ushuaia and Calafate.
- BLACKISH OYSTERCATCHER** (*Haematopus ater*) (7) Up to 15 daily in Ushuaia area, max 10 in Trelew Valdes area.

- SOUTH AMERICAN STILT** (*Himantopus melanurus*) (5) Max 46 in Trelew Lagoons and in frequent in Pampas.
- SOUTHERN LAPWING** (*Vanellus chilensis*) (16) Seen daily in all areas, locally common.
- GREY PLOVER** (*Pluvialis squatarola*) (1) Two at Punta Rasa on Nov 5th.
- AMERICAN GOLDEN PLOVER** (*Pluvialis dominica*) (3) 3 at El Calafate, several small groups at Punta Rasa and El Palenque.
- TAWNY-THROATED DOTTEREL** (*Oreopholus ruficollis*) (1) 12 on Valdes Peninsular on 1 Nov.
- TWO-BANDED PLOVER** (*Charadrius falklandicus*) (1) About 20 at Laguna Escarchados on Oct 27th.
- MAGELLANIC PLOVER** (*Pluvianellus socialis*) (2) Single at Laguna Escarchados and 4 on shore of lake Argentina, Calafate on Oct 29th.
- WIMBREL** (*Numenius phaeopus*) (1) Single in Ushuaia area.
- GREATER YELLOWLEGS** (*Tringa melanoleuca*) (1) 10 at San Clemente on 5 Nov..
- LESSER YELLOWLEGS** (*Tringa flavipes*) (1) 30 at El Palenque on 6 Nov.
- TURNSTONE** (*Arenaria interpres*) (2) Three on beach at Punta Rasa on both 5 & 6 Nov.
- KNOT** (*Calidris canutus*) (1) Single near San Clemente on Nov 5th.
- BAIRD'S SANDPIPER** (*Calidris bairdii*) (4) Fairly common near Ushuaia and max of 200 in lagoons by El Calafate on 29 Oct.
- WHITE-RUMPED SANDPIPER** (*Calidris fuscicollis*) (4) Fairly common near Ushuaia and in pampas near San Clemente.
- HUDSONIAN GODWIT** (*Limosa haemastica*) (2) up 60 in Punta Rasa and San Clemente.
- COMMON (WILSON'S) SNIPE** (*Gallinago gallinago*) (2) Single near Ushuaia, and 3 at lagoon by El Calafate on 29 Oct.
- WILSON'S PHALAROPE** (*Phalaropus tricolor*) (1) One in pool near Ushuaia airport.
- LEAST SEEDSNIPE** (*Thinocorus rumicivorus*) (3) At least 30 around Lake Escarchardos - Calafate on Oct 27th, plus smaller numbers elsewhere in Calafate area.
- SNOWY SHEATHBILL** (*Chionis alba*) (3) At least 15 on sea lion islands in the Beagle Channel on Oct 25th, and surprisingly a single at Punta Rasa on 5 Nov.
- GREAT SKUA agg.** (*Catharacta sp*) (5) Max 80 around Beagle Channel on 25 Oct, but also seen at Punta Tombo on 30 Oct.
- DOLPHIN GULL** (*Leucophaeus scoresbii*) (4) Numerous Ushuaia and Beagle Channel area.
- KELP GULL** (*Larus dominicanus*) (12) Widespread and locally common max 300 near Ushuaia on 23 Oct.
- OLROG'S/BAND-TAILED GULL** (*Larus belcheri*) (2) 50+ immatures and sub-adults at Punta Rasa on Nov. 5th and 6th.
- BROWN-HOODED GULL** (*Larus maculipennis*) (12) Common and locally numerous, max 50+ at Valdes.
- GREY-HOODED GULL** (*Larus cirrhocephalus*) (3) One at Punta Lara, two at Costanera Sur.
- SNOWY-CROWNED TERN** (*Sterna trudeaui*) (3) Max of 12 at Punta Rasa on 5 Nov.
- SANDWICH TERN** (*Sterna sandvicensis*) (1) One at Punta Rasa on 5 Nov.
- COMMON TERN** (*Sterna hirundo*) (3) Max of about 150 at Punta Rasa on Nov 5th.
- ARCTIC TERN** (*Sterna paradisaea*) 2 at Punta Rasa on 6th Nov.
- SOUTH AMERICAN TERN** (*Sterna hirundinacea*) (6) Fairly numerous in Beagle Channel, max 100+ on 25th Oct, smaller numbers smaller numbers in San Clemente area.

- CAYENNE TERN** (*Sterna eurygnatha*) (3) About 120 off Puerto Pyramide on Nov 1st and 10-15 at Punta Rasa 5th and 6th Nov.
- ROYAL TERN** (*Sterna maxima*) (3) Max of 20 at Puerto Pyramide on 1st Nov .
- BLACK SKIMMER** (*Rhynchops nigra*) (2) Single seen on sandbar at Punta Rasa on 5th and 6th.
- PICAZURU PIGEON** (*Columba picazuro*) (5) Small numbers regularly seen Costanera Sur otherwise common/abundant in Pampas.
- SPOT-WINGED PIGEON** (*Columba maculosa*) (1) Two in Buenos Aires area on 22 Oct.
- ROCK DOVE** (*Columba livia*) (5) Small numbers around estancias, towns and villages, not always noted. Regular in Buenos Aires area.
- EARED DOVE** (*Zenaida auriculata*) (11) Only area where not seen was Ushuaia area, otherwise up to 10 per day.
- PICUI GROUND-DOVE** (*Columbina picui*) (6) Numerous near Trelew, around Buenos Aires, and in pampas around San Clemente.
- BURROWING PARROT** (*Cyanoliseus patagonus*) (1) 30 in cliffs of dry gorge near Puerto Madryn on 31 Oct.
- BLACK-HEADED PARAKEET** (*Nandayus nenday*) (2) Five Costanera Sur on Oct 23rd and Nov 5th.
- AUSTRAL PARAKEET** (*Enicognathus ferrugineus*) (2) Heard around Ushuaia, but not seen until 15 at Glaciers NP on 28th October.
- MONK PARAKEET** (*Myiopsitta monacha*) (6) Common around Buenos Aires, Costanera Sur and very common in Pampas – ca 100 at Otamendi on 3 Nov.
- MITRED PARAKEET** (*Aratinga mitrata*) (1) 8 in Parque Pereyra, Buenos Aires on 22 Oct.
- REDDISH BELLIED PARAKEET** (*Pyrrhura frontalis*) (1) Two seen high in tree in Parque Pereyra on 22 Oct.
- GUIRA CUCKOO** (*Guira guira*) (5) Fairly common at Costanera Sur and in the pampas, max 10 en route to San Clemente.
- BURROWING OWL** (*Athene cunicularia*) (4) Regular in Trelew area, on Valdes, and max of 5 at El Palenque.
- GLITTERING-BELLIED EMERALD** (*Chlorostilbon aureoventris*) (4) Up to 4 in Costanera Sur and very seven at El Destino reserve.
- GREEN KINGFISHER** (*Chloroceryle americana*) (2) Two at Otamendi and one en route to San Clemente.
- FIELD FLICKER** (*Colaptes campestris*) (5) Two in Parque Pereyra, several in San Clemente area.
- CHILEAN FLICKER** (*Colaptes pitius*) (1) Four in Glaciers NP on Oct 28th.
- GOLDEN-BREASTED / GREEN-BARRED WOODPECKER** (*Colaptes melanolaemus*) (5) 2 near Punta Lara, 3 at Otamendi, and elsewhere in pampas.
- MAGELLANIC WOODPECKER** (*Campephilus magellanicus*) (2) Female east of Ushuaia on 26 Oct, 3 males around harbour Glaciales NP.
- NARROW-BILLED WOODCREEPER** (*Lepidocolaptes angustirostris*) (2) Two in Parque Pereyra, two at El Destino on 4 Nov.
- COMMON MINER** (*Geositta cunicularia*) (1) 6 near Calafate on Oct 27th.
- SCALE-THROATED EARTHCREEPER** (*Upucerthia dumetaria*) (3) Pairs seen twice near Calafate on Oct 27th and 29th, and one on Valdes 1st Nov.
- DARK-BELLIED CINCLODES** (*Cinclodes patagonicus*) (4) Up to 10 in Ushuaia area.
- BAR-WINGED CINCLODES** (*Cinclodes fuscus*) (4) Up to 15 in Ushuaia and Tierra Del Fuego NP area.
- RUFOUS HORNERO** (*Furnarius rufus*) (8) Very common Costanera Sur, San Clemente and in the Pampas.

- WHITE-THROATED CACHALOTE** (*Pseudoseisura gutturalis*) (1) One on Valdes Peninsular on 1 Nov.
- CURVE-BILLED REEDHAUNTER** (*Limnornis curvirostris*) (2) Seen twice in Buenos Aires area.
- WREN-LIKE RUSHBIRD** (*Pheocryptes melanops*) (3) Seen Buenos Aires area, and in pampas near San Clemente.
- THORN-TAILED RAYADITO** (*Aphrastura spinicauda*) (4) Small numbers in *Nothofagus* forests at Ushuaia and Tierra Del Fuego, Glaciares NPs.
- LESSER CANASTERO** (*Asthenes pyrrholeuca*) (2) Seen twice near El Calafate.
- PLAIN-BREASTED TIT-SPINETAIL** (*Leptasthenura aegithaloides*) (2) Singles near Punta Tombo on Oct 31st and on Valdes Peninsula on Nov 1st.
- WHITE-THROATED TREERUNNER** (*Pygarrhichas albogularis*) (3) Seen near Glacier Martial, Harberton, and Tierra Del Fuego NP.
- NARROW-BILLED WOODCREEPER** (*Lepidocolaptes angustirostris*) (2) Seen in Buenos Aires area and near San Clemente.
- GREY-BELLIED SHRIKE-TYRANT** (*Agriornis microptera*) (1) Single on Valdes Peninsular on Nov 1st.
- CHOCOLATE-VENTED TYRANT** (*Neoxolmis rufiventris*) (1) One in steppe around Laguna Escarchardos on Oct 27th.
- RUSTY-BACKED MONJITA** (*Neoxolmis rubetra*) (1) Single on Valdes Peninsular on Oct 31st.
- BLACK-CROWNED MONJITA** (*Xolmis coronata*) (1) Single seen Valdes Peninsular on 31 Oct.
- FIRE-EYED DIUCON** (*Xolmis pyrope*) (4) Seen regularly near Ushuaia, max at Glaciares NP, especially at glacier viewpoint.
- DARK-FACED GROUND-TYRANT** (*Muscisaxicola macloviana*) (3) In Tierra Del Fuego NP and below the Martial Glacier, Ushuaia on 26th.
- WHITE-BROWED GROUND-TYRANT** (*Muscisaxicola albilora*) (1) Single en route to Punta Tombo Oct 30th.
- OCHRE-NAPED GROUND-TYRANT** (*Muscisaxicola flavinucha*) (1) Two near Ushuaia on Oct 26th
- CINNAMON-BELLIED GROUND-TYRANT** (*Muscisaxicola capistrata*) (1) Single near Calafate on Oct 29th.
- AUSTRAL (RFOUS-BACKED) NEGRITO** (*Lessonia rufa*) (8) Numerous at Ushuaia, Calafate and Valdes Peninsula.
- SPECTACLED TYRANT** (*Hymenops perspicillata*) (6) Two seen on Valdes, numerous around Otamendi, and throughout San Clemente pampas.
- WHITE-WINGED BLACK-TYRANT** (*Knipolegus aterrimus*) (1) 3 seen in gully near Puerto Madryn.
- SOOTY TYRANNULET** (*Serpophaga nigricans*) (1) Two Otamendi Reserve on Nov 3rd.
- MANY-COLOURED RUSH-TYRANT** (*Tachuris rubrigastra*) (2) Two sightings near San Clemente roundabout, 5 & 6th Nov.
- CATTLE TYRANT** (*Machetornis rixosus*) (3) Seen at Buenos Aires and San Clemente pampas.
- YELLOW-BROWED TYRANT** (*Satrapa icterophrys*) (1) Two seen Costanera Sur.
- GREAT KISKADEE** (*Pitangus sulphuratus*) (8) Fairly common Costanera Sur, Trelew area, Otamendi Reserve and San Clemente pampas.
- TROPICAL KINGBIRD** (*Tyrannus melancholicus*) (5) Seen in Costanera Sur, Otamendi Reserve and fairly numerous in the Pampas.
- FORK-TAILED FLYCATCHER** (*Tyrannus savana*) (5) Single at Otamendi, and very numerous in the Pampas around San Clemente.
- STREAKED FLYCATCHER** (*Myiodynastes maculatus*) (1) Pair in trees by lane at El Destino on 4 Nov.

- VERMILION FLYCATCHER** (*Pyrocephalus rubinus*) (3) Seen daily in pampas near San Clemente.
- WARBLING DORADITO** (*Pseudocolopteryx flaviventris*) (1) Single at Punta Rasa on Nov 6th
- TUFTED TIT-TYRANT** (*Anairetes parulus*) (2) One near Ushuaia, 1 possibly on Valdes Peninsular.
- WHITE-CRESTED ELAENIA** (*Elaenia albiceps*) (2) Six in Tierra del Fuego NP 24 Oct, and six in Glaciales NP 28 Oct.
- RUFOUS-TAILED PLANTCUTTER** (*Phytotoma rara*) (1) Single in Glaciers NP on Oct 28th.
- SOUTHERN MARTIN** (*Progne modestus*) (3) Up to 10 daily Trelew area and Valdes Peninsula.
- GREY-BREASTED MARTIN** (*Progne chalybea*) (2) Up to 10 in San Clemente area.
- BROWN-CHESTED MARTIN** (*Phaeoprogne tapera*) (2) 10 in Otamendi Reserve and in Pampas near San Clemente.
- WHITE-RUMPED SWALLOW** (*Tachycineta leucorrhoa*) (6) Numerous near Punta Lara, at Costanera Sur, Otamendi and in San Clemente Pampas.
- CHILEAN SWALLOW** (*Tachycineta leucopyga*) (9) Numerous between Ushuaia and Trelew and Valdes.
- BLUE&WHITE SWALLOW** (*Notiochelidon cyanoleuca*) (4) Locally numerous at Calafate and Valdes Peninsula.
- BARN SWALLOW** (*Hirundo rustica*) (2) Max of 6 over water and reeds near San Clemente.
- GRASS WREN** (*Cistothorus platensis*) (1) One near Ushuaia on 26 Oct.
- HOUSE WREN** (*Troglodytes aedon*) (15) Almost daily at all locations, max 10 near Trelew.
- CHALK-BROWED MOCKINGBIRD** (*Mimus saturninus*) (6) Frequent in Pampas/Buenos Aires and at Trelew airport.
- PATAGONIAN MOCKINGBIRD** (*Mimus patagonicus*) (5) Small numbers El Calafate, locally numerous in Trelew and Valdes Peninsula (max 15).
- CREAMY-BELLIED THRUSH** (*Turdus amaurochalinus*) (1) 5 in Parque Pereyra on 22 Oct.
- RUFOUS-BELLIED THRUSH** (*Turdus rufiventris*) (5) Numerous Costanera Sur, Otamendi Reserve and in Pampas.
- AUSTRAL THRUSH** (*Turdus falklandii*) (8) Locally numerous Ushuaia, Tierra Del Fuego NP, and Calafate.
- CORRENDERA PIPIT** (*Anthus correndera*) (7) Several around Calafate, Buenos Aires area and max of 10 in San Clemente pampas.
- HELLMAYR'S PIPIT** (*Anthus bellmayri*) (1) Single near Punta Lara on 22 Oct.
- HOUSE SPARROW** (*Passer domesticus*) (16) Common and widespread at all locations.
- TROPICAL PARULA** (*Parula pitaiayumi*) (1) 3 at Parque Pereyra on 22 Oct.
- MASKED YELLOWTHROAT** (*Geothlypis aequinoctialis*) (2) Single at Punta Lara 22 Oct, and 3 at Otamendi Reserve on 3 Nov.
- SAYACA TANAGER** (*Thraupis sayaca*) (1) Two at Otamendi on 3 Nov.
- RED-CRESTED CARDINAL** (*Paroaria coronata*) (4) Two near Trelew, in Costanera Sur, Otamendi Reserve and in the Pampas.
- YELLOW-BILLED CARDINAL** (*Paroaria capitata*) (2) Pair at Costanera Sur on each visit.
- YELLOW-BRIDLED FINCH** (*Melanodera xanthogramma*) (1) 3 below Glacier Martial near Ushuaia on 26 Oct.
- COMMON DIUCA-FINCH** (*Diuca diuca*) (2) One near Calafate on 27 Oct, one on Valdes Peninsular 1 Nov.
- GRASSLAND YELLOW-FINCH** (*Sicalis luteola*) (2) Max 6 in Valdes Peninsular.
- SAFFRON FINCH** (*Sicalis flaveola*) (5) Small numbers Parque Pereyra, Costanera Sur, and max 6 in the Pampas.

- PATAGONIAN YELLOW-FINCH** (*Sicalis lebruni*) (3) Max 8 near Ushuaia, and near Calafate and on Valdes Peninsular.
- GREY-HOODED SIERRA-FINCH** (*Phrygilus gayi*) (1) 7 seen to W of El Calafate on 29 Oct.
- PATAGONIAN SIERRA-FINCH** (*Phrygilus patagonicus*) (4) Max 25 near/in T del F NP, also common near El Calafate.
- MOURNING SIERRA-FINCH** (*Phrygilus fruticeti*) (4) Small numbers near El Calafate, fairly common Trelew - Valdes Peninsula.
- RUFOUS-COLLARED SPARROW** (*Zonotrichia capensis*) (16) Seen everyday, widespread and common in all habitats.
- LONG-TAILED REED-FINCH** (*Donacospiza albifrons*) (1) Single near San Clemente on 6 Nov.
- BLACK & RUFOUS WARBLING-FINCH** (*Poospiza nigrorufa*) (2) Small numbers in Buenos Aires area.
- GREAT PAMPA FINCH** (*Embernagra platensis*) (3) In Buenos Aires area and up to 10 daily in the pampas near San Clemente.
- HOODED SISKIN** (*Carduelis magellanica*) (5) In Buenos Aires area, and in pampas near San Clemente.
- BLACK-CHINNED SISKIN** (*Carduelis barbata*) (5) Several small flocks Ushuaia area, Harberton, and Tierra Del Fuego NP, also around Glaciales NP.
- EUROPEAN GREENFINCH** (*Carduelis chloris*) (1) Single in San Clemente on Nov 6th.
- AUSTRAL BLACKBIRD** (*Curaeus curaens*) (4) Regular in Ushuaia area and max 12 near Calafate.
- EPAULET ORIOLE** (*Icterus cayanensis*) (1) 3 in Otamendi Reserve on 3 Nov.
- SCREAMING COWBIRD** (*Molothrus rufoaxillaris*) (2) Two in Costanera Sur, and 4 four at El Palenque estancia on Nov 6th.
- SHINY COWBIRD** (*Molothrus bonariensis*) (5) 3 near El Calafate, and locally common from Trelew, Buenos Aires, to the Pampas
- BAY-WINGED COWBIRD** (*Molothrus badius*) (3) Common in Buenos Aires area and in pampas near San Clemente.
- SOLITARY CACIQUE** (*Cacicus solitarius*) (1) Single Costanera Sur Nov. 3rd.
- STARLING** (*Sturnus vulgaris*) (3) Common around Costanera Sur (nesting) and Buenos Aires and pampas..
- CHESTNUT-CAPPED BLACKBIRD** (*Agelaius ruficapillus*) (1) Six in Buenos Aires area on 22 Oct.
- YELLOW-WINGED BLACKBIRD** (*Agelaius thilius*) (6) Fairly common in Buenos Aires area incl Punta Rasa, Costanera Sur, Otamendi and in Pampas.
- BROWN&YELLOW MARSHBIRD** (*Pseudoleistes virescens*) (5) Very common Otamendi Reserve, Buenos Aires area and in Pampas
- SCARLET-HEADED BLACKBIRD** (*Ambiramphus holosericeus*) (34) Five Otamendi Reserve and several places in Pampas near San Clemente.
- LONG-TAILED MEADOWLARK** (*Sturnella loyca*) (10) Widespread and locally common from Ushuaia to Valdes Peninsular
- WHITE-BROWED BLACKBIRD** (*Sturnella superciliaris*) (3) Punta Lara, Costanera Sur, and in pampas en route to San Clemente.

Mammals

SOUTHERN RIGHT WHALE (*Eubalaena australis*) Minimum of 11 off Puerto Pirámide, Valdes Peninsula on Oct 31st and min 30 following day, same area and further out.

DOLPHIN sp. Seen from boat in Beagle Channel on 25 Oct.

SOUTH AMERICAN (SOUTHERN) SEA-LION (*Otaria byronia*) At least 57 islands in Beagle Channel on Oct 25th and off Puerto Piramedes, and Punta Delgado, Valdes Peninsula on Nov 1st.

SOUTHERN ELEPHANT SEAL (*Mirounga leonina*) Common around coast of Valdes Peninsula, 100+ at Punta Delgado on 1 Nov.

GUANACO(*Lama guanicoe*) Up to 100 around Calafate, herds of over 50, around Trelew, on Valdes Peninsula.

MARA (*Dolichotis patagonum*) Between Trelew and Punta Tombo and max 25 on Valdes Peninsula.

EUROPEAN HARE (*Lepus c. europaeus*) INTRODUCED Widespread in Calafate and Valdes areas, occasional in pampas near San Clemente.

COYPU (*Myocaster coypus*) Single at Costanera Sur on Nov 3rd and en route to San Clemente.

LEAST CAVY (*Microcavia australis*) 7 near Punta Tombo

PAMPAS CAVY (*Cavia porcellus*) One in the Pampas on Nov 6.

PAMPAS DEER (*Ozotoceros bezoarticus*) A male and two females near San Clemente on Nov 6th.

PATAGONIA GREY FOX (*Dusicyon culpaeus*) Singles near Ushuaia and 1 (or 2?) in steppes to W of El Calafate.

HAIRY ARMADILLO (*Chaetophractus villosus*) One crossing road on Valdes Peninsular on 1 Nov.

SEVEN-BANDED ARMADILLO (*Chaetophractus vellerosus*) Two in El Palenque estancia on 6 Nov.

Reptiles & amphibians

MONITOR LIZARD (*Tupinambis tejuixin*) At Costanera Sur on 3 Nov.

LIZARD Sp. (*Liolaemus* sp) On Valdes Peninsula several (possibly other species) at various locations

CAVE TOAD One in Parque Pereyra on 22 Oct.

TREE FROGS (*unknown spp*) at Costanera Sur on 3 Nov.