

Argentine Patagonia

Naturetrek Tour Report

19 October - 6 November 2008

Report compiled by Bob Brown



Naturetrek Cheriton Mill Cheriton Alresford Hampshire SO24 0NG England

T: +44 (0)1962 733051

F: +44 (0)1962 736426

E: info@naturetrek.co.uk

W: www.naturetrek.co.uk

Tour leaders:	Bob Brown (Naturetrek Leader) Esteban Daniels (Argentina guide) Diego Gallegos (local guide for Buenos Aires area) Alejandro Capelli (local guide for El Calafate area) Ruben Henriquez (local guide for Valdes area)
Participants:	Gaynor Wright Val Cleaver James Humphreys Rhion Pritchard Kathleen Hendry Chris Bond Glynis Robinson Norman Hunter Kevin Button Leo Batten Angela Batten Tom Parr Penny Chambers Rochelle Seifas Steve Blore

Days 0/1

Sunday 19th to Monday 20th October

London (Heathrow) – Madrid – Buenos Aires and Costanera Sur

An uneventful series of flights brought us all together as a complete group in Madrid, and from there onwards to Buenos Aires, arriving in the morning very slightly ahead of schedule – always a pleasant surprise. Diego Gallegos was there to meet us in the newly improved airport, and having obtained cash and other necessities we headed out on the main highway into town. This proved far from simple, as a major traffic jam was caused by a small number of teachers demonstrating for more pay. Our slow progress was put to good use, and we clocked up a number of ‘jam’ species near the highway, including burrowing owl, the startlingly yellow field flicker, southern lapwing, chimango caracara and rufous collared sparrow. These last two species were present throughout the entire trip; indeed there can hardly be a community in South America that doesn’t have the sparrow.

Following check-in at the Hotel 4 Reyes, we headed off to the Costanera Sur with Diego. This is an extensive reserve almost in the centre of town, and well known for its wealth of wildlife though during our visit this was constrained by a shortage of rainfall leaving the lagoons completely dry, so that we didn’t do well on the waterfowl aspects of the place. Nonetheless, in the course of an excellent picnic procured by Diego, we enjoyed views of guira cuckoos, saffron finches, bay winged cowbird, chequered woodpecker and even fine views of ferruginous pygmy owl. Following this, we followed one of the paths alongside the lagoon, and although there were no waterfowl (other than whistling heron) we had good sightings of masked gnatcatcher, white browed blackbird, yellow winged blackbird, American kestrel and giant wood rail.

An enormous monitor-type lizard, the black and white tegu (ca 1m length) examined us suspiciously and then retreated under a hut. Finally, with the heat building to ca 27°C, and the length of the journey catching up on us, we returned to the hotel for rest and a meal, pleased with our introduction to Argentina's wildlife.

Day 2

Tuesday 21st October

Buenos Aires - Ushuaia

We left the hotel to the accompaniment of darkening skies and spattering rain, for our flight to Ushuaia which in the end was delayed for one hour by the weather, as it developed a truly spectacular downpour. We finally got away at 11.30, travelling south down the Patagonian coast with an unscheduled stop in Trelew for refuelling the pilot said...Our approach to Ushuaia was accompanied by wonderful views of the snowy mountains, glaciers, and the dark slopes of southern beech (*Notofagus*) forest, on both the Argentina and Chile shores of the Beagle Channel. Esteban Daniels was there to meet us, after our chaotic retrieval of luggage because the airport is under re-construction. We got installed into the friendly Hostería Recodo, which is mainly constructed from giant trunks of the local southern beech.

From there we went out for a first look at Fuegian bird life, wandering through the bits of forest near the Hostería, and down to the shore by the tumbling Rio Pipo. Visibility was good and there was a wonderful evening light developing with a light breeze. Immediately we were getting excellent views of a pair of crested caracara courting at the top of a tall tree, and as we approached the shore we saw dolphin gulls, flightless steamer-ducks, Magellan and blackish oystercatchers, upland kelp, and ashy headed geese, the perky little Austral negrito, and on the way back stunning views of long tailed meadowlark, their pink-red breasts showing brilliant as the sun went down.

Day 3

Wednesday 22nd October

Ushuaia & Tierra del Fuego National Park

Pre-breakfast wanderings gave some folk fine views of black faced ibis, in one spot being mobbed furiously by a pair of southern lapwings, along with bar-winged cinclodes, and black crowned night heron.

We headed off to spend the entire day in the National Park which is about 30 minutes drive from Ushuaia – the distance is likely to get shorter since the town is expanding in all directions. Once in the park, we had a series of stops and explorations of the local forest and lakes. The first of these was down along the shore looking out to Isla Redondo and Chile's Isla Hoste on the south side of the Beagle Channel. Here we encountered dark bellied cinclodes breeding as ever in the structure of the little quay, black faced ibis, black chinned siskin, Patagonian sierra finch. From there to an area of dense woodland littered with orchids just coming in to leaf (but too early for flowering) and here we had good views of white crested elaenias, thorn-tailed rayadito, and examined good specimens of each of the three species of southern beech, two freshly emerged after the winter, the other evergreen.

Further into the forest, beside a lake not far from the Chilean border, we went hunting for the famous and dramatic Magellanic woodpecker, and Esteban had the forest echoing with their calls from his recorder – but no luck.

However, whilst at times the forest seemed quite empty, at other times it would suddenly become alive with birds as small flocks moved through and during one of these phases we found white throated tree-runner, tufted tit tyrant, and Patagonian sierra finch in some numbers. Across on the far side of the lake a tiny dot appeared in the sky – our first condor, and there were many to be seen later in the trip. We were beginning to transfer our attention from woodpeckers to the compelling topic of lunch when suddenly a dark bird shot out across the ground and through trees where a couple were having a picnic. Esteban played the recording again, and to the couple's bemusement we hurried forward to get excellent views of both male and female Magellanic Woodpecker with its high crest. As often with these birds, they were very confiding, and just watched our antics with scopes and cameras. After that, lunch was very welcome, to the accompaniment of some sixty scavenging chimangos – some debate as to whether this was a blessing or a curse.

The greater part of the afternoon was spent between the lake and the cliffs where Ruta 3 and the Pan-American Highway finishes. This is a good area for birding with sightings of condors (again in the distance), a very fine series of flights by black chested buzzard eagle, and sightings of dark faced ground tyrant. Further on, there is an enormous beaver dam (they were introduced for fur in the early 20th century and the population has exploded since then) and some of us were lucky enough to see one of these secretive animals, whilst others got brief glimpses of the even more discreet Andean tapaculo; this grey-black little bird creeps furtively around tree roots in the muddy patches beside the beaver lake.

Then, back in rain and increasing wind, to the Hostería Recodo, where the multi-tasking maid, receptionist, waitress, bar-person and administrator sprinted around supplying us with food and drink for a very congenial evening.

Day 4

Thursday 23rd October

Ushuaia – Beagle Channel and Harberton

A nifty bit of negotiation resulted in us being able to charter a boat ahead of the main season, with the result that our group were almost the only passengers aboard. The rain of the previous evening had passed through and the weather was fresh, dry and cool and brightly overcast, but throughout the day a series of squalls blew down from the mountains. The boat itself was a large robust catamaran, with excellent viewing from the top deck, from within the cabin, and via a walkway running all the way round the outside.

First visit was to the cluster of small rocky islands guarding the entrance to Ushuaia Bay; these are densely populated with sea lions, including the massive males dominating (or trying to) their harems. Around them were large numbers of imperial shags, snowy sheathbills foraging for unmentionable organic matter, and the increasingly familiar array of squabbling dolphin and kelp gulls, together with Chilean skuas. We got excellent views of all of these as the skipper nudged his boat in through the enormous strands of kelps that festoon the islands in order to get us really close to the colony.

A short way further on we encountered more sea lions, this time accompanied by a small colony of rock cormorants – plus three rufous chested dotterel, and then we sailed on eastwards along the channel, seeing numbers of black browed albatross, southern giant petrel, southern fulmar, and on, past the appropriately named Gable Island, to one of the main penguin colonies in the Beagle Channel.

We were fairly early in the season but already numbers of Magellan penguins were loafing on the shingle shore, and swimming out on the water. Elsewhere on the island, the colony of gentoo penguins appears to be growing – we counted 29 (the 2007 trip counted 14). From there it was a short trip to Harberton, the estancia founded by the Bridges family, led by a pioneering missionary over a hundred years ago. We were entertained by a tour round the old farm, its equipment and buildings, and given a flavour of what life was like in the “Uttermost part of the Earth”.

Our return to Ushuaia took us through fairly squally conditions, piping up to force 10 on occasions, but this did not prevent a close look out for the elusive Magellanic diving petrels, and we managed to get sufficiently good sightings of five of these to be able to discern their characteristic ‘gill’ marking on the neck. In between, we were entertained by numerous further sightings of albatross and giant petrel soaring and sweeping through the squalls, and completely at home in these rigorous conditions. Dinner in the evening was highlighted by a certain lady who shall not be named’s birthday, so cake and a discreet single candle were produced with great ceremony!

Day 5

Friday 24th October

Ushuaia – Glacier Martial - Calafate

The day dawned sullen, very rainy, low clouds obscuring the mountains and a gusty erratic wind. Undeterred, we cleared our things from the *Hostería* and headed off to find some of the higher altitude species to be found around the Glacier Martial, which descends to about 1880ft, reached by a ski slope. As we approached the base of the slope, the rain turned to sleet, and then to snow, and as we approached the key area, overlaid by about a foot of snow, the wind swirled around us producing blizzard conditions for a brief while. However, when these cleared gaps in the clouds revealed brilliant blue skies, and the mountains showed in all their glory. Because of the conditions we only had limited birding, but managed to see the striking little yellow bridled finches dodging the gale, and foraging in the snow around rock outcrops.

It was with some reluctance, despite the conditions, that we left this magnificent place, because of the need to visit the other side of town and its ornithologically famous dump as well as get lunch before going to the airport. Frustratingly, as we were crossing town, we learned that a strike in Buenos Aires was going to delay our flight to El Calafate and we could have stayed up there longer. Our visit to the dump produced the only sightings we had of white throated caracaras (10) on the trip, but there were excellent views, together with chimango and crested caracaras, in abundance. As a bonus we also had very good views of a roosting and rather scruffy immature black chested buzzard eagle, right beside the road. Unfortunately the adjacent river which is often good for black crowned night heron and ringed kingfisher has become polluted and murky from nearby building works and none were seen.

After a lunch consisting of mountains of empanadas (a sort of Austral Cornish pasty) we headed for the lagoons near the airport, and here re-enforced our knowledge of the wildfowl, getting views of ashy headed goose, kelp and upland geese, crested duck, Chiloe wigeon, yellow billed pintail and red shoveller, along with both flightless and flying steamer ducks. Then we heard our plane was due in so it was time to go for the airport, and after more fine views of the Beagle Channel, an hour in the air, we found ourselves descending over the wide open steppe grasslands of Santa Cruz province and the brilliant turquoise Lago Argentino – beyond in the distance, the magnificent peaks of the southern Andes. Speedy passage through arrivals and check in at the Hotel Ariel in El Calafate, was followed by a good evening dinner.

Day 6

Saturday 25th October

El Calafate and Glaciares National Park

Surprisingly for this part of Patagonia, we did not emerge to a howling gale, but a gentle breeze, clear and sunny, and happily it remained this way throughout the day. We left at 8am, accompanied by Alejandro Capelli who knows the entire area extremely well, particularly its glacial history. We headed west from El Calafate, along the north shore of Lago Argentino, seeing icebergs in the distance, calved from the glaciers we would be seeing. This road runs through steppe grasslands backed by hills grading into mountains as we got closer to the Andes. A range of typical species of the area appeared, and for the first time we started getting really good views of condors, rising and circling on updrafts from the slopes. Other species included black faced ibis, Chilean flamingo along the lake shores, southern lapwing in large numbers, lesser canastero, rufous tailed plantcutter, correndera pipit, mourning sierra finch and long tailed meadowlark.

Entering the National Park, pausing for a 'comfort break' we saw austral parakeets for the first time, later to be followed by a spectacular fly past when we stopped for a picnic. A range of species turned up during various forays along the road – black chinned siskin, austral thrush and austral blackbird, house wren, and over many of the open spaces, Chilean swallow. In addition to the parakeets, our picnic spot provided fine views of the Perito Moreno glacier, and immediately below us in a small lakeside pool, a pair of spectacled duck.

Visiting the glacier viewing site itself, a series of newly constructed walkways offer eagle's eye views of the glacier which is one of the few that are not retreating in the region. A constant thunderous rumble of glacier portions collapsing into the lake, and it was clear from the deep blue clefts that some really large icebergs were soon to calve, but we also turned our attentions to the many fire-eyed diucons and Patagonian sierra finches around us – both species are very tame here.

Through all of our searches however, we had failed to find two species characteristic of the area – austral pigmy owl and Chilean flicker. In a final attempt to get these we pulled off on to a track to the right of the road leaving the park, and began a search. In the end we saw both species – the flicker more distantly and obscurely because it is very cryptic in colouration, but the pigmy owl was far more accommodating and posed for those with long lenses on various dead trees close by. Satisfied with this, we headed back to El Calafate, cruising along the straight highway that stretches to the open horizon, offering views of the mountain Cerro Castillo, so named by Charles Darwin because of the castle-like topmost rocks of its peak.

Day 7

Sunday 26th October

El Calafate – Laguna Escarchados

The day dawned bright and fresh, but the wind had picked up to its more usual levels, bringing quite a chill to the air. Breakfast was accompanied by the news that spectacled tyrant was seen in reeds near the hotel – an amazingly southern site for the species, and towards the end of our stay in El Calafate we all had a chance to look at this striking bird. We headed out of town eastwards along Route 40, initially travelling over wide open steppe grasslands, and then gradually climbing a long, high escarpment towards the lake. In the former area we began to get the first really good views of guanaco and lesser rhea, both very characteristic species of this habitat and in some numbers a short way from the road.

Other species included condors rising over the hills, caracaras (of course), common miner, small billed elaenias, common diuca finch, and grey hooded sierra finch, which is a tough species to distinguish from the Patagonian sierra finch, but lacks the russet back, has more white on the rump, and is usually seen in more open terrain.

Lunch was off the highway near the lake, everyone sheltering in, behind, or in ditches near the bus, to get out of that stinging wind. Thus, suitably wrapped we set off along the broad dirt road that heads roughly NW off the highway, looking for post No 94, and the cairn that Esteban and I erected last year to mark the turn off to the left. Almost immediately after this we began to get good sightings – least seedsnipe with their wonderful gliding display flight, the spectacular chocolate vented tyrant positively posing on heathy tussocks, and everywhere the little austral negritos dodging the bushes in the wind. Down at the lake, which actually is now two lakes separated by a long shingle spit because water levels have dropped so much we found the place full of waterfowl. Out on the water there were large numbers of Chilean flamingo, and Coscoroba swans, crested duck, Chiloe wigeon, red shoveller, speckled teal and flying steamer duck along with a spectacular view of at least 200 Wilson's phalaropes. Along the extensive shores we saw large numbers of both Baird's and white-rumped sandpiper, two Magellanic plover frantically treading circles to catch invertebrates, and about ten two-banded plovers.

Despite the wind, we all enjoyed the walk back through this open terrain, once more getting fine views of the chocolate vented tyrant, and on the way back stopped to examine large specimens of the extraordinary fire-tongue bush with brilliant red-orange florets. Sadly there was evidence that some specimens had been removed, presumably to enhance someone's garden.

Day 8

Monday 27th October

El Calafate – Estancia 9 Julio – Trelew

We left the hotel, weather being overcast, dry and perhaps not quite so windy, and once again headed westwards, this time on the 'upper' of the two roads. There were numerous stops along the way for different birds, this time giving really good views of grey-hooded sierra finches, scale throated earth creeper, Patagonian mockingbird, Magellanic oystercatcher, and once again numerous condors. We also had sightings of Aplomado falcon and American kestrel.

An important location to visit was one of a cluster of small shallow lakes not far from the Estancia 9 Julio, and we walked across about half a mile of grassland to reach this. It was well stocked with waterfowl, and we saw Coscoroba and black-necked swans, about a hundred crested duck, cinnamon teal, white tufted and silvery grebes, many black faced ibis, red gartered and white winged coot.

Returning to town, after lunch in a fine parilla joint, and explorations for ice creams and other treats, we headed to the shore of Bahía Redonda which is now fringed by an extravagant dual carriageway development (well, the President does live here!). Despite these disruptions we had views of very large numbers of Chilean flamingo, cinnamon teal, and further round the shore to Laguna Nimez several cinereous harriers displaying over their nests in the reeds, and on the outer shore a single Magellanic plover foraging for invertebrates.

With little time left we headed for the airport, got checked in, and then to the mystification of other travellers in the departure lounge, got together and totted up the species list.

Our flight was uneventful, and in Trelew we met Ruben Henriquez for the short drive to the small farm where we were booked. As it couldn't accommodate all of us, two of our party opted to stay in Ty Gwyn in nearby Gaiman, but being a traditionally Welsh guest house their accommodation was generous, as indeed the arrangements for the rest of us were in Posada los Mimbres, which also had connections with the old country.

Day 9

Tuesday 28th October

Gaiman – Punta Tombo

A bright and clear dawn greeted us, with fair weather clouds and a light breeze; conditions that remained with us during the whole day. We headed out to the appropriately named 'Ornithologists' lagoon which lies outside Trelew. Initial appearances of the place are not encouraging because it is a widespread and abused dump. However, in the centre lie a series of gravel pits and water channels, and these have been colonised by extensive marginal vegetation with a wealth of bird life.

We first explored one of the water channels, and were almost immediately rewarded by the distinctive calls of the wren-like rush bird which we also saw briefly, and then several excellent sightings of the brilliantly coloured many-coloured rush tyrants, which were foraging amongst the reeds very near us – it was a real treat to get such close, and lingering, views of this secretive little bird. Finally, (and all this took place within a few yards) some of us got glimpses of a plumbeous rail quietly stepping amongst the reeds. Further on, looking across the main lagoon with its scatter of wetland, weeds, reeds, willows and dead trees, we saw many large flocks – some 70 Chilean flamingos, Coscoroba swans, blacked neck swans, Chiloe wigeon, red shoveller, lesser and greater yellowlegs, S American stilt and Hudsonian godwit. On reflection we could have spent longer here, but the lure of Punta Tombo awaited us, so we headed off.

The drive to our next location was a classic Patagonian drive, straight across wide open pampas scrublands, with relatively few stops for elegant crested tinamous and distant views of rusty backed monjita. At Punta Tombo we walk out to the headland with its characteristic red porphyritic rocks, seeing Magellanic penguins on every side, under the bushes and in burrows – the majority were in a fairly early stage of the nesting process, though we saw some with eggs. Patagonian mockingbirds darted around the bushes, and as we got to the point, despite the shimmer of heat haze, we finally got good views of the white-headed, or Chubut, steamer ducks which genuinely have paler upper parts than their more southern counterparts. Also offshore were southern giant petrels, rock cormorants, and a solitary great grebe fishing off the rocks.

Eventually we headed back towards Gaiman, cutting on to a dirt road veering westwards and thereby avoiding Trelew. This took us direct to the Chubut valley, which eventually we saw as a green streak across the browns of the pampas. As we descended towards the river we passed several trees completely laden with raucous flocks of burrowing parrot – at one time the air seemed almost full of these brilliantly coloured birds. Onwards into Gaiman, regarded by many as a centre of the Patagonian Welsh culture, some of us ventured into the little museum with its poignant mementos of the austere life these colonists experienced.

Finally, an excellent dinner in Posada los Mimbres, consisting of what can only be described as a seriously gigantic Argentinean stir-fry, with most of a cow in it.

Day 10

Wednesday 29th October

Gaiman – Puerto Pyramide

We had an early start, and having collected packed lunches, headed out for the long journey to the Valdes Peninsular (all such journeys are long in this part of the world!). Some two hours later we had checked in to the National Park, and stopped at the now expanded and improved visitor centre with its displays helping identification of the peninsula's more frequent wildlife.

By lunchtime we had arrived in Puerto Pyramide and a Motel of the same name which is perched with whale-scanning vistas of the bay. Once checked in and enjoyed lunches, we learned from Ruben that it was too breezy for us to be venturing out to look for whales, and indeed a choppy swell was sweeping into the bay. We could however, actually see several spouting whales from the viewpoint of our lunch packs! Instead we explored the scrubby little hills around the Motel, which although rich in a range of flowers and cacti, proved relatively sparsely populated with birds, except mourning sierra finches which were everywhere.

Still no boats running after this despite the turn of the tide, so we headed across the peninsula to the north side, Bahía Fracasso. Along the way we found the curious maras (Patagonian hares), and tinamous. In the bay itself, sheltered from the breeze on this side, several southern right whales were breaching and spouting, whilst along the shore we renewed our acquaintance with two banded plovers on the edge of the salt marsh – some of these had red and yellow darvik bands on.

On the way back to Puerto Pyramide, Ruben got a phone call that the seas were subsiding and that we should join the boat pronto...and so we did. By 19.00 we were heading out, and almost immediately got fine views of female southern right whales and their calves (which the mothers always kept protected from the boat) and further out a mating group of several males cavorting with a large female with white blotches on her belly – the competition for her attentions made for a wonderful spectacle, with the males weaving and twisting in the water, the characteristic 'V' plumes of spray drifting towards us, and their tail flukes gliding up above the water and then sweeping below. At one point a whale emerged so close beside the boat we could have touched it, and indeed some could smell its (not very nice) breath. The whole trip concluded with one of the most beautiful sunsets many of us have seen – the sight of tail flukes emerging in this golden light was truly memorable.

Day 11

Thursday 30th October

We drove to the north point of the Valdes Peninsular, to Punta Norte, made famous by the orca invasions of sea lion beaches. In the area we visited we had excellent views of elephant seals basking on the long shingle beach, including a number of massive males whose scars, fresh and red, were evidence of battles for sex and supremacy. The wildlife wardens of the area told us that several orcas had passed this way in the previous couple of days, and we might well see them to the south. We duly headed that way, along a coast with a massive shingle spit enclosing a lagoon some 30km long, but the locations we visited had no orcas present.

From there it was a relatively short journey to Punta Delgado which is a key location for both seabirds and elephant seals. The latter have declined much in number – apparently there are concerns that too much visitor pressure is the problem.

Nonetheless there were further good views of these magnificent animals, together with large numbers of southern giant petrels, neotropic cormorants, American and blackish oystercatchers, Chilean skuas, Cayenne and royal terns, and in the scrub around us, mourning sierra finches. All this was accompanied by an asado lunch of lamb and empanada, which was very welcome after all the travelling.

Travelling back to Puerto Pyrámide, we encountered a range of classic Valdes residents: southern martin, blue and white and Chilean swallows, Patagonian mockingbird, burrowing owl, common miner, plain-mantled tit-spinetail, turkey vulture, lesser rhea, elegant crested tinamous, numerous herds of guanaco working through the scrublands, maras, and a number of European hare (introduced, and now widespread throughout Argentina).

Day 12

Friday 31st October

Puerto Pyrámide – Puerto Madryn – Buenos Aires

The day dawned calm and sunny, and stayed that way throughout our travels, although latter it became rather hot and humid. We left at 09.00 and headed straight for Puerto Madryn, stopping only to look at Guanacos and at a gorge near the road that has a mass of burrows into its sandy cliffs where a lively and vocal colony of burrowing parrots is established. An additional bonus was seeing male and female white-winged black tyrants flying around the scrub on the gentler slopes of the gorge, whilst a number of monarch butterflies flitted around the bushes. Also in the area we saw common diuca finch, carbonated sierra finch and grey-bellied shrike-tyrant.

An excellent lunch in the 'Marisko' restaurant beside Puerto Madryn's sunny shoreline, was accompanied by flights of Chilean flamingos moving along the coast. From there we headed to Punta Loma where there is a very large colony of sea lions, with rock cormorants on the upper cliffs very near the view point, and scuttling around the colony some 12 snowy sheathbill – this is a fairly northerly location for this species. Nearby there was a large colony of South American terns and we saw hundreds of these birds pass by the headland on the way out to hunt and return from fishing trips.

We still had some time before our flight to Buenos Aires, so as we approached Trelew we decided to re-visit the Ornithologists' lagoon, and got good views of silvery grebe, snowy and cattle egrets, large numbers of white faced ibis, white winged coot and large numbers of Baird's and white rumped sandpipers. From there to the airport, where after check-in, we tucked into a picnic provided by Marcella of the Posada los Mimbres and completed the species list.

The flight was delayed as is so often the case with local airlines, and whilst the flight was uneventful, we arrived very late in Buenos Aires (given the shift forward of one hour), and a delay in getting our bus, we didn't arrive in our hotel until about 03.00.

Day 13

Saturday 1st November

Buenos Aires – London / Extension Buenos Aires – San Clemente de Tuyu

Nobody was greatly excited by the idea of an early start, and by agreement everyone met for breakfast about nine, after which there were farewells as some of the party stayed on in Buenos Aires for a spot of city-birding

before flying home, whilst the remainder eventually left for the pampas country a day's drive to the south-east of the big city.

The initial part of this journey is fairly dull, but after a lunch at a roadside café where parilla was on offer, both the scenery and ourselves perked up somewhat. The pampas landscape became dominated by wide open estancias, shallow lagoons and wetlands, and almost immediately we began to see greater rheas, maguari storks, roseate spoonbill, snail kite scarlet headed blackbirds (on a roundabout!), and southern screamer. In a lagoon near Km 169 we found good views of white tufted and pied billed grebe, three species of egret, and silver teal, and large numbers of neotropical cormorants. By this time our driver (a tango fan) was getting into his stride and we concluded the last part of the journey in true Porteño style with him drumming tango rhythms on the steering wheel in time with his CD. It was a long drive after a long previous day, so having arrived in San Clemente de Tuyu ('Tuyu' is an old Guarani word for mud – after the nearby inlet), we soon repaired to the local restaurant Lo Towil, where a warm welcome awaited us from staff who looked after us last year.

Day 14

Sunday 2nd November

San Clemente – Punta Rasa – General Lavalle

A warm, dry day, with enough breeze to clear the air and no more. We headed out to Punta Rasa which unfortunately was rather full of Sunday trippers and beach buggies. However, the site is good in most conditions, and at an early stage we were finding lots of snowy crowned terns, white necked heron, American oystercatcher, South American stilt, American golden plover, a single pectoral sandpiper, and two freckle breasted thorn birds. A constant presence was a flock of monk parakeets which seem to exploit the feeding amongst the dune vegetation.

After a lunch in town, we decided to pick up on a discovery by fellow birders at our hotel, and headed out to the small and tidy little community of General Lavalle just to the north of San Clemente. There are a series of small pools and wet grasslands just outside of town, and we were delighted to succeed in getting the reported spot-flanked gallinule there together with wattled jacana and a range of other birds including rosy billed pochard, silver teal and red shoveller, and whistling heron, concluding finally with two bare-faced ibis. A small spot well worth remembering, and in the town itself the road ends at the harbour where we had views of grey hooded gull and cattle tyrant feeding in the local picnic area.

Returning to San C, we stopped at the road intersection where a cluster of reed beds have developed in drainage ditches and got views of many coloured rush-tyrant, wren like rush-bird, sooty tyrannulet, and (with some difficulty but great satisfaction) a stripe-backed bittern skulking in the vegetation. Dodging the traffic to the middle roundabout, we got excellent views of scarlet headed blackbird and great pampa finch.

Day 15

Monday 3rd November

San Clemente – Estancia los Ynglesas – Punta Rasa

We made an early foray into a pocket of urban woodland a few blocks from our hotel, near a rather horrible ACA camping and barbeque site – despite this we got quite good views of golden breasted woodpecker, cattle tyrant, and glittering bellied emerald posing in the dead twigs above us.

But from there we headed out to the Estancia Ynglesas, on the way stopping to look at a white-tailed kite, and a range of wetland birds plus quite frequent grassland yellow-finches. Following slowly along the track through the estancia we got good views of vermilion flycatcher, a cluster of field flickers (including at least two nesting pairs) and good views of southern screamers, greater rheas, roseate spoonbills and once again, the versatile monk parakeets.

Lunch was back in San C, down at the harbour where we enjoyed the local speciality of fish empanadas (and others), the former being made of a local delicacy fish called Lisa. There were distractions; a black skimmer flew past in the distance and there were large numbers of lesser yellowlegs, and just a few greater. From there we returned to have a second go at Punta Rasa, and were rewarded by excellent views of large numbers of black skimmers roosting on the mud by a lagoon on the seaward side of the track. We spent some time watching these graceful birds, actually doing what their name suggests, and many of their flights over the surface were within good camera shot for those so-minded. In addition to numbers of snowy crowned terns amongst them, one individual possibly in a transition or wintering plumage puzzled us, and after further reference it appears most likely to have been a black tern in moulting plumage. More towards the main point, we had good views of an Olrog's gull whilst there may have many more of these on an offshore sandbar – we could see them roosting there but too far out for detailed views. A flock of terns along the shore, mostly snowy crowned, also had a sandwich tern amongst them, but by this time the sky was darkening dramatically and a wind was picking up.

We returned to our bus, and as we left the reserve the first drops of rain spattered onto the windscreen, and we just made it back into the hotel as an almighty thunderstorm broke upon the little town and cleared the streets of people and dust.

Day 16

Tuesday 4th November

San Clemente – Parque Vivero – Estancia el Palenque

This was our last full day of exploring, and we started off well, going to an extensive park woodland in the town, which proved much more productive than the previous one. Both glittering bellied emerald and the elusive and quite rare white throated hummingbird were present in some numbers and we got good views. Roadside and sharp shinned hawks also gave good views along with a more distant Aplomado falcon high up on a dead tree. We also saw tropical parula, and perhaps most intriguingly of all, a fleeting glimpse of a grey necked wood rail (almost certainly) dodging behind a fallen tree.

From here, equipped with picnic, we headed out to Estancia el Palenque, as the day began to get significantly hotter. Heading into the estancia, we encountered several golden breasted woodpeckers in and around the trees and small fields near the entrance, and then tucked the minibus into the shade of some trees for the picnic. This offered a number of pleasant distractions in the form of several vermilion flycatchers (which tend to like woodland-edge areas), as well as the abundant fork tailed flycatchers, burrowing owl, great kiskadee and tropical kingbird – all classic species for this habitat. Further in to the estancia, we searched out the pockets of wetland, but unfortunately this proved somewhat frustrating – as in Buenos Aires, this area has suffered from a shortage of rainfall, and as a result most of the wetland wildlife had move away. As we returned to the main highway, we stopped to witness a true gaucho scene – bullocks being rounded up and corralled, the farm hands galloping around whipping the cattle into the enclosure, where the males had 'little operations'.

Hastening away, we stopped where a highway bridge crossed a small river about 7km out of town, and in addition to the other birds of Reedbeds, we got good views of plumbeous rail and long tailed reed finch, which was some compensation for the drought in the estancia.

Day 17

Wednesday 5th November

San Clemente – Punta Lara - Buenos Aires

We cleared out of the hotel in timely fashion, and set off on the long drive northwards, with relatively few stops. This proved a bit wearisome, but it paid off because we managed to get some extra time outside the Buenos Aires area, and look at a couple of interesting sites before making our way to the airport.

So, the majority of the journey completed, we turned off to the east of the main highway to Punta Lara. This is a small seaside resort, where we were able to get some lunch and cold drinks. From there, to the north of the town, there is a substantial wetland reserve centred round a canalised river, and associated wet forest scrub and ditches. By working our way slowly along this, and despite the drying up of the river, we got views of striated heron, black crowned night heron, white necked heron, great black hawk, masked yellow-throat. Further along, on the other side of the main highway we searched unsuccessfully for Hellmayr's pipit (the field has become overgrown) but managed to get good views of white browed blackbird and as a final flourish, a roosting white tailed kite perched conspicuously on a telegraph pole.

Finally, we had to return to Buenos Aires, working our way through the somewhat run-down suburbs to the airport, where we parted with Esteban who had contributed so much to the success of our trip.

Day 18

Thursday 6th November

Buenos Aires – Madrid - London

Take off from Buenos Aires was only slightly late, so the flight managed to catch up with its schedule, and passage through Madrid was straight forward with only about an hour to wait in the impressive new terminal. So we arrived in London pretty much on time, wished each other well, and headed for our homes, full of the memories of Patagonia. We saw some 115 bird species, a good range of mammals, including a memorable fifty southern right whales on just one boat trip, a wide range of insects and wildflowers, all set in some of the most dramatic scenery to be found in the world.

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Species Lists

Birds (Figures in parenthesis indicate number of days species was seen)

GENTOO PENGUIN (*Pygoscelis papua*) (1) Small breeding colony of at least 29, with Magellanic Penguins, on island near Harberton, Beagle Channel on 23rd Oct.

MAGELLANIC PENGUIN (*Spheniscus magellanicus*) (3+) At least 100 in Beagle Channel on Oct 23rd, 500 at Punta Tombo on 28, with fewer on Valdes Peninsula next few days.

GREATER RHEA(*Rhea americana*) (5) Maximum of 20 on pampas on 5 Nov near Estancian Palentque.

LESSER RHEA (PATAGONIAN RHEA) (*Pterocnemia pennata*) (2) Maximum of 20 on way to Punta Delgado on Valdes Peninsula.

SPOTTED TINAMOU (NOTHURA) (*Nothura maculosa*) (2) Two near General Lavalle on 3 Nov.

DARWIN'S TINAMOU (*Nothura darwini*) (1) One seen at Puerto Pirámide on 29 October

ELEGANT CRESTED TINAMOU (*Eudromia elegans*) (3) Maximum of 16 seen in/around Punta Delgado on 30 October, Valdes Peninsula.

WHITE-TUFTED GREBE (*Podiceps rolland*) (6) Lagoons around El Calafate, Valdes Peninsula and in Buenos Aires area, max 12 en route to San Clemente.

SILVERY GREBE (*Podiceps occipitalis*) (3) Maximum of 22 at Ornithologist's lagoon near Puerto Madryn.

PIED-BILLED GREBE (*Podilymbus podiceps*) (2) 3 seen near San Clemente.

GREAT GREBE (*Podiceps major*) (8) Max of 5 seen in Tierra del Fuego NP, also Valdes and San Clemente areas.

BLACK-BROWED ALBATROSS (*Diomedea melanophrys*) (2) 50 seen in Beagle Channel on 23 Oct.

SOUTHERN GIANT PETREL (*Macronectes giganteus*) (9) Fairly common in Beagle Channel, maximum of 100 at Punta Delgado. One at Punta Rasa on 3 Nov.

SOUTHERN FULMAR (*Fulmarus glacialisoides*) (1) 6 in Beagle Channel on Oct 23rd.

SOOTY SHEARWATER (*Puffinus griseus*) (1) 4 seen in Beagle Channel on 23 October

MAGELLANIC DIVING-PETREL (*Pelecanoides magellani*) (1) 5 in Beagle Channel on Oct 23rd.

OLIVACEOUS (NEOTROPIC) CORMORANT (*Phalacrocorax olivaceus*) (11) Mainly in Pampas areas, maximum of 200 at Punta Rasa.

ROCK CORMORANT (*Phalacrocorax magellanicus*) (4) Fairly common Beagle Channel & Valdes, max 100 at Punta Loma on on Oct 31.

IMPERIAL SHAG/KING CORMORANT (*Phalacrocorax atriceps/albiventer*) (5) Abundant in Beagle Channel (ca 1000) and on breeding islands, max 500 on Oct 25th.

WHITE-NECKED HERON (*Ardea cocoi*) (4) Small numbers seen throughout the Pampas.

STRIPE BACKED BITTERN (*Ixobrychus involucris*) One seen near San Clemente roundabout on 2 Nov.

WHISTLING HERON (*Syrigma sibilatrix*) (5) Small numbers near Punta Lara and near San Clemente, max 20 in Costanera Sur.

GREAT EGRET (*Egretta alba*) (6) Seen very regularly in pampas wetlands around San Clemente.

SNOWY EGRET (*Egretta thula*) (8) Seen occasionally in Valdes area, and regularly around San Clemente

CATTLE EGRET (*Bubulcus ibis*) (6) Max was over 100 birds on each of two days in and near Estancia el Palenque.

STRIATED HERON (*Butorides striatus*) (1) 1 seen at Punta Lara, in tree over river.

BLACK-CROWNED NIGHT-HERON (*Nycticorax nycticorax*) (3) Small numbers near Ushuaia and at Punta Lara.

MAGUARI STORK (*Ciconia maguari*) (5) Common in the Pampas, maximum of at least 100 seen whilst driving S to San Clemente.

BLACK-FACED IBIS (*Theristicus melanopsis*) (7) Very common Ushuaia and around Calafate, with max of 25 seen around lake near Estancia 9 Julio, near Glaciares National Park.

- BARE-FACED IBIS** (*Phimosus infuscatus*) (2) Only two seen, these around pool near General Lavalle.
- WHITE-FACED IBIS** (*Plegadis chihi*) (8) Very common on Valdes Peninsular, and Pampas, max 500 en route to Pta Tombo, and around Pta Rasa.
- ROSEATE SPOONBILL** (*Platalea ajaja*) (5) Common in Pampas wetlands, max 40 around Pta Rasa and Gen Lavalle on 2 Nov.
- CHILEAN FLAMINGO** (*Phoenicopterus chilensis*) (10) Common El Calafate area and around San Clemente pampas; 200 seen near Estancia 9 Julio and Puerto Madryn respectively.
- SOUTHERN SCREAMER** (*Chauna torquata*) (5) Regularly seen in the pampas, notably on Estancias Ynglesas and El Palenque.
- COSCOROBA SWAN** (*Coscoroba coscoroba*) (10) Max. 75 near El Calafate, smaller but regular numbers Valdes and pampas.
- BLACK-NECKED SWAN** (*Cygnus melancoryphus*) (4) Seen widely in El Calafate area (max 100) and off Puerto Madryn.
- KELP GOOSE** (*Chloephaga hybrida*) (4) Pairs widely distributed Ushuaia area/Beagle Channel
- UPLAND GOOSE** (*Chloephaga picta*) (8) Common on Tierra del Fuego and around el Calafate, max of 250 seen to W of town.
- ASHY-HEADED GOOSE** (*Chloephaga poliocephala*) (6) Regular in small numbers, Ushuaia area and El Calafate, max of 20 seen along shores of Beagle Channel.
- CRESTED DUCK** (*Lophonetta specularioides*) (8) Locally common in all areas visited in S Patagonia, 100 seen at/near Estancia 9 Julio.
- SPECTACLED DUCK** (*Anas specularis*) (2) Two in Glaciers National Park on Oct 25th on small lake near glacier.
- SOUTHERN (CHILOE) WIGEON** (*Anas sibilatrix*) (11) Widely distributed in small numbers in all areas, max 56 at Lago Escarchados.
- WHITE CHEEKED PINTAIL** (*Anas bahamensis*) (1) Two seen on Ornithologist's lagoon, 28 October.
- BROWN (YELLOW-BILLED) PINTAIL** (*Anas georgica*) (12) Locally common, occurring throughout trip, max numbers near Estancia 9 Julio (60 - El Calafate) and Ornithologist's lagoon nr Trelew (50).
- SPECKLED TEAL** (*Anas flavirostris*) (5) Common and widespread in small numbers around Ushuaia and El Calafate, plus two seen en route to San Clemente.
- SILVER TEAL** (*Anas versicolor*) (4) Small numbers at Ornithologist's lagoon, max of 15 in Pampas wetlands.
- CINNAMON TEAL** (*Anas cyanoptera*) (3) Seen on lakes to W of El Calafate and one near San Clemente.
- RED SHOVELER** (*Anas platalea*) (7) Max of 500 seen in lagoons near Trelew 31 Oct, also in Calafate area.
- ROSY-BILLED POCHARD** (*Netta peposaca*) (5) Relatively common near Trelew, max of 12 in Ornithologist's lagoon and in Pampas.
- BLACK-HEADED DUCK** (*Heteronetta atricapilla*) (2) Max 10 en route to El Calafate.
- ANDEAN RUDDY DUCK** (*Oxyura ferruginea*) (3) Fairly common around Calafate, 20 nr Estancia 9 Julio, also at Ornithologist's lagoon, Trelew.
- LAKE DUCK** (*Oxyura vittata*) (1) 35 on lake nr Estancia 9 Julio, El Calafate on 27 October.
- FLIGHTLESS STEAMER DUCK** (*Tachyeres pteneres*) (4) Numerous around Ushuaia/Beagle Channel
- FLYING STEAMER-DUCK** (*Tachyeres patachonicus*) (3) Small numbers on lakes around Ushuaia and El Calafate.
- WHITE-HEADED STEAMER-DUCK** (*Tachyeres leucocephalus*) (1) Six at Punta Tombo on Oct 28.
- ANDEAN CONDOR** (*Vultur gryphus*) (5) Fairly numerous Ushuaia and around Calafate, max 30 to E of el Calafate on 26 October.
- TURKEY VULTURE** (*Cathartes aura*) (7) Seen widely throughout trip, largest numbers on Valdes, max 30 on both 29 & 30 Oct.

- GREAT BLACK HAWK** (*Buteogallus urubitinga*) (1) One in reserve wetlands at Punta Lara on 5 Nov.
- HARRIS'S (BAY WINGED) HAWK** (*Parabuteo unicinctus*) (1) One seen Costanera Sur on 20 Oct.
- BLACK-CHESTED BUZZARD-EAGLE** (*Geranoaetus melanoleucus*) (4) In Ushuaia and El Calafate areas in small numbers.
- WHITE-TAILED KITE** (*Elanus leucurus*) (2) One seen near San Clemente, two near Punta Lara.
- SNAIL KITE** (*Rostrhamus sociabilis*) (4) Numerous in Buenos Aires area, notably Costanera Sur, and in Pampas to south.
- LONG-WINGED HARRIER** (*Circus buffoni*) (6) Numerous in the Pampas (max 15) near San Clemente, and en route to Buenos Aires.
- CINEREOUS HARRIER** (*Circus cinereus*) (3) Common around Calafate, especially at nesting site beside Laguna Nimez.
- SHARP-SHINNED HAWK** (*Accipiter striatus*) (1) One in Parque Vivero, San Clemente, 4 Nov.
- ROADSIDE HAWK** (*Buteo magnirostris*) (3) One in Costanera Sur in Buenos Aires, 2 en route to San Clemente, 2 in Parque Vivero.
- WHITE-THROATED CARACARA** (*Polyborus albogularis*) (1) Ca 10 seen on municipal dump in Ushuaia, 24 Oct.
- CRESTED CARACARA** (*Polyborus plancus*) (15) Widespread and locally numerous, especially Ushuaia, El Calafate and pampas, max ca 30 seen on several dates, several locations.
- CHIMANGO CARACARA** (*Milvago chimango*) (17) One of the most widespread birds in Argentina, seen every day, max of 100+ in/around Tierra del Fuego NP, 22 Oct.
- APLOMADO FALCON** (*Falco femoralis*) (3) One at each of Glaciares NP, road to W of El Calafate, El Palenque.
- AMERICAN KESTREL** (*Falco sparverius*) (6) Seen in Buenos Aires, Tierra del Fuego, Valdes area, max 7 along roads to W of El Calafate.
- GREY NECKED WOOD RAIL** (*Aramides ypecaha*) One possibly glimpsed in Parque Vivero, San Clemente on 4 Nov.
- GIANT WOOD-RAIL** (*Aramides ypecaha*) (1) One in Costanera Sur on 20 October.
- PLUMBEOUS RAIL** (*Rallus sanguinolentus*) (2) One at Ornithologist's lagoon, one outside San Clemente.
- RED-GARTERED COOT** (*Fulica armillata*) (2) In Calafate area, max 8 en route to San Clemente.
- WHITE-WINGED COOT** (*Fulica leucoptera*) (7) Common and widespread, the most widespread coot, max 60 at Ornithologist's lagoon.
- RED-FRONTED COOT** (*Fulica rufifrons*) (1) Only recorded at El Palenque - six.
- SPOT-FLANKED GALLINULE** (*Porphyriops melanops*) (1) Three in wetland outside Gen Lavalle on 2 Nov.
- WATTLED JACANA** (*Jacana jacana*) (1) Four in wetland outside Gen Lavalle on 2 Nov.
- AMERICAN OYSTERCATCHER** (*Haematopus palliatus*) (6) Punta Tombo, max 10 at Punta Delgado, and at Punta Rasa.
- MAGELLANIC OYSTERCATCHER** (*Haematopus leucopodus*) (7) Locally numerous around Ushuaia and Calafate, max 12 en route to Harberton.
- BLACKISH OYSTERCATCHER** (*Haematopus ater*) (5) Daily sightings in Ushuaia area (max 30 en route to Harberton), and at Puntas Tombo & Delgado.
- SOUTH AMERICAN STILT** (*Himantopus melanurus*) (7) Ornithologist's lagoon, and frequent in Pampas, max being en route returning to Buenos Aires (100+).
- SOUTHERN LAPWING** (*Vanellus chilensis*) (16) Seen almost daily in all areas, locally common, max 130 to W of El Calafate.
- AMERICAN GOLDEN PLOVER** (*Pluvialis dominica*) (4) 5 at Lago Escarchados, several small groups at Punta Rasa.
- TAWNY-THROATED DOTTEREL** (*Orepholus ruficollis*) (1) 1 at Lago Escarchados.

- TWO-BANDED PLOVER** (*Charadrius falklandicus*) (2) 10 at Laguna Escarchados on Oct 26th, 9 on N shore of Valdes Peninsular, 29 Oct.
- RUFIOUS CHESTED DOTTEREL** (*Zonibyx modestus*) 3 on rocks in Beagle Channel, 23 Oct.
- MAGELLANIC PLOVER** (*Pluvianellus socialis*) (2) Two at Laguna Escarchados and one shore of Lago Argentino, Calafate.
- GREATER YELLOWLEGS** (*Tringa melanoleuca*) (4) One at Ornithologist's lagoon, max of 8 in pool en route to San Clemente on 1 Nov.
- LESSER YELLOWLEGS** (*Tringa flavipes*) (7) Six at Ornithologist's lagoon nr Trelew, and max of 400 at Punta Rasa on 2 Nov.
- KNOT** (*Caladris canutus*) (1) Single at Pta Rasa on Nov 3rd.
- PECTORAL SANDPIPER** (*Calidris melanotos*) (2) One seen on both 2 & 3 Nov, near San Clemente
- BAIRD'S SANDPIPER** (*Calidris bairdii*) (9) Seen regularly in most key areas, max in San Clemente area, not counted but exceeding 200.
- WHITE-RUMPED SANDPIPER** (*Calidris fuscicollis*) (7) Seen in Calafate area, and in pampas near San Clemente, max 75 counted at Lago Escarchados on 26 Nov.
- HUDSONIAN GODWIT** (*Limosa haemastica*) (4) Small numbers in Ornithologist's lagoon and in pampas, max 20 at Punta Rasa on 3 Nov.
- COMMON (WILSON'S) SNIPE**(*Gallinago gallinago*) (1) Two at El Calafate on 26 Oct.
- WILSON'S PHALAROPE** (*Phalaropus tricolor*) (4) 200 at Lago Escarchados on 26 Oct, seen occasionally in pampas.
- LEAST SEEDSNIPE** (*Thinocorus rumicivorus*) (1) At least 7 around Lago Escarchados - Calafate on Oct 26th.
- SNOWY SHEATHBILL** (*Chionis alba*) (2) At least 30 on sea lion islands in the Beagle Channel on Oct 23th, and 12 at Punta Loma on 31 Oct.
- GREAT SKUA agg.** (*Catharacta sp*) (5) Max 60 around Beagle Channel on 23 Oct, but also seen at Punta Tombo and Valdes Peninsular.
- DOLPHIN GULL** (*Leucophaeus scoresbii*) (5) Numerous Ushuaia and Beagle Channel area, two near Pto Madryn.
- KELP GULL** (*Larus dominicanus*) (14) Widespread and locally common max 5000+ at Ushuaia municipal dump on 24 Oct.
- OLROG'S/BAND-TAILED GULL** (*Larus belcheri*) (1) One sub adult at Punta Rasa 3 Nov, but many more likely on offshore sand spit in same area.
- BROWN-HOODED GULL** (*Larus maculipennis*) (11) Common and locally numerous, max 100 in Puerto Madryn/Trelew area on 31 Oct.
- GREY-HOODED GULL** (*Larus cirrhocephalus*) (1) 3 at Gen Lavalle / San Clemente area.
- SNOWY-CROWNED TERN** (*Sterna trudeaui*) (5) Max of 200 at Punta Rasa on 3 Nov.
- SANDWICH TERN** (*Sterna sandvicensis*) (2) Two at Punta Loma on 31 Oct, one at Punta Rasa on 3 Nov.
- COMMON TERN** (*Sterna hirundo*) (1) 15 at Punta Rasa on Nov 3rd.
- BLACK TERN** (*Chlidonias niger*) (1) Seen with skimmer flock at Punta Rasa on 3 Nov.
- SOUTH AMERICAN TERN** (*Sterna hirundinacea*) (6) Fairly numerous in Beagle Channel, max 900+ at Punta Loma near Madryn, with colony (unseen) further along coast.
- CAYENNE TERN** (*Sterna eurygnatha*) (3) Two at Punta Delgado & Punta Rasa respectively, one at Punta Loma.
- ROYAL TERN** (*Sterna maxima*) (2) Two at Punta Delgado, one en route to San Clemente.
- BLACK SKIMMER** (*Rhynchops nigra*) (2) Max of 400 roosting at Punta Rasa on 3 Nov.
- PICAZURU PIGEON** (*Columba picazuro*) (6) Regularly seen in pampas/Buenos Aires areas, max 70 in San Clemente area on 3 Nov.
- SPOT-WINGED PIGEON** (*Columba maculosa*) (5) Regular in pampas, especially in / around San Clemente.

- ROCK DOVE** (*Columba livia*) (4) Small numbers around estancias, towns and villages, not always noted. Regular in Buenos Aires area.
- EARED DOVE** (*Zenaida auriculata*) (12) Only area where not seen was Ushuaia area, max 50 in / around San Clemente.
- PICUI GROUND-DOVE** (*Columbina picui*) (9) Numerous near Trelew with max of 100, around Buenos Aires, and in pampas around San Clemente.
- BURROWING PARROT** (*Cyanoliseus patagonus*) (3) Nesting in cliffs of dry gorge near Puerto Madryn, max was ca 200 in tree near Gaiman on 28 Oct.
- BLACK-HEADED PARAKEET** (*Nandayas nenday*) (2) 20 in Costanera Sur on Oct 20.
- AUSTRAL PARAKEET** (*Enicognathus ferrugineus*) (1) Glimpsed near visitor centre at Glaciares NP, flock of ca 20 seen later near glacier.
- MONK PARAKEET** (*Myiopsitta monacha*) (6) Common around Buenos Aires, Costanera Sur and very common in Pampas – ca 300 at Estancia Ynglesas.
- GUIRA CUCKOO** (*Guira guira*) (7) Fairly common at Costanera Sur and in the pampas, max 12 in / around San Clemente.
- BURROWING OWL** (*Athene cunicularia*) (5) Regular in Trelew area, on Valdes, and max of 14 off highway to Buenos Aires on 5 Nov.
- FERRUGINOUS PYGMY OWL** (*Glaucidium brazilianum*) (1) One in Costanera Sur on 20 Oct.
- AUSTRAL PYGMY OWL** (*Glaucidium nanum*) (1) One in dead tree in Glaciares NP on 25 Oct.
- GLITTERING-BELLIED EMERALD** (*Chlorostilbon aureoventris*) (3) One in Costanera Sur and max 4 in urban woodland, San Clemente.
- WHITE-THROATED HUMMINGBIRD** (*Leucochloris albicollis*) (1) Three in Parque Vivero, San Clemente on Nov 4th.
- FIELD FLICKER** (*Colaptes campestris*) (5) Along airport road Buenos Aires, in pampas, max of 8 in around Estancia Ynglesas, almost a 'colony'.
- CHILEAN FLICKER** (*Colaptes pitius*) (1) Two in Glaciers NP on Oct 25th.
- GOLDEN-BREASTED / GREEN-BARRED WOODPECKER** (*Colaptes melanolaemus*) (3) Several in pampas, max 6 in San Clemente and El Palenque.
- CHEQUERED WOODPECKER** (*Picoides mixtus*) (1) Three in Costanera Sur Oct 20.
- MAGELLANIC WOODPECKER** (*Campephilus magellanicus*) (1) Male & female in Tierra del Fuego NP on 22 Oct.
- COMMON MINER** (*Geositta cunicularia*) (3) 4 on steppe grasslands near Calafate on Oct 26th.
- SCALE-THROATED EARTHCREEPER** (*Upucerthia dumetaria*) (1) 3 in scrub to W of Calafate on Oct 27th.
- DARK-BELLIED CINCLODES** (*Cinclodes patagonicus*) (3) Max 10 in Ushuaia / Harberton areas.
- BAR-WINGED CINCLODES** (*Cinclodes fuscus*) (2) In Ushuaia and Tierra Del Fuego NP area, max 4.
- RUFIOUS HORNERO** (*Furnarius rufus*) (8) Very common Costanera Sur, San Clemente and in the Pampas.
- WREN-LIKE RUSHBIRD** (*Phleocryptes melanops*) (3) Seen in reed beds in Ornithologist's lagoon, pampas wetlands near San Clemente.
- THORN-TAILED RAYADITO** (*Aphrastura spinicauda*) (2) Small numbers in *Nothofagus* forests at Ushuaia and Tierra Del Fuego NP.
- LESSER CANASTERO** (*Asthenes pyrrholeuca*) (2) Seen near El Calafate and near Pto Pyramide.
- PATAGONIAN CANASTERO** (*Asthenes patagonica*) (1) Two seen very briefly en route to Punta Tombo on Oct 31st.
- TUFTED TIT-SPINETAIL** (*Leptasthenura platensis*) (3) Small numbers seen regularly in Ushuaia area, max 4 in Tierra del Fuego NP.

- PLAIN-MANTLED TIT-SPINETAIL** (*Leptasthenura aegithaloides*) (3) Small numbers near Punta Tombo and on Valdes Peninsula.
- SULPHUR-BEARDED SPINETAIL** (*Cranioleuca sulphurifera*) (1) Possibly one seen, but not confirmed, near San Clemente on 2 Nov.
- FRECKLE-BREASTED THORNBIRD** (*Phacellodomus striaticollis*) (1) Two near San Clemente on Nov 2.
- WHITE-THROATED TREERUNNER** (*Pygarrhichas albogularis*) (1) Two in Tierra Del Fuego NP.
- ANDEAN TAPACULO** (*Scytalopus magellanicus*) (1) Single seen beside beaver lake in Tierra del Fuego NP on 22 Oct.
- GREY-BELLIED SHRIKE-TYRANT** (*Agriornis microptera*) (1) Single on Valdes Peninsular on Oct 21st.
- CHOCOLATE-VENTED TYRANT** (*Neoxolmis rufiventris*) (1) 4 in steppe grasslands around Lago Escarchados on Oct 26th.
- RUSTY-BACKED MONJITA** (*Neoxolmis rubetra*) (2) Two en route to Pta Tombo, one on return on Valdes on 31 Oct..
- FIRE-EYED DIUCON** (*Xolmis pyrope*) (2) Seen regularly in Tierra del Fuego NP, and max 10, many very tame, at Perito Moreno glacier viewpoint, 25 Oct.
- DARK-FACED GROUND-TYRANT** (*Muscisaxicola macloviana*) (1) Three in Tierra Del Fuego NP Oct 22nd.
- AUSTRAL (RUFIOUS-BACKED) NEGRITO** (*Lessonia rufa*) (8) Numerous at Ushuaia, Calafate and Valdes Peninsula, max 100 to W of Calafate on 27 Oct.
- SPECTACLED TYRANT** (*Hymenops perspicillata*) (10) One in Calafate on 26 Oct (unusually far south), common in Ornithologist's lagoon, and abundant in the pampas around San Clemente.
- WHITE-WINGED BLACK-TYRANT** (*Knipolegus aterrimus*) (1) 2 seen in gully near Puerto Madryn.
- SOOTY TYRANNULET** (*Serpophaga nigricans*) (1) One in reed bed near roundabout at San Clemente on 2 Nov.
- MANY-COLOURED RUSH-TYRANT** (*Tachuris rubrigastra*) (3) Four on canal at Ornithologist's lagoon, and several sightings near San Clemente roundabout, 2 & 3 Nov.
- CATTLE TYRANT** (*Machetornis rixosus*) (4) Regular in San Clemente, at Gen Lavalle, and in nearby pampas.
- YELLOW-BROWED TYRANT** (*Satrapa icterophrys*) (1) Two seen Costanera Sur on 20 Oct.
- GREAT KISKADEE** (*Pitangus sulphuratus*) (8) Common Costanera Sur, Trelew area, and San Clemente pampas, where max 20 occurred on 2 Nov.
- CROWNED SLATY FLYCATCHER** (*Empidonomus aurantioatrocristatus*) (1) One seen in woodland edge habitat on Estancia El Palenque.
- TROPICAL KINGBIRD** (*Tyrannus melancholicus*) (3) One in Costanera Sur, and fairly numerous in the Pampas, max 7 en route to San Clemente.
- FORK-TAILED FLYCATCHER** (*Tyrannus savana*) (9) Very numerous around Buenos Aires and in the Pampas around San Clemente – max ca 50.
- VERMILION FLYCATCHER** (*Pyrocephalus rubinus*) (3) Seen almost daily in pampas near San Clemente.
- WARBLING DORADITO** (*Pseudocolopterix flaviventris*) (1) Single at Punta Rasa on Nov 1.
- TUFTED TIT-TYRANT** (*Anairetes parulus*) (2) Two near Punta Tombo, one on Valdes Peninsular.
- WHITE-CRESTED ELAENIA** (*Elaenia albiceps*) (4) One in Tierra del Fuego NP 22 Oct, and daily, max 5, around El Calafate.
- RUFIOUS-TAILED PLANTCUTTER** (*Phytotoma rara*) (1) 3 in Glaciers NP on Oct 25th.
- SOUTHERN MARTIN** (*Progne modestus*) (4) Up to 50 daily Trelew area and Valdes Peninsula.
- GREY-BREASTED MARTIN** (*Progne chalybea*) (7) Up to 20 in San Clemente area, and seen widely around Buenos Aires.
- BROWN-CHESTED MARTIN** (*Phaeoprogne tapera*) (5) Max 20 in Pampas near San Clemente, also in Buenos Aires.
- WHITE-RUMPED SWALLOW** (*Tachycineta leucorrhoa*) (6) Max 30 over wetlands in San Clemente pampas.

- CHILEAN SWALLOW** (*Tachycineta leucopyga*) (9) Numerous between Ushuaia and Trelew and Valdes, with max 100+ over lakes nr El Calafate.
- BLUE&WHITE SWALLOW** (*Notiochelidon cyanoleuca*) (6) Present in small numbers at Calafate and Valdes Peninsula.
- BARN SWALLOW** (*Hirundo rustica*) (6) Max of 30 seen over water and reeds near San Clemente.
- HOUSE WREN** (*Troglodytes aedon*) (14) Almost daily at all major locations, max 20 in Costanera Sur.
- CHALK-BROWED MOCKINGBIRD** (*Mimus saturninus*) (5) Frequent in Pampas/Buenos Aires, max 15 en route to Buenos Aires on 5 Nov.
- PATAGONIAN MOCKINGBIRD** (*Mimus patagonicus*) (6) Small numbers El Calafate, locally numerous in Trelew and Valdes Peninsula (max 20).
- CREAMY-BELLIED THRUSH** (*Turdus amaurochalinus*) (1) One in urban woodland in San Clemente on 3 Nov.
- RUFOUS-BELLIED THRUSH** (*Turdus rufiventris*) (4) In Costanera Sur, and in Pampas, Max 10 in Parque Vivero in San Clemente.
- AUSTRAL THRUSH** (*Turdus falklandii*) (8) Locally numerous Ushuaia, Tierra Del Fuego NP, and Calafate, max 12 in / around Tierra del Fuego NP.
- CORRENDERA PIPIT** (*Anthus correndera*) (7) Several around Calafate, Valdes area and max of 20 in San Clemente pampas.
- MASKED GNAT CATCHER** (*Polioptila dumicola*) (1) One near entrance to Costanera Sur on 20 Oct.
- HOUSE SPARROW** (*Passer domesticus*) (17) Common and widespread at all locations.
- TROPICAL PARULA** (*Parula pitiayumi*) (1) One near San Clemente on 4 Nov.
- MASKED YELLOWTHROAT** (*Geothlypis aequinoctialis*) (1) Single at Punta Lara reserve on 25 Nov Oct.
- RED-CRESTED CARDINAL** (*Paroaria coronata*) (5) 6 in Costanera Sur, and also seen near Trelew, and the pampas.
- YELLOW-BRIDLED FINCH** (*Melanodera xanthogramma*) (1) 2 below Glacier Martial near Ushuaia on 24 Oct.
- COMMON DIUCA-FINCH** (*Diuca diuca*) (2) One near Calafate on 26 Oct, two on Valdes Peninsular 31 Oct.
- GRASSLAND YELLOW-FINCH** (*Sicalis luteola*) (4) Often seen in pampas near San Clemente, max 40 on each of two days on Estancias.
- SAFFRON FINCH** (*Sicalis flaveola*) (2) Two in Costanera Sur, and two outskirts of Buenos Aires on 5 Nov.
- PATAGONIAN YELLOW-FINCH** (*Sicalis lebruni*) (1) Six seen en route to Pto Madryn on 31 Oct.
- GREY-HOODED SIERRA-FINCH** (*Phrygilus gayi*) (2) Two pairs seen in open scrub lands near El Calafate on 26 & 27 Oct.
- PATAGONIAN SIERRA-FINCH** (*Phrygilus patagonicus*) (4) Max 10 near Perito Moreno glacier, and frequent in T del F NP and Ushuaia areas.
- MOURNING SIERRA-FINCH** (*Phrygilus fruticeti*) (3) One seen near El Calafate, fairly common in Valdes Peninsula, notably Puerto Pirámide and Punta Delgado.
- CARBONATED SIERRA-FINCH** (*Phrygilus carbonarius*) (1) Two near 'burrowing parrot gorge' on Valdes Peninsular.
- RUFOUS-COLLARED SPARROW** (*Zonotrichia capensis*) (17) Seen everyday, widespread and common in all habitats and communities.
- LONG-TAILED REED-FINCH** (*Donacospiza albifrons*) (1) Single near San Clemente on 4 Nov.
- BLACK & RUFOUS WARBLING-FINCH** (*Poospiza nigrorufa*) (1) One in Costanera Sur.
- GREAT PAMPA FINCH** (*Embernagra platensis*) (3) Up to 10 daily in the pampas near San Clemente.
- HOODED SISKIN** (*Carduelis magellanica*) (4) In Buenos Aires area, and in pampas near San Clemente where max of 12 occurred.
- BLACK-CHINNED SISKIN** (*Carduelis barbata*) (8) Several small flocks Ushuaia area, Harberton (max 30), and Tierra Del Fuego NP, also around Glaciales NP, and near Puerto Pirámide .

EUROPEAN GREENFINCH (*Carduelis chloris*) (1) Two in San Clemente on Nov 4th.

AUSTRAL BLACKBIRD (*Curaeus curaeus*) (4) 12 near Calafate, Glaciares NP on 25 Oct.

SCREAMING COWBIRD (*Molothrus rufoaxillaris*) (1) Five near Ornithologist's lagoon on 28 Oct.

SHINY COWBIRD (*Molothrus bonariensis*) (8) Locally common from Trelew to Valdes, very common Buenos Aires to the pampas

BAY-WINGED COWBIRD (*Molothrus badius*) (2) Common in Buenos Aires (15 in Costanera Sur) area and one in pampas near San Clemente.

STARLING (*Sturnus vulgaris*) (3) Common around Buenos Aires, smaller numbers around Valdes and pampas.

YELLOW-WINGED BLACKBIRD (*Agelaius thilius*) (7) Fairly common in Buenos Aires area incl Punta Rasa, Costanera Sur and in Pampas – max 30 in El Palenque.

BROWN&YELLOW MARSHBIRD (*Pseudoleistes virescens*) (5) Very common in pampas, ca 50 on several days

SCARLET-HEADED BLACKBIRD (*Ambiramphus holosericeus*) (5) Several places in Pampas near San Clemente.

LONG-TAILED MEADOWLARK (*Sturnella loyca*) (8) Widespread and locally common from Ushuaia to Valdes Peninsular

WHITE-BROWED BLACKBIRD (*Sturnella superciliaris*) (3) Punta Lara and Costanera Sur in open, scrubby fields.

Mammals

SOUTHERN RIGHT WHALE (*Eubalaena australis*) Minimum of 50 off Puerto Pyrámide, Valdes Peninsula on Oct 29 and a number seen in N bay of Valdes as well.

SOUTH AMERICAN (SOUTHERN) SEA-LION (*Otaria byronia*) At least 200+ on islands in Beagle Channel on Oct 23, also off Puerto Piramedes, and Punta Delgado, Valdes Peninsula and max 450 at Punta Loma.

SOUTHERN ELEPHANT SEAL (*Mirounga leonina*) Common around coast of Valdes Peninsula, 200+ seen variously at Punta Norte to Punta Delgado on 30 Oct.

GUANACO(*Lama guanicoe*) Up to 50 on various days around Calafate, around Trelew and Valdes Peninsula, max of ca 200.

MARA (*Dolichotis patagonum*) Between Trelew, Puerto Pyrámide and Punta Delgado on 29-30 Oct.

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

CAVY spp seen near Punta Tombo

PAMPAS CAVY (*Cavia porcellus*) One in the Pampas on Nov 2.

PAMPAS DEER (*Ozotoceros bezoarticus*) 3 possibly seen near San Clemente on Nov 1st.

PATAGONIA GREY FOX (*Dusicyon culpaeus*) One en route to San Clemente on Nov 1st.

HAIRY ARMADILLO (*Chaetophractus villosus*) One by road on Valdes Peninsular on 30 Oct.

SEVEN-BANDED ARMADILLO (*Chaetophractus vellerosus*) Two at Punta Tombo on 28 Oct.

LITTLE GRISON (a mustelid) (*Galictis cuja*) 3 seen near San Clemente on 2 Nov.

BEAVER In Tierra del Fuego NP on 22 Oct.

Reptiles & amphibians

BLACK & WHITE TEGU (*Tupinambis tejuixin*) At Costanera Sur on 20 Oct.

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

Insects

MONARCH BUTTERFLIES in Buenos Aires area, on pampas and on Valdes Peninsular

WHITE PIERID slightly similar to European marbled white, in Tierra del Fuego and Glaciares NPs.

SKIPPER SP in Parque Vivero, San Clemente on 4 Nov.

AMERICAN PAINTED LADY One in pampas 1 Nov, at least 10 in Punta Lara reserve on 5 Nov.