

Trip report – Argentina.

Buenos Aires & Iguazu.

10.10.22 – 20.10.22

Overview: I was booked on a trip to Antarctica, leaving from Buenos Aires and had chosen to spend some time in Argentina prior to embarkation and following after. I intend to present trip reports for both the Antarctic expedition and the Ushuaia stage under separate listings. For this report – I spent one and a half days in Buenos Aires (BA) before flying to Iguazu where I spent 8 days birding, then returned to BA for two days before embarking on the ship. This was to be my first visit to South America. I did not hire guides at any point, but did encounter casual assistance on my return to BA, as shall be described. I generally prefer to bird independently as I feel it gives me more ‘ownership’ and makes the experience more personal. I believe in quality, rather than quantity so please do not expect great lists of species or insights into rarity locations. I did my best, alone for the most part, and enjoyed every minute of it! I am under no illusion – if I had hired a guide or guides I would have at least doubled my lifer count. As it was I listed, entirely coincidentally (!), 67 new species at each location.

Dates: I arrived in BA late on October 10th 2022 and flew to Iguazu on 12th, I flew back to BA on 19th, spent the 20th and the morning of the 21st birding, before starting the Antarctic trip on the afternoon of the 20th.

Accommodation & Transport: Normally I would arrange all the details myself – or in conjunction with a travel companion. I had originally planned to spend a month in Argentina before the Antarctic trip and a month in Chile afterwards, however, at the time of booking (June 2022) the hire car price was prohibitive and as the main purpose of the trip was the Antarctic leg, I decided to reduce my time before and after and agreed for Craig of **Chimu Adventures** to arrange the details for everything, based on my specific requests. I had been waiting 3 years to go to the Antarctic and did not want to stuff it up in any way.

This was a move way outside my comfort zone – i.e. allowing someone else control over flights, transport, accommodation etc and I did find it stressful leading up to departure. However, Craig did a brilliant job and everything went to plan – so much so I am considering a similar arrangement in future. But it was weird, not having control.....

In BA I stayed at the Argenta Tower Hotel which was quite a central location – and, most importantly perhaps, within 30 minutes walk of **Costanera Sur**, the main birding area in the city area. A three star hotel it served my purpose very well. After all my needs are pretty minimal – a lock on the door and a relatively clean room with a bed and that’s all I need. The Argenta Tower more than satisfied that expectation.

In Iguazu I stayed at La Cantera Jungle Lodge. This turned out perfectly in that the Lodge was situated in the natural reserve of Selva Iryapu, a rainforest jungle. This reserve lies outside Puerto Iguazu and there were a number of lodges, hotels etc situated throughout via a network of narrow bitumen roads. It had the advantage of my being able to bird immediately outside my door, but the disadvantage of being away from alternative venues for eating or tourist type activities without using paid transport, such as taxis. As a result I simply had the ‘all included breakfast’ every morning and ate dinner in the late afternoon at the restaurant in the lodge. No worries – being alone, food is fuel, not an event.

As part of my Argentinian ‘experience’ Craig had booked me on a half-day city tour of BA and two separate trips to see the Iguazu Falls – one to the Brazilian and the second the Argentinian side of the falls. These are things that, once again, I never do, but I thought, might as well – first time in South America, don’t speak Spanish, what the hell, let’s do it! I probably would not have missed the tour of BA, but if you go to Iguazu you go to see the falls. I could have organised the Argentinian side easily enough myself, the Brazilian side would have been much more complicated, especially as it was only half a day – it was probably easiest to go with a tour to be honest.

I was also picked up at the airports and taken to my hotels and back again in all cases. Once again, a ‘luxury’ I don’t normally indulge, but..... it was a lot less stressful and time saving and, kind of nice! It also reduced the possibility of something going wrong before Antarctica, an occurrence I

had every interest in avoiding! Obviously it cost extra – the details of which I never enquired, but was happy with the final quote from Craig for the flights (both International and Domestic) the accommodation and transportation. This might sound a bit blasé – I’m not made of money by any standard, my usual trip consists of camping, cooking and self driving with Air BnB being the peak level of accommodation - but in this case I just thought I’d throw the dice, pay the money and see what it was like. I had simply given Craig approximate dates and locations, requested he keep it as cheap as possible and left him to it. I was very happy with the outcome.

Research: I had a copy of the Helm Field Guide to the *Birds of Argentina and the South-west Atlantic* (Pearman & Areta, pub 2020). Possibly the only book specifically dealing with Argentinian birds? I went through it to start with marking off the species I might expect in each of the three areas I would be birding. I then spent hours going over the BA and Iguazu birds in the weeks leading up to my departure.

I had also just been introduced to the Merlin app and I downloaded the Argentinian Bird Pack and applied the locations and dates and spent ages going through each list of Most Likely species. I found this incredibly helpful. Simply reducing the species list to what was most likely in a specific area, made life, for me anyway, much, much easier. Not only helping with ID, but also encouraging targeting of certain species.

I assume most readers will be familiar with the app so won’t go into further detail, but if you’re not – get it! It’s free and its brilliant! I used it extensively in the field for quick reference and the calls. I will admit here and now I am absolutely shit when it comes to bird calls. I just cannot link a call with a bird like some of my birding mates. I also have some difficulty hearing high pitched calls or song – especially if there is any background noise, so I have to hear a repeated call and see the bird before I can pin it down in the future and even then..... On the plus side I seem to be able to retain ‘jizz’ like a video in my head, so a birds movements, being unique, become for me a quick identification feature – but, of course, I do have to see the bird to use that.

In the end I managed to identify 80%+ of the new birds I saw almost immediately simply on memory of what I had learned from the field guide and app. I was very pleased with this outcome from my pre-trip work at home.

I trust you find this interesting if not highly informative.

Day 1 Monday 10.10.22

I got an Uber from home at 4am and flew Brisbane to Sydney with Qantas to start my journey. The next leg was Sydney to Auckland and another security check and another stop over.

Later – same day:

10 hours later and we landed in Santiago, Chile.

For me - a new city, a new country, a new continent - SOUTH AMERICA!

The Andes loomed in the not too distant distance, snow visible on some peaks.

I looked hard for my first bird in South America, but didn’t manage to see anything at all from the taxiing plane.

Another walk through endless corridors and duty free shit. Another security scan – this one without any hassle - to the furthest-gate-at-the-end-of-the-line (as usual? Or is it just me?) For the final leg, the fourth flight of the day, to Buenos Aires.

Later still, same day:

While the plane was taxiing out I saw a couple of obvious **Southern Lapwings** and pretty sure a **Chimango Caracara** – so started my Chile list off...

Uneventful 90 minute trip to Buenos Aires – apart from the spectacular viewing over the Andes. I think this is probably the ‘low’ end but still amazing to see this mountain chain at last.

Another new country/city.

No obvious pickup at the airport so I wandered outside for a smoke and saw a **Variable Hawk** soaring around pretty low immediately overhead - I think it was a juvenile. There were a few Hirundine sp, which I think were probably either Grey-breasted or Brown-chested Martins but the light was pretty shit so sp not called.

I found the guy in the waiting area with my name on an iPad and with only a ‘Hola’ he led me off and into a car and away we went for the 45 minute drive to the Argenta Tower Hotel, city center. On the way I saw several more **Southern Lapwings** in grassed areas alongside the road and one other **Chimango Caracara** at the airport. So kicked off my Argentinian list before it got too dark.

The poor driver had more twitches than.....a UK birder... stroking his hair, shrugging his shoulders, touching his face – quite extraordinary - and said nothing all the way in. I checked in, had a shower, and got a phone call from the Chimu rep in BA which made me happy. We established WhatsApp as a communication source and discussed the next few days itinerary. Went for a short walk around the local streets, mainly for a smoke, before settling in for the night.

Day 2 Tuesday 11.10.22

I didn't sleep well. Possibly jet lag, maybe because I had slept a bit on the plane and could have been because I'd done bugger all for 24 hours. However, I got up at 6 anyway.

Breakfast wasn't till 7, so went for a wander locally. Not far away I found a plaza – not much in area, not much in vegetation, but a few birds....

On the way I almost stepped on **Eared Doves** feeding on the path beside the **Feral Pigeons**. In the plaza – **Rufous-bellied Thrush** (3), **Rufous Hornero** (1), **Picazuro Pigeon** (1), **House Sparrow** and **European Starling**. In the trees finally got onto **White-eyed Parakeet** and in the street a **Great Kiskadee** and a single **Chalk-browed Mockingbird**.

So in 30 minutes I saw 7 of the first 8 birds in the 'Most Likely at this location' list in Merlin! Not a bad start – 7 lifers.

Back to the hotel – after being briefly lost and rescued by MapsMe, I know, I'm bloody hopeless in cities – and a serious go at breakfast.

At 8.30 I was ready to go on the tour. They picked me up at 9.05, which I was happy to wait for, and Sabrina and her driver spent the next 3 hours guiding myself, and 2 others only, around the highlights of Buenos Aires. It was interesting and she was very good. Most importantly to me, I picked up another 2 lifers.

Creamy-bellied Thrush (4) in the main square and a **Harris's Hawk** near the main cemetery which one of the other 'tourists' pointed out. The view was a bit shit, but happy with it. Also had great views of **Monk Parakeet** (20 in the La Boca area) but had seen them, as an established introduced species, in Athens, Greece in 2017. Also saw more of the morning's earlier species and found a Hornero's nest in a tree.

After a break at the hotel I decided to head out and find a bank. I needed to get some pesos. I had asked the Chimu rep the previous evening, but it all sounded so complicated if I wanted to change the US dollars I was carrying and anyway, I wanted to keep them and withdraw pesos from my travel card. I found a bank nearby that was 'Linked' so headed out there with birding gear intending to chase down some of the birds I'd seen earlier, as well as, obviously, see what else I could find. I hadn't had my cameras with me on the first outing so needed to get some photos to entertain and amaze you all.

I found the bank after a couple of false starts and worked the ATM. I asked for 40,000 pesos – about \$400 as I figured I'd get as much as I was likely to need in one hit?

Nothing came out. There was some stuff in Spanish but of course I had no idea what it all meant. Slight panic.

I went into the bank and, eventually, they pushed a woman out who didn't really speak English, but, I was betting, had lost the drawn straw competition out back. Maybe it was just her unlucky day or maybe she was the office bitch. She was really nice anyway and it turned out that I had asked the ATM for too much?

We tried 10,000 at the same ATM, but that didn't work either – she had no explanation for that. But a second ATM delivered 10,000 (~\$100 AU) and I thanked her effusively as she scurried back inside to the safety of the back office looking very relieved and hopefully gaining the respect and honour she deserved for putting it out there – so to speak.

I needed more and probably should have gone again at the same bank, but the stress had been too much and I just got out and went birding. Later I tried another ATM at another bank and it wouldn't even give me 10,000 so.....WTF?? Hopefully I can get money somewhere else along the way.

Across the road was a park and I walked knee deep into **Chalk-browed Mockingbirds**, **Rufous-bellied Thrushes**, **Rufous Horneros**, **Eared Doves** and a couple of **Picazuro Pigeons**. I spent the next three hours wandering around taking photos and looking for new stuff. The only new bird I came up with was **Shiny Cowbird**, although I did see a **Vermillion Flycatcher** high in a tree – it's a migrant and I'd seen it before in the States – nice male though.

At one point a small green and yellow bird flew past me and landed up. What could it be? I got all excited and quickly 'binned' it. It was a freaking BUDGIE! Jesus Mary & Joseph, I come all this way, suffer all the indignities and stress of air travel, spend all that money and find a freaking **AUSTRALIAN BUDGERIGAR!!** It took me years before I saw one at home – less than 24 hours in South America with all its potential and I get a Budgie....The species is not even listed in the book or on Merlin so maybe a new species for Argentina – look at me!

It looked a little lost. Maybe it needed MapsMe to get home?

There were a couple of small birds high in the trees that I just could not get onto – no idea what they were, but, for me, anyway, that's standard in a new country. They were probably Brown Honeyeaters or Striated Pardalotes....

I left the park, found a chemist and bought a couple of packets of Dramamine. It's the only seasick tablets I have found that actually work. I had some with me already – but just wanted to make sure I was well covered. The last thing I want to do is screw up the boat trip by being sick. Even if I have to stay drugged up for three weeks – the worst thing I will suffer is constipation as these things dry me out incredibly. Time will tell.

I headed 'home' and checked my bird IDs over a couple of cups of coffee.

I was pretty knackered and decided to just eat at the hotel and crash early. I did that and was in bed before 9.

Day 3 Wednesday 12.10.22

I didn't sleep well again. In fact I didn't seem to sleep at all, although I must have for a few hours at least. It's definitely jet lag. I assume because I flew east from Australia. I spent most of the night reading and finally gave up and got up at 6. I finished off packing and went downstairs hoping to get a coffee. Breakfast wasn't to start till 7 and I was scheduled to be picked up at 7.30 so.... After a smoke outside and a coffee in the hotel restaurant where they were setting up, I checked out, paying my bill for coffee and the previous night's meal. In total it came to 1,340 pesos = \$14Aus. I'm not sure how they arrived at that price because I had believed the previous night's meal cost at least \$30. I wasn't complaining. Maybe the \$5 tip (500 pesos) I had left the waitress had encouraged her to change the bill? No idea. I started into breakfast as soon as they set it up and by 7.15 was waiting outside the hotel.

7.30 and the car arrived. It only took 15 minutes to get to the Jorge Newbery airport (domestic) - different airport than my arrival. I had checked in on-line the previous night, but had to queue to get my boarding pass and dump my check-in backpack. Then made my way through the usual security stuff to await my flight to Iguazu.

The 90 minute flight passed uneventfully, although it was one of those flights where everyone seems to be coughing and sneezing and you're sure you'll come down with something afterwards. I was picked up as part of another group in a small bus and handed an itinerary for the next few days by the driver. Apparently he will be taking me, along with others I assume, on the tours tomorrow and Friday and back to the airport next week – all good and very efficient.

I was the only one dropped off at La Cantera Jungle Lodge and checked in before making my way to my 'jungle room'. And jungle is exactly what it was. Heavy rainforest all around, the Lodge is situated within the Natural Reserve called Selva Iryapu, as were other lodge-type places. The rooms were scattered through the rainforest with walkways between them and the facilities.

There was a restaurant/café, swimming pool, massage place etc.

I unpacked a bit, then, eager to get started, headed out for a wander.

The first birds I found were **Eared Doves** and a family party of **Great Kiskadees**.

The calling young of the latter got a bit annoying after a while. I also had a **Rufous Hornero** and at that stage started to think I was just going to repeat yesterday's effort. Then a family party of **Red-rumped Caciques** turned up and investigated a nest covered bush.

I hadn't brought the camera, thinking it was a bit quiet, but dashed back to get it. Of course they had moved on, but I did see them throughout the afternoon on several occasions – very common – but not as well as the first time and no photos ...yet.

I continued walking and the birds – and butterflies – kept coming. It was good, because I wasn't overwhelmed, having time to spend with each observation. I was quite impressed as I identified most of the birds straight away, just checking with Merlin to confirm. I did have a flycatcher or two, seen only briefly, that I failed to ID definitively, but other than that the hours spent with the book and the app at home seemed to have paid off.

Birds I did see and id in order of appearance:

Thrush-like Wren – seen quite well, but no photos.

Streaked Flycatcher – average views, poor photos.

House Wren – apparently the same as the wren in the States. Managed to grab one photo.

Squirrel Cuckoo – seen briefly, no photos

Black Vulture – soaring high overhead

Creamy-bellied Thrush – seen and photographed previously

Picazuro Pigeon – heard only (!! Look at me!)

Rufous-bellied Thrush – saw several, taped one singing, although Merlin failed to identify it by song, which I thought was a bit weird.

Plumbeous Kite – seen high overhead, then later one landed in a tree. Nice looking bird.

Cattle Tyrant – one seen quite well, but silhouetted so didn't get any photos today.

Magpie Tanager – possibly bird of the day – spectacular views, photos and short video. Quite a charmer!

Boat-billed Flycatcher – seen briefly and not very well, no photos.

Also had 4 butterflies, but no ID on any as yet.

After 2 hours I was feeling really knackered again and headed back to the restaurant for coffee. I downloaded the photos and sorted them, then started to write this when calling birds took me away and, after frantically packing up the laptop, grabbing my stuff and getting into position 20 meters from the swimming pool, I had

Yellow-chevroned Parakeet perched up high, calling

And then a **Chestnut-eared Aracari** flew in – one of my target birds – brilliant. Not the best of views, or photo, but expect I will see more.

Just as I decided to go back and get something to eat the aforementioned **Plumbeous Kite** flew in.

I went back to my table and ordered dinner. I was eating when I noticed another guy with a 'birder's camera' trying to photograph something. Following his camera angle I had a brief view of a **Blue Dacnis** – another bird I'd like to see more of.

By the time I had finished eating I was really, really knackered and decided to call it a day and retire gracefully for a shower, a shave and sleep, hopefully.

While doing that I received a message advising the Argentinean side of the falls tour had been moved to Friday instead of tomorrow as the river had risen. Instead it's Brazil tomorrow for a half day tour.

Although the birds weren't coming in droves, it was a nice way to be. Instead of being deluged with new species and not managing to get all of them, I had time to identify and try for photos – and enjoy the birds better. So far so good.

Day 4 Thursday 13.10.22

Another night of jet lagged sleep. A bit better this time, but wide awake at 4am. Around 5 I heard a bird calling and fiddled with Merlin until I identified it as a Common Potoo. That was enough motivation for me to get up and go birding. Still dark, of course, but I wandered out to the road and walked along randomly trying bird calls. I didn't see the Potoo, but heard at least 3 calling, but I did stir up a pair of **Short-tailed Nighthawks** which responded well, flying around above the road. I also heard but failed to see Tropical Screech-owl, calling relatively close, but off road out of reach. Good start to the day!

Walked back to the restaurant for breakfast around 6.30. Breakfast didn't 'start' till 7, but I figured I'd get in if I could. On the way I had a **Crested Caracara** perched up – lousy photo due to low light and not the best view, but, beggars can't be choosers!

I also decided that some of the Thrushes I was seeing were definitely **Pale-breasted Thrushes** so another lifer before breakfast. Finishing breakfast I hurried out to Reception and sat and waited for my pick up at 7.35.

At 8 I messaged the tour organization and asked if I had somehow been forgotten?

It took another 30 minutes for Aquas Grandes Tours to send another bus to pick me up. I had actually seen the bus, but didn't recognize the driver or the company name. He had picked up two English women who were going to the airport immediately after their waterfall tour – obviously that distracted him. No problem – I was on the way!

But the delay actually paid off because as I waited I birded and picked up 5 more lifers!

Turquoise-fronted Amazon – big chunky parrot flying across the canopy, calling, passed overhead several times before I ID'd it.

Glittering-bellied Emerald – my first South American Hummingbird. At least 2 buzzing around flowers in the canopy – difficult to ID obviously, but I did get one perched up briefly and the choice in this area is pretty limited anyway so...

Ruddy Ground Dove – a couple flew in and perched up long enough for me to ID them from the reception area.

Swallow Tanager – back near my room. No photos, brief view, obvious blue bird with black bib, nice!

And so it was off to Brazil! Another country to add to my list.

We had to get my passport stamped at the border, involving two stops, but not much delay. And I had to show my Vaccination cert as well. Then we drove close by the border with Paraguay (!) and on to the Brazilian side of the Iguazu Falls to meet up with the tour group I was assigned to. Now, the reason the Argentinian side of the falls was closed today was because there was too much water over the falls. Apparently there was 10 times more water than normal! Approx 16,000,000 cubic meters of water a second (I think that's right). A number of the lower tracks were washed away or at least under water in Argentina and we found part of the normal viewing area inaccessible in Brazil too – as you will see if you watch the videos I intend to load.

Facts: Normally more water goes over Niagara and Victoria Falls in Africa is higher, but for sheer width and water volume Iguazu is the biggest – and with the water flow at the moment, definitely bigger.

The first bird I saw in Brazil was, predictably (?) **Southern Lapwing**, followed by a few other of the already seen variety, roadside. We hung around a bit getting tickets and waiting for the bus ride in. The access point was about 25kms from the waterfall and you have to get a bus. Its all very organised chaos, but it works. While we waited I had **Sick's Swift**, a pair of **Plumbeous Kites**, **Black Vultures** and **Blue and White Swallows** overhead and a pair of **Saffron Finches** in the eating area.

On the drive in – a **Crested Caracara** beside the road and a **Red Brocket Deer** *Mazama americana* broke cover and ran alongside for 50 meters or so.

At the entrance to the walk a bird I had really wanted – **Plush-crested Jay** great views at close range.

Halfway along the walk, just beside one of the viewing points I was totally stunned to see a **Black-fronted Piping Guan** perched up! I was so surprised, I thought it was a stuffed one until it shook its head and looked around. This was one bird I did NOT expect to see and was just so stunned it was so easy. It was perched up no more than 10 meters away, clearly visible to everyone – and there were hundreds of people passing along the narrow track. I'm still not sure it was a genuinely live one, but I can't see it really being anything but. This thing is twice the size of a Bush Turkey, its freaking huge and the markings are awesome!

Giant Dusky Swift: not as many as I'd hoped, maybe because the water was so churned up?

Giant Cowbird: around the shopping area at the end. Pretty cool character!

The walk took about an hour and a half. The crowds were annoying (to me anyway, but then I have little patience with people who don't think of anyone but themselves). The waterfall was amazing, actually quite scary in places. You could see an accident just waiting to happen and hundreds being washed away. I tried to capture the whole experience on video, but it was hard to get it all in.

Along the way and particularly in the meeting area at the end there were butterflies of all shapes and colours. I had several actually land on my hands. They must have liked Irish Australian sweat. No IDs yet.

We left the area in the bus and were taken back to the access point. Along the way I saw a couple of Goanna-sized lizards beside the road, but no way of getting photos and no ID yet.

We got 'our' bus and headed back towards Argentina.

Along the way we dropped some of the group of at hotels and then had to wait at the border while the tour leader took our passports in to be stamped. I got off the bus for a smoke and found a **Cattle Tyrant** and a **Fork-tailed Flycatcher** on the wires. Wow! The latter was just Unreal! The tail! Far out – just brilliant!

I also got photos of a pair of **Southern Lapwings** at last, although the light was pretty harsh.

The last bird I saw in Brazil was a **Burrowing Owl** sat in the shade under a bush on the side of the road!

So, kicked off my Brazilian list with **22 species** and **8 lifers**. Now I need to go back and start ticking the 1,883 other species in Brazil....

Rufous-collared Sparrow – just back across the border, driving slowly away and a pair on the ground beside the road.

Finally back at La Cantera and I got the driver to drop me off at the entrance. As I walked in a **Boat-billed Flycatcher** perched up above was a nice final camera opportunity.

I spent a couple of hours downloading and sorting 800+ photos, reduced to ~260+ videos. Then had dinner (**Chestnut-eared Aracarias** came in again), a shower and wrote this up. While doing so I heard the **Screech-owl**, the **Potoo** and the **Short-tailed Nighthawk** calling again, but its raining lightly so..... maybe tomorrow morning.

The Argentinian side of the waterfall is closed tomorrow, so, as the weekend is busier, I have asked to go on Monday. Hopefully the water level will drop enough to allow them to open the park again by then.

Day 5 Friday 14.10.22

I gave up on sleep at about 3am. I am seriously jet lagged so might as well make the most of it.

Got up at 5 and went out to the road again. Again played random night bird calls.

Short-tailed Nighthawk responded immediately and in fact stuck around for most of the next hour providing early daylight views.

Tropical Screech-owl showed up sometime after playback. Quietly flew in and perched up. Just could not get the camera to focus, but it sat for several minutes high on a dead branch.

Common Potoo – at least 2 calling, somewhat distantly, but playback brought one in! It was huge, I thought it was a Black Cockatoo at first. It too perched up on a high stump and, again, I couldn't get the camera to focus.

I headed back to the restaurant for breakfast at 7, seeing a few other previously listed species along the way. A leisurely breakfast this morning as it's the first morning I'm not flying somewhere or going on a tour. In fact – this is my first full day birding in Argentina!

As I left my room, a small yellow bird attracted my attention. Unsure what it had been I took a guess and soon had a pair of **Banaquits** on the boardwalk.

Further along I came across a female **Glittering-bellied Emerald** hovering at flowers beside the boardwalk, quite confiding, just ignoring passers by.

I had decided to walk out to the road and turn right, then left 100 m further on and down to a flooded pond beside an Indian settlement. The First Nations people here appear to have a pretty basic standard of living and in this area, their houses are randomly scattered along or near the roads. At the pond, when I got there, there were at least two women beating clothes with sticks at the edge of the dirty water. The water was more flood water rather than clean pond water. There were several scruffy looking little kids hanging around, but there was no feeling of threat to me, they just shyly said 'Ola' and left me to myself.

I tried to walk around the pond, but the margins were too badly flooded, however, I picked up a number of birds in and close to the edge of the water and nearby trees.

Green-winged Saltator – seen well and photographed, although a bit silhouetted. I was pretty pleased to get this as it seems to be persecuted for the pet trade. I don't know why as it's not much to look at – in comparison to other local birds – and doesn't sound anything special either.

Smooth-billed Ani – also seen very well, crashing around in the lower vegetation – weird looking bird, but kind of nice with it.

Yellow-bellied Elaenia – seen well, but not photographed as other things started to happen at the same time.

Sayaca Tanager – seen well, responded well.

Wattled Jacana – flushed unexpectedly and pretty startling vision with the large yellow panels in the wind. These were the Chestnut-backed variety and very smart looking.

White-faced Whistling Duck – stuck their heads up out of the grass.

I walked back round to the other side of the lake and started in through a patch of trees. I found a side gully flooded and decided to sit there for a while and let the birds come to me? This worked well as individual species sporadically turned up, I'd ID most of them – to at least family level, sometimes species level, then play back and see if I could photograph them. I spent almost three hours at the same spot doing just that and had the following lifers among other, already seen, species:

Common Tody-flycatcher – a pair hung around most of the time, fly catching and generally being cute.

Saffron-billed Sparrow – seen briefly, refused to come closer. Quite a surprise actually, but very distinctive.

Purple-throated Euphonia – at last, a Euphonia! One of those ‘must see’ birds for me. Stunning, but didn’t come very close.

Long-tailed Tyrant – one male only seen. A bit distant, top of a tree 70 meters away, but immediately ID’d as ‘one of those long-tailed Tyrant things’.

Yellow-chinned Spinetail - great views, but never stopped moving.

In fact I had just picked up the camera to film the Spinetail, when I saw a snake swimming AWAY from me. It must have been right at my feet as my boots were only inches away from the water’s edge. It was so brightly coloured I was amazed I hadn’t seen it. I ID’d it later as an **Argentinian Coral Snake**, although I think it might also be known as South American Coral Snake.

White-winged Becard – I saw this a couple of times, but badly, then it was in a tree beside me and I managed to get a few shots. I had no idea what it was but Merlin ID’d it for me from the photos! Pretty cool – and listed as ‘rare’ in this area.

Large Elaenia – also ID’d from photos via Merlin I am not embarrassed to admit. I knew it was an Elaenia, but these are difficult bastards to ID at the best of times.

Pale-vented Pigeon – perched high up a tree, as Pigeons do.

I left my spot and headed on along the lakeside turning off on a track and walking back ‘home’ through open fields and low bush.

A **Roadside Hawk** soared overhead along the track.

I also had a couple of butterflies on the small red flowers. Again no ID as yet.

Back home and I woke myself up somewhat with coke and coffee as I downloaded and sorted 400+ photos. I had just finished and was heading back to my room for a rest when I spotted two (in fact there were 3) blue/green birds fly up into a tree on the other side of the pool.

Green-headed Tanagers! A bird I really wanted to see. Unfortunately they didn’t hang around for photos but seen well, if briefly.

I was pretty knackered and had a little ‘lie down’ for an hour or so. Then I found a way into the jungle from the carpark, sat on a log in a small clearing and played calls of birds I haven’t come across yet. I had no success apart from a female **Ruby-crowned Tanager** that appeared, but I don’t think it was responding, just simply passing. While I sat, at least 5 **Plumbeous Kites** and a handful of **Great Dusky Swifts** fed over the canopy on something, continually swooping and circling.

Back ‘home’ again and I had something to eat and then headed back to my room. I figure I’ll just go along with this, not sleeping properly thing, and hope it wears off soon.

Day 6 Saturday 15.10.22

At last! A good night’s sleep – until 5am when Linc, my grandson, woke me with a phone call – and a Praying Mantis to show. All good. Actually went back to sleep again until 6.30!

Breakfast over and I headed out. I had planned to walk a couple of ‘off road’ tracks starting locally. The first one headed out across open fields with scattered trees through ‘native’ settlements for want of a better word. Small holdings, but no ‘crops’ as such, just a few cattle here and there. Everyone was reservedly friendly, so long as I stayed on the track.

Plenty of birds – **Fork-tailed Flycatcher** nest building, plenty of **Smooth-billed Anis** falling around, **Magpie Tanagers** and **Tropical Kingbird**. Embarrassingly I think I’ve been writing off Tropical Kingbirds as Cattle Tyrants so that was a lifer, but a bit retrospectively....

I also had **Chalk-browed Mockingbirds** which challenged my, admittedly poor, identification skills, but it was so different from the ones I had seen in Buenos Aires, much browner and less well marked, I thought.

New birds I did have:

Variable Oriole – seen distantly, but ID’d straight away. Seen much better later in the day, read on!

Double-collared Seedeater. Seen quite well, but photos not great.

I came out on the road again and started down another track – this time through the rainforest. It was disappointing and I didn’t see much at all until I reached another road where I had a **Pale-breasted Thrush** with food for young.

I tried to go up yet another dirt track but an old Indian guy basically told me I couldn't and I had to beat a retreat. Luckily in a way because a **Black-tailed Tityra** landed in a tree nearby. Only stayed briefly but long enough was good enough.

I wasn't sure what to do and thought about working my way round to the track I wanted, to avoid the local elder, but I felt a bit uncomfortable with that so decided as I'd walked as far from 'home' as I had, I might as well walk the rest of the way to the **Hummingbird Garden** in Puerto Iguazu. It was 35 minutes walk by MapsMe and I knew I could manage that.

The app took me through some dirt streets, some rough cobblestone type roads with dogs and kids and motorbikes and drains and some rubbish, but I never felt uncomfortable or threatened. Eventually I arrived at a locked gate in a wall - they didn't open till midday and it was only 11.15. So much for my research!

I walked a bit further and found a café for water and coffee - both badly needed by this stage. Back at the gate at 12.05 and I was admitted and paid my 1,200 pesos (~\$12 Aus) entry fee. The garden was tiny compared to some similar places I have visited in the States, but there were plenty of feeders and dozens of hummers! It was a bit overwhelming, ID-wise. There were a load of visitors too, although only a couple seemed to be birders - everyone was very quiet.

I recognized a guy from 'home' whom I knew spoke English - we have discussed the breakfast items briefly the day before - and I struck up conversation with 'Alan' from Yorkshire. He had more experience with Hummingbirds than I did and helped me ID the 7 species present.

There were:

Versicoloured Emeralds - the smallest and commonest

Gilded Hummingbird - probably the next commonest and, I think, the hummingbird I have featured before on the blog, calling it Glittering-bellied Emerald - incorrect, sorry!

Glittering-bellied Emerald

Black-throated Mango

Black Jacobin

Swallow-tailed Hummingbird

Planalto Hermit (my favourite I think, although swallow-tailed was pretty special too)

There were also loads of **Banaquits** and **Sayaca Tanagers** taking advantage of the sugar water and bananas that were scattered around. A **Purple-throated Euphonia**, male & female, made brief appearances and a **Variable Oriole** showed some creativity.

We spent about two hours initially, then went out for lunch (for Alan) and coffee (for me) and then went back again for another hour or so.

When we just about to leave the manager/owner of the place pointed out a **Yellow-fronted Woodpecker** that had come in to the fruit he provided on a higher platform. It was a female and outside across the road the male was in a roadside tree.

Alan and I got a taxi 'home' and discussed possibilities for the next day. The taxi cost 800 pesos or ~\$8 Aus.

I sat down and sorted my photos in the café - as I have become accustomed to doing. Just as I took a break I noticed some of the other patrons pointing at a tree at the end of the pool area. Long story short it was the **Green-headed Tanager** back again. This time I did manage to get photos of this (in my opinion) f.....g stunning bird. There is SO much going on its just unbelievable!

Alan had not seen this (in Argentina) and had mentioned it as I bird he really wanted to add to his country list. Unfortunately he didn't appear until well after it had departed - maybe tomorrow?

I had dinner and retired to my room.

Day 7 Sunday 16.10.22

Alan and I had discussed the possibilities and decided to share the 5,000 peso (\$53 Aus) round trip taxi ride to Iguazu National Park. We didn't intend to do the waterfall thing - he had already done it and I was scheduled to the next day, but to walk a non-waterfall trail, the Macuco trail. After breakfast, therefore, we met at reception and they ordered the taxi for us. 30 minutes later we set off on the 20 minute 'race' to the NP entrance. He dropped us off and we agreed to a 15.00 pick up time. We had to buy tickets to enter the park - 4,000 pesos (~\$40 Aus), then walked in and turned off on the trail itself. All in all it was quiet at the entrance, considering it was a Sunday and the trail didn't have many people on it, certainly in comparison to my experience on the Brazilian side the other day. That had been chaos at the entrance. But here on the Argentinian side I would have said it was almost dead.

The trail was 3.5 kms long, all mud, some very messy spots, but overall not a hard walk. Alan was a bit slower than myself, given his arthritis, but it didn't make much difference either way. I have to say it was a disappointment and, potentially, my worst birding day as far as number of lifers goes – but we saw some good stuff.

At the entrance – **Blue & White Swallows**, my first in Argentina. They are big swallows, much more like Australian Woodswallows than 'normal' Swallows.

A **Common Tody Flycatcher** sat up well at the start of the trail and it was looking good. BUT it was a long time before we saw any other birds, apart from a brief **Green-winged Saltator** that Alan failed to get onto.

Eventually my main target showed - and showed well! **Toco Toucan** at last! Very impressive and awesome in fact!

Shortly afterwards a **Squirrel Cuckoo** put in an appearance, but was difficult to photograph – BIG cuckoo!

And not long after THAT a calling bird showed up as **Surucua Trogon**. We did see both female and male birds, but I only got photos of the female.

We reached the end of the track just before 12. It finished at the top of a waterfall and in the surrounding area we saw several lizards which may be the same species, but looked a bit different to each other – I have no IDs yet.

Heading back the only bird we saw, believe it or not, apart from a couple of Thrushes, in the first 2.5 kms was a **Sepia-capped Flycatcher**. Very cute.

A family group were looking at something above their heads and when we arrived, they pointed out a **Common Potoo** perched up in classic style on a stump! Their 8 or 9 year old son had spotted it! I thought of Lincoln straight away! We congratulated the boy and he looked quite embarrassed, but, wow, how he saw it at all, I don't know.

Further along the track and another group were pointing and looking – they had come across a family (?) party of **Black Capuchins**. There were at least 3 animals hanging out above the track, quite unconcerned. My first South American monkey.

The day had been hot and very humid and we relaxed for an hour or so while we waited for the cab to arrive.

Back at 'home' we sat and watched for the Green-headed tanagers to return from 15.30-17.00. it/they didn't.

Alan said goodbye and headed off to pack. He returns to BA tomorrow and home on Thursday. I sat on doing my photos etc and was joined by two American birders around my age and we struck up conversation. They told me of a site 'just up the road' for Red-breasted Toucan which they had watched going in and out of its nest hole.

After I ate I went for a walk to try to find the tree. I didn't find it definitely, but will try again tomorrow. I did hear a soft tapping and had a very, very, brief glimpse of a **Blond-crested Woodpecker** before it flew and disappeared into the dusk. 3 **Short-tailed Nighthawks** then appeared overhead as I walked back to the Lodge.

All in all not a bad day, I guess, just not quite as productive as the previous few days.

Day 8 Monday 17.10.22

A tour of the Argentinian side of Iguazu Falls was the plan for today. All good this time – breakfast with Alan, said goodbye and the bus was there to pick me up at reception at 7.30.

It took a while as we picked up other participants at various lodges and hotels along the way, then all transferred into a bigger bus for the 20 minute ride to the entrance.

There was only one other English speaker in the group – about my age, maybe older, Marcia from Kedron, Brisbane (go figure!) who was on her way to Peru after Iguazu and had been to Antarctica already on a previous trip. We kind of hung together – it made it easier for our guide and at least gave each of us someone to talk to.

The guide bought our tickets and checked us through the gate, then we moved on as a group.

This tour was much more complex than the Brazilian side as there were several tracks closed, including the Devil's Throat which was the biggest attraction really, but the walkway had been completely demolished by the high water level and is unlikely to be repaired this year.

We walked a lot. Along several tracks, upper level, lower level, another loop – I was kind of over waterfalls by the end. The tracks were very busy – partly due to the fact that several were closed – and people were so bloody ignorant it really got on my wick. I managed to contain myself, but really? Couldn't get away quick enough. It was a loooooong day. Social media and friggng selfies have a lot to answer for....

Bird-wise it was very poor. Only a few **Plush-crested Jays**, **Shiny Cowbirds** and **Pale-breasted Thrushes**. Other than that a single **Neotropic Cormorant** (see before in the States) and, of course, the highlight – **Great Dusky Swift**. Amazing watching them fly into the thundering waterfall and just disappear. I took hundreds of photos - or at least attempted hundreds of photos – most of which failed, but I did get some of the birds very close to the falls.

I also had them perched on the rock face beside the falls.

And some more butterflies....

A boat trip was mentioned for some of the people who had been pre-booked on it. I enquired and paid \$50 US to go on it – what the hell, I'll possibly never be here again - and so at 14.00 we boarded the bus for the Grand Jungle tour (30 minute ride to the boat through the jungle, during which we saw nothing special, but the guide did her best to tell us all in Spanish, and English for Marcia and I, about the local environment and inhabitants.)

Then we were given a dry-bag to put our cameras etc in. Then a life jacket. Then we got in the boat and headed up the river through the quite rough, flooded conditions. When we got to the base of the falls the boat stopped for us to take photos – I didn't bother, getting the camera out of the dry-bag was just too messy.

Then they took the boat closer to the falls and we all got a bit spray-wet. That was OK.

Then they took the boat right in beside the falls and our side of the boat got hit twice by what constituted a fire hose quantity of water. Obviously we were soaked – to the skin. We had been prepared to get wet, but it really was a bit over the top – especially as they didn't do the same for the other side of the boat and they were the ones screaming and laughing. I must admit I didn't find it particularly funny. I mean I can take it with the best of them, but it all seemed a bit too much.

We partly dried out on the way back, but I doubt my shirt and pants will be completely dry by tomorrow. I'm glad I did it, but wouldn't do it again.

The best part of the boat ride were a couple of **White-rumped Swallows** over the landing stage – my only lifer for the day.

I got 'home' at 17.30 – just in time to order dinner before 18.00.

Day 9 Tuesday 18.10.22

My last full day in Iguazu. I had made enquiries regarding getting to the Observatorio de Aves, about the same distance away as Iguazu Falls, just a little further along the main road. The taxi wanted 10,000 pesos and I wasn't willing to pay \$100+ AUS so decided to just bird locally and bird hard!

I started at 6 and walked the road outside the lodge area. Saw a good list, but nothing new before breakfast at 8. Back out again before 9 and this time I walked in on the dirt track Past the native farms to the 'lake' where I had been the other day.

It went well, I had....

Brazilian Teal – 7 birds on the pond. Very skittish.

I moved on to my little side pond where I had sat a few days ago and as I approached had an **Ochre-collared Piculet** feeding low down – which was great! You can't beat a good Piculet!

As I settled in it started to rain in earnest but I sat it out getting quite damp, but not soaked.

A **Dark-billed Cuckoo** was next on the agenda for a brief few minutes, but no photo.

Cobalt-rumped or **Blue-winged Parrotlet** showed up next and preformed quite well.

The **Common Tody Flycatcher** and **Yellow-chinned Spinetail** came around and I had a male **Blue Dacnis** briefly as well.

I decided to move on after about an hour. My ass was damp and I needed to dry out in the sun. Some local kids had been throwing stones into the pond while I sat and when I walked around I found their 'target' was a 2 meter **Broad-snouted Caiman** *Caiman latirostris* lying calmly in the water a few meters offshore. I always thought Caimans were slender and more alligator-like – this one looked like a salt water croc!

I headed off around the back of the pond and found a **White-tipped Dove**. Probably seen this before, but just not recognized it as something different.

I found a track through bamboo and scrub which was inviting and brought me out at the far corner of the pond where I had the same **Great Egret**, **Wattled Jacanas**, **Striated Herons** and a **Black-crowned Night Heron**.

A little further up this track and I had another Piculet – good morning for Piculets! This one was a **White-barred Piculet** – brief, clear view of red crown.

A pair of **Saffron Finches** further along and then a female **Hooded Tanager** feeding in a tree was a nice addition to my lifer list.

Shortly afterwards a small bird-wave occurred, all of which I missed except for a **Rufous-crowned Greenlet**.

By this time it was 12.30. I'd been birding for 6 hours and was pretty knackered in the damp, humid heat so decided to trudge 'home' and have a coffee or two and a rest.

I did that and at 15.30 headed out again – but I was still pretty tired. It's been a big week for walking and fairly intense birding.

But I trudged up the road again. It was very quiet. I did have a **Squirrel Cuckoo** and several **Chestnut-eared Aracarias** – which are just brilliant!

Then high in a tree a new bird – but I had no idea what it was. I asked Merlin via a photo from my laptop and was advised it was a **Chestnut-crowned Becard**.

I also had a couple of **Gray-breasted Martins** to finish off my 10 lifer day.

I had the Caesar Salad for the fourth evening in a row – well, I liked it! Then retired to pack and sleep. 3 **Short-tailed Nighthawks** overhead as I walked back to my room and the **Common Potoo** was calling again.

Day 10 Wednesday 19.10.22

I got up at 6.30 having slept quite well and walked the road for an hour and a half generally birding. Nothing super special – watched a pair of **Purple-throated Euphonias** nest building and saw a nice pair of **Thrush-like Wrens** (weird birds) crawling around a tree and calling – a call I NOW recognized as having heard all week.....Jesus Mary & Joseph, I am sooooo slow when it comes to calls.

Back 'home' had breakfast, then took a bowl of coffee outside for a smoke. (I've been drinking 'bowls' of coffee, French-style, to save me having to go up and down to re-fill my cup). Anyway, sitting outside watching the **Red-rumped Caciques** move around noisily, as you do, and I had the **Green-headed Tanager** again. Brilliant, brilliant bird!

Back to my room and finished packing, then down to reception at 9.30. Due to be picked up at either 10 or 10.30, I was in no rush – just conflicting schedules.

I paid my bill – meals, coffees, cokes, more coffees...all told 20,600 pesos = \$206. Not bad considering it covered 7 days.

10.30 pick up, took an hour to get to the airport as we picked up several other groups of people on the way. Checked in, no drama, went to the boarding area and had a coffee, then boarded and flew. All good.

At Buenos Aires Jorge Newbury (Domestic) airport it was very busy. I stood waiting at the arrivals door under the Private Vehicles Pick up sign for 30 minutes or so while everyone else left. Then realised there were two Arrivals doors and my driver was waiting at the other one, 30 meters away... had to wait another 10 minutes for him to get the car – watched the chaotic arrival and departure of taxis, private cars, buses etc outside, absolute mayhem.

Arrived at the same hotel – Argenta Tower – in downtown BA and checked in. I was handed a bill for approx \$37 that they had not billed me for before I left a week ago. Fair enough, I guess, I didn't argue as I knew they had undercharged me last time.

Unpacked and decided not to do anything too energetic with what was left of the afternoon, but did go out and buy some 'Argentinian' cigarettes – Marlboro and Camel – go figure. And ordered my first coffee in a public café. Look at me!! It came with a piece of cake! I should have done this every day before! I could even smoke at the outdoor table – how civilized!

The weather. I haven't talked about the weather at all. On the whole it's been dry with just that bit of rain yesterday during the day. It has rained a little at night, most nights (in Iguazu at least), but more a pattering on the leaves than a serious downpour. Most of the days have been cloudy for at least some of the day. We did have some sunshine on a couple of the days and it was very humid then. Maximum temp probably around 31C, but generally mid twenties – very much like the weather would be at this time of year in Brisbane. Mind you, with what's coming, I imagine it'll be the last time I'll be warm outdoors for at least a month....

Day 11 Thursday 20.10.22

An amazing day – of birds, meetings and small-world-type coincidences!

It started off with breakfast at 7. Bloody scrambled eggs AGAIN. I have had scrambled eggs for breakfast every morning cause that's all they seem to serve, hot. Every day. Everywhere.

After breakfast set off at 7.45 to walk to [Costanera Sur](#). It's the premier birding site in down town BA, an area of parkland, scrub, lakes and sea front. It took me 25 minutes to walk the 4.5 kms through part of the city. No problems, no uneasy feelings, I'm getting to like this city!

At the north end I arrived at a gate which I expected to enter the area by – but it was closed. I didn't know why, couldn't read the signs, so started walking south towards where I knew the main gate was. Alongside a wide (100 meters?) water filled canal type thing backed by trees and scrub and FILLED with birds. They just started and kept coming, unbelievable stuff...

Lifers in order of appearance:

Nanday Parakeet – seen regularly through the day, an introduced feral species, but a lifer none the less.

Grayish Baywing – a charismatic species reminded of Apostlebird, but much smaller. Really cool.

Rufescent Tiger Heron – Unbelievably standing out in the open, a big Bittern type thing, stunning markings.

Silver Teal – beautiful duck, in number although listed in Merlin as 'Uncommon in BA', must have seen at least 100, conservatively.

Giant Wood Rail – also standing out in the open!

Spot-flanked Gallinule – only saw the one and it was attacked by a Wattled Jacana, dived and I never saw it again.

Cocoi Heron – very like Grey Heron, saw 2 or 3 only.

Red-gartered Coot – heaps.

White-winged Coot – more than heaps.

Red-fronted Coot – not so many

White-banded Mockingbird – saw one only and was too tied up with other stuff to take a photo.

Rosy-billed Pochard – heaps upon heaps, begging for food.

Coscoroba Swan – only one, looked like a dump duck/goose to be honest, but a genuine wild bird.

Yellow-billed Teal – discreetly at distance.

Southern Screamer – really wanted to see them scream, but the pair with 5 chicks I saw, just stood around like vacant geese. Big birds, was very happy to see them, just cause they are called Screamers!

White-tufted Grebe – absolutely charming little guys, fell in love immediately, just so dam cute.

It was at this point I came across another birder. We nodded and said 'good morning' and continued birding separately.

Just further on, a guy with a scope appeared. We started talking and it turned out Javier was a Bird Pal and a Bird guide. Long story short – we ended up spending the rest of the day together! We birded along this 'canal', then because, believe or not, the Sur was closed he took me off to a couple of other spots and we saw some amazing birds together. That was the first amazing meeting of the day.

Not long after starting with Javier, Alan from Iguazu turned up! He had a few hours before flying home and had actually spent some time with Javier a day or two before, so they already knew each other. Second amazing meeting really!

As the three of us chatted, the first guy I had seen came along and HE knew Javier too. But more amazing was the fact that he was the bird guide on the *Sea Spirit* to Antarctica that I am joining on Saturday

Is it a small world or what??

Alan, Javier and I spent some time together and the birds kept coming...

Bare-faced Ibis – one flew in and around but didn't land.

Black-necked Swan – just a pair, gliding along.

Black-headed Duck – several birds but not in great number.

Yellow-billed Pintail – just two seen.

Chestnut-capped Blackbird – 3 in a tree, I did take photos but the brownish/red head is difficult to see and didn't show well enough in the rather grey morning light.

Brown-chested Martin – these are BIG Martins compared to Australian Martins.

Lake Duck – for all intents and purposes it could be a Blue-billed on Lake Galletly!

Ringed Teal – Javier found two half hidden 100 meters away. Good in the scope, poor in bins, hopeless in camera. Pity cause they are a nice looking duck. But quite uncommon and few in number in BA.

Snowy-crowned Tern – nice Tern. Flew in along the 'canal', dived a few times and flew away.

At this point Alan had gone and Javier suggested we go elsewhere. Not totally sure why the Sur was closed. They called it 'bad weather' but it was only overcast and a bit dull. It may have been because there was rain overnight and they were afraid the tracks would get damaged by too many feet. Or something. Anyway, my one full day in BA and the place was closed – not overly happy, Jack! But Javier made up for it in a big way.

We got in his taxi – his normal job – and drove for about 45 minutes to the north of the city in BA province. We stopped at a location with no name so.....close to the river mouth and started trying for Many-coloured Rush Tyrant which I had expressed a desperation for - or at least an interest in!

Along the way we had:

Brown-hooded Gull - a bit distant and brief, but we saw another 20-30 fly overhead later in the afternoon. My first South American Gull.

Rufous-collared Sparrow – not strictly a new tick as I had seen it briefly from the bus coming back from Brazil, but when its hopping around your feet....

Black and Rufous Warbling Finch – nice bird, saw several, but challenging to photograph.

Wren-like Rushbird – reminded me of Little Grassbird or Cisticolas, very hard to see and impossible to photograph with the time in hand.

Spectacled Tyrant - a female sat up – look at the eye! Far out!

Bran-coloured Flycatcher – just one, briefly, a bit so, so - pretty much as it says on the box!

Whistling Heron – glad to get this as its not really a marsh bird, more an open field bird – a bit weird looking for a heron.

Screaming Cowbird – another screamer that did nothing! Subtly different from the much commoner Shiny Cowbird. Well, it's not shiny and its bill is a bit different...

White-crested Tyrannulet – seen a couple of times, but too 'flicky' to get the camera on. Nice little bird though.

White-browed Meadowlark (or Blackbird) – I found this all on my own! Javier's first for the year, they had just started arriving. Stunning bird, there were two together.

Checkered Woodpecker – just one, seen well, but briefly as is normal with Woodpeckers in my experience.

Hooded Siskin – a pair flew up into a pine tree. Didn't even try to get a photo. Nice view though. We had tried several spots along the back of a reed bed for the **MCR Tyrant**, but no luck.

Apparently very reactive to 'encouragement' but no responses so far.

I felt Javier was getting a bit desperate, but we tried one more spot and as he walked back from placing the speaker one appeared. Wow!! Stunning! Brilliant! Incredible colour. I got good views as it flitted around, perching briefly on the reed stems.

We went back to the car and drove somewhere else, back towards BA. Into a pretty degraded area of low bush alongside a pretty grotty stream. As we walked in Javier saw a bird and got very excited. It was a **White-naped Xenopsaris** and was several hundred kilometers out of range. (And, no, I don't know how to pronounce it either) he sent messages to his birding friends and put it on E-bird, I think. Very exciting and rare in BA, apparently. For me, sigh, just another lifer....

We had a **Grey-cowled** or **Grey-hooded Wood Rail** in the little creek and tried for Rufous-sided Crake. We heard at least two and very close, sounded like Spotless Crake, but they just would not come out, so remain as heard only and not ticked.

Sooty-fronted Spinetail – took a bit of work, but we did see one in the end. Not well enough for the camera, darting around in an overgrown, dark area.

Glaucous-blue Grosbeak – just further on in the same area. We saw two, one perched up quite well.

Greyish Saltator – briefly overhead on a branch, but no chance with the camera.

Masked Gnatcatcher – prolonged underside views and some side on, but too flitty to try for photos.

Tropical Parula – seen very briefly.

Spix's Spinetail – again seen briefly and moving fast through thick, dark undergrowth.

By now it was after 16.00. Quite frankly I was knackered. I'd only had one cup of lousy coffee since breakfast and a mouthful or two of water and that was it. Javier had to pick up his wife at 17.00 in the city and so we drove back and he dropped me off at the hotel. I insisted on donating 5,000 pesos for fuel, although he didn't really want to take it, but hey, what a day! 43 lifers!

Of course along with all those new birds there were heaps of previously-seen stuff – **Chimango** and **Crested Caracaras**, **Harris's Hawk** and a **Snail Kite** (seen in Florida), **White-tipped Pigeon**, **Gray-breasted Martin**, **Green-winged Saltator**, **Limpkin**, **Wattled Jacana**, **Common**

Gallinule, Pied-billed Grebe (seen in USA), **Black-crowned Night Heron, Great & Snowy Egret, Brazilian Teal, Monk, White-eyed and Yellow-chevroned Parakeets, White-faced Whistling Duck, Fork-tailed Flycatcher, Vermillion Flycatcher, Glittering-bellied Emerald** and **Gilded Sapphire, Double-collared Seedeater** and **Plush-crested Jay** to name a few (or most of, in fact, the 85 species we had in the day!)

I stopped at the coffee shop across the road and sucked down two Café con Leches before heading in for a shower and a rest. Then started sorting the 1,237 photos I had taken, breaking them down to 345. I'm not sure what that says of me as a photographer, but there you have it. Treated myself to a half inch thick sirloin steak for dinner and continued doing all this stuff till midnight...

Day 12 Friday 21.10.22

I got up at 7, had breakfast and then headed out. Firstly I walked to the Alvear Art Hotel – the hotel I needed to transfer to for the Antarctic leg. It was only 300 meters from the place I was staying so I decided I'd walk it later in the afternoon – with my bags.

I walked down to Costanera Sur again – and it was open! Obviously the drier weather overnight had made a difference? I headed in from the north end and walked along the track that kind of skirts the perimeter until I reached the Middle Track, this I walked down to the back of the 'canal, before turning left and heading out the main gate.

All that took most of the morning – it was midday before I left the park.

Along the way I had loads of stuff I'd seen before but added a few new species and got photos of a few previously seen ones...

Spot-winged Pigeon – only saw one, but there were probably more around. Hundreds of **Picazuro Pigeons** in the trees and on the ground were distracting.

Golden-billed Saltator - picked up from its strong call, really attractive bird. I then saw another individual which at first I thought was some other species, but turned out to be a race, I believe. I'm not completely sure of the race ranges, but it seemed strange to have two races in the same area, right beside it each other? I don't have time to investigate further at the moment.

Green-barred Woodpecker was perched up brilliantly in the top of a tree and I was angling for a photo but an overweight Indian man dressed only in a pair of Speedos flushed it early. I saw a second one on the ground after I left the park, but it flushed naturally before I could get close enough – very frustrating, cause Woodpeckers are just stunning photography subjects!

Checkered Woodpecker – got close on a couple of occasions – quite a confident little bird. I just love woodpeckers for some reason!

Small-billed Elaenia. As usual with Elaenias there's always a difficulty in identification, but I was confident with this one – relatively confident anyway. Saw 2 and then 1 later.

Hooded Siskin – not new, but got the camera on one.

Blue-and-yellow Tanager – nice bird! And very reactive.

Southern Beardless Tyrannulet saw 2 but could not get them in the camera.

Straneck's Tyrannulet -1 and ditto.

I spent an hour or so trying really hard to get Rufous-sided Crake along the back of the 'canal' area. I heard them call in a couple of locations, but they just stopped when I played back and didn't appear.

I tried once for **Plumbeous Rail** – more from WTF kind of attitude – and one came charging in out of the blue, immediately. Unfortunately a **Giant Wood Rail** was hanging around and kept chasing it away so didn't get any photos. But I was pretty happy about the view.

Narrow-billed Woodcreeper, I was really pleased at finally seeing a Woodcreeper – and seeing it so well, right beside the track, brilliant!

Yellow-billed Cardinal. I saw a juvenile first and was, like, WTF is that? Then it flew and was fed by an adult. One bird I hadn't really expected to see.

Later I saw a pair of **Red-crested Cardinals**. I had seen this before in both Hawaii and Sydney, but here it was a native bird, for the first time!

Once I exited the park I headed north back along the 'canal'. I was kind of running out of time so didn't spend much time looking at the **Rosy-billed Pochards, Yellow-billed Teal, White-tufted & Pied-billed Grebes**, 3 species of **Coots**, 2 **Swans**, **Hérons** etc. I did notice a large **American Beaver** swimming along the edge of one of the islands. I thought, at first, it might be a Capybara, but when its tail broke the surface I knew it wasn't – and it didn't look quite right anyway.

I got back to the Argenta Tower at about 14.15, but headed first across the road and had a couple of coffees and relaxed before actually entering the hotel.
I collected my bags and walked the 300 meters to my designated 5 Star Alvear Art Hotel to check in for the Antarctic leg of my trip.

If I have made any mistakes – they're mine, no one else's! I am based in Brisbane, Queensland, Australia. For further details, photos and videos please refer my blog – reidcolin55.blogspot.com
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