



**LA CAMPANA NATIONAL PARK,  
CENTRAL COASTAL RANGE IN VALPARAÍSO  
REGION 2017**

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**Participants:** Jennifer Kotler & Daniel Light

## INTRODUCTION

### General Biogeographic context of Chile

There is a narrow and long strip of land called Chile in the South American continent. It borders with Argentina, Bolivia and Peru (Figure 1). Because of the long extension of its territory and its peculiar geography there is a great diversity of climates along the country. This allows the existence of a variety of dramatically different types of habitats. From the driest desert in the world, the Mediterranean Region, the Temperate Rain Forest to the Patagonian Steppe.

The central zone of Chile comprises all the central regions, this means it spans from Coquimbo to El Maule (4<sup>th</sup> to 7<sup>th</sup> region). This area has a Mediterranean Climate, therefore, all the central part of Chile, like only four other places in the world, has been called ***Mediterranean Region***. The Mediterranean Climate has rainy and cold winters and very hot and dry summers.

The different climates present in Chile are the result of the physical interactions of four main factors; the Humboldt Current, the Pacific Anticyclone and the presence of the Andes and Coastal Range.

Although, Chile is on the continent it has a considerable geographical isolation. The Atacama Desert in the north, the Pacific Ocean in the West and the Andes Mountain Range in the East. Because of this isolation the rates of endemism are very high.

There are 829 species of terrestrial vertebrates in Chile. Despite of the high diversity of ecosystems the richness of the bird species is low compared to other countries of South America. There are 480 described species of birds, 11 of them are endemic (2,3 %). The number of native mammal species is 160 of which 13 are endemic (8%). Among reptiles the rate of endemism is high, 50% of the 126 native species are endemic. Finally the group with the highest rate of endemism is the amphibians with 63 described native species, 72% of which are endemic.

Regarding vegetation the number of endemic species is very high as well. One half of the 6.000 vascular plants species present in the territory are endemic.

Due to the high rates of biodiversity and endemism the Mediterranean region of Chile has been classified as one of the **25 Hot Spots** in the world with priority on its conservation.

### Geographic Location of Chile



**Figure 1:** Location of Chile in the South American continent. An important portion of it is in the Southern cone of South America.

## OUR GESTS

This report summarizes Jennifer Kotler's and Daniel Light's birding trip in Chile. They came to Santiago for work. After learning they would have a free day, they decided to book an excursion to observe and photograph many species of native birds. Main target species was the beautiful Tufted-tit Tyrant, therefore, we designed a private trip for them where it was very likely to spot it.

The best place for this objective was La Campana National Park, so that is what we did.

## ITINERARY

### Full day La Campana National Park

We traveled to La Campana National Park in Valparaíso region, or 5<sup>th</sup> region (Figure 2). Only an hour and a half away from Santiago this park is located in the coastal mountain range in central Chile and harbors one of the most representative populations of fauna and flora of the mediterranean region of Chile. La Campana consists of beautiful valleys and foothills with xeric vegetation (e.g. spiny shrubs and scrubs forming the "*Matorral*" plant community), creeks and slopes covered with ***Sclerophyllous Forest***, all mixed with the largest population (about 60,000) of the endemic Chilean Palm, *Jubaea chilensis*. This palm is famous for its longevity; several specimens of 500 to 700 years of age have been observed in the park and it is likely that the oldest palms are near 1000 years old. For several reasons nowadays it's an **endangered species** and the only place where it is possible to see a forest of this palm is in La Campana.

This 8,000 ha park was declared a national park in 1967 by CONAF and a World Biosphere Reserve in 1985 by UNESCO.

We left Santiago at 7:00 in the morning. Driving along the Pan-American route we headed north to the national park (Figure 2). While driving to the entry the first bird we saw was a Tufted-tit Tyrant!! Yes, incredible, the main target species was the first to be spotted!! However, in that moment, the light wasn't good for photographs so we moved on with the hope of finding another one. We continued towards the main entrance of the park and we spotted several Chilean Mockingbirds, Picui Ground Doves, Common Diuca Finches and Rufous Collared Sparrows. Once in the park we headed to the picnic area for breakfast, on the way

we had the chance to sight the beautiful and endemic rodent Degú or Fence Degú (*Octodon degus*), Grassland Yellow Finches and Fire-eyed Diucon.

As soon as we arrived to the picnic area we had a nice coffee with muffin and biscuits. While chatting and enjoying our snack many Chilean Swallows, House Wrens, White Crested Elaenias and Thorn-tailed Rayaditos were flying and moving around. Suddenly, Daniel and I realized that we had lost Jennifer, she was in the camera world, fascinated taking photographs among bushes, trees, branches and mosses. Fortunately, she came back! Although we heard a White-Throated Treerunner around us, we could not see it.

Soon after putting everything away we continued our birdwatching adventure. We left the picnic area and while moving towards our next stop we spotted a beautiful Rufous Plantcutter perching on top of a bush. Nearby an incredible couple of Moustached Turca appeared (Figure 3). They had a nest but unfortunately we couldn't see it because it was very well hidden under the ground. We stayed there for a while as we were having great views of mother and father Moustached Turcas coming in and out of their nest. At the same time, we saw Long-tailed Meadowlarks, Common Diuca Finches, Eared Doves, Grassland Yellowfinches, Austral Thrushes, Austral Blackbirds, Black-chinned Siskins, Californian Quails and many curious Chilean Mockingbirds.

It was hard to leave the Turcas but it was getting late and we had to move on, we still had a quest – to find and photograph Tufted-tit Tyrant. After a while we arrived to an area with a fantastic lookout, Jennifer and Daniel were delighted watching the astonishing valley full of Chilean Palms mixed with Matorral and Schlerophylous Forest.

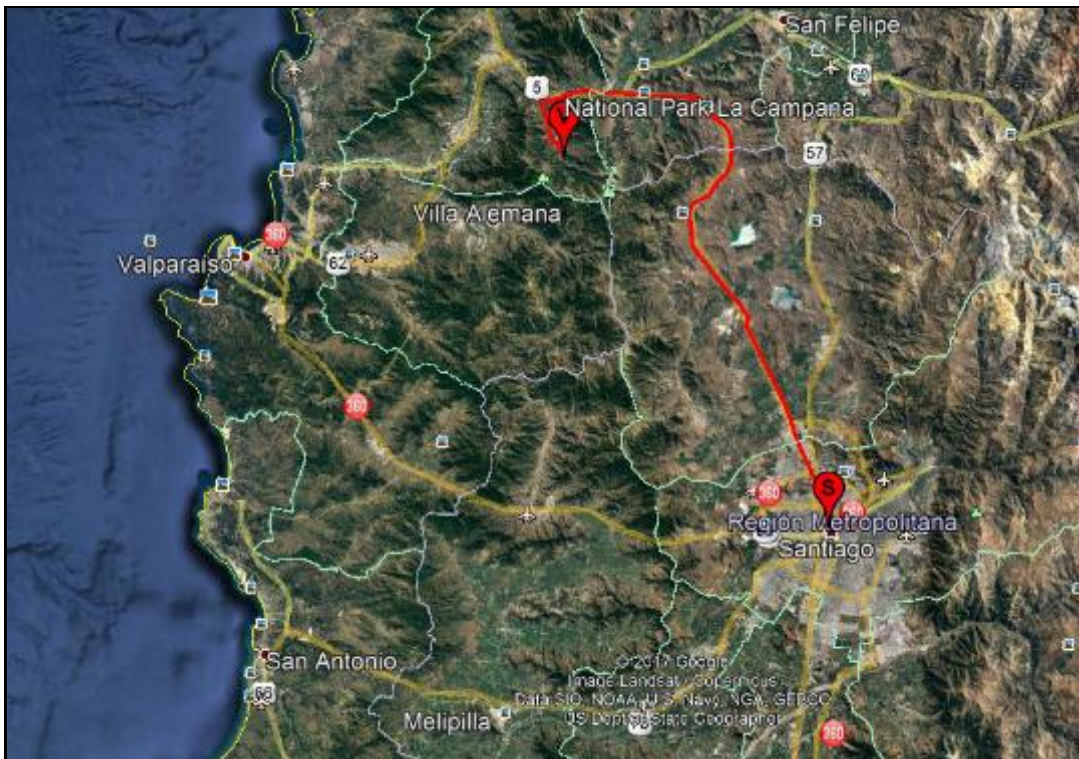
We continued our trek and later on we had excellent views of Dusky-tailed Canastero, Grey-hooded Sierra Finch and a beautiful White-throated Treerunner who posed for Jennifer's camera. At the end of this walk we stopped for a little rest and suddenly heard a knocking noise, we walked towards to it and discovered that there was a couple of Striped Woodpecker foraging in the trees around.

Sadly, it was already time to return to Santiago so after this we started to head back to the car. While walking back we saw a beautiful male of a Thin-tree Lizard having sun at the base of a big Chilean palm (Figure 5). This stunning reptile is an endemic species of Chile.

As we continued three very active Tufted-tit Tyrants appeared and posed as well for Jennifer. She couldn't believe it, finally, she got an excellent photograph of this species (Figure 4).

When we left the park we had beautiful sights of Chimango Caracaras, Southern Lapwings and specially a fantastic male of Long-tailed Meadowlark in the ploughed fields that surround the park.

### Route to La Campana National Park



**Figure 2:** The red line shows the route traveled from Santiago to La Campana NP in Valparaíso region, 5<sup>th</sup>.

Photographs of the bird species observed during the excursion



**Figure 3:** Moustached Turca (*Pteroptochos megapodius*), endemic to the mediterranean region.



**Figure 4:** Tufted-tit Tyrant (*Anairetes parulus*), a very small but superb Flycatcher.



**Figure 5:** A male specimen of Thin tree Lizard (*Liolaemus tenuis*) having a sun bath.

### **Bird list**

Taxonomic order and notes follows South American Classification Committee  
<http://www.museum.lsu.edu/~Remsen/SACCBaseline.html>

#### NEW WORLD QUAILS

1. Californian Quail - *Callipepla californica*

#### HAWKS

2. Harri's Hawk – *Parabuteo unicinctus*
3. Black-chested Buzzard Eagle – *Geranoaetus melanoleucus*

#### FALCONS

4. Chimango Caracara - *Milvago chimango*
5. American Kestrel – *Falco sparverius*

#### PLOVERS

6. Southern Lapwing - *Vanellus chilensis*

#### PIGEONS

7. Rock pigeon – *Columba livia*
8. Eared Dove - *Zenaida auriculata*
9. Picui ground-dove – *Columbina picui*



#### WOODPECKERS

10. Striped Woodpecker - *Veniliornis lignarius*

#### TAPACULOS

11. Moustached Turca – *Pterotochos megapodius*

#### OVENBIRDS

12. Thorn-tailed Rayadito - *Aphrastura spinicauda*

13. White-throated Treerunner – *Pygarrhichas albogularis*

14. Plain-mantled Tit-spinetail – *Leptasthenura aegithaloides*

15. Dusky-tailed Canastero- *Pseudoasthenes humicola*

#### TYRANTS

16. White-crested Elaenia – *Elaenia albiceps*

17. Tufted Tit-Tyrant - *Anairetes parulus*

18. Fire-eyed Diucon - *Xolmis pyrope*

#### SWALLOWS

19. Chilean Swallow - *Tachycineta meyeni*

#### WRENS

20. House Wren - *Troglodytes aedon*

#### THRUSHES

21. Austral Thrush - *Turdus falcklandii*

#### MOCKINGBIRDS

22. Chilean Mockingbird - *Mimus thenca*

#### FINCHES & SPARROWS

23. Rufous-collared Sparrow - *Zonotrichia capensis*

24. Grey-hooded Sierra-Finch – *Phrygilus gayi*

25. Common Diuca-Finch - *Diuca diuca*

26. Grassland Yellow-Finch - *Sicalis luteola*

#### SISKINS

27. Black-chinned Siskin - *Spinus barbata*

#### BLACKBIRDS

28. Long-tailed Meadowlark - *Sturnella loyca*

29. Austral Blackbird - *Curaeus curaeus*

30. Shiny Cowbird - *Molothrus bonariensis*

MAMMALS

1. Fence Degu – *Octodon degus*

REPTILES

2. Thin tree Lizard – *Liolaemus tenuis*