

# Albatross

*Birding and Nature Tours*



Birding in the southern Andes: from central Chile to Patagonia

January 26<sup>th</sup> – February 6<sup>th</sup> 2017

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**Participants:** John Black, Marcia Jacklin, Lynne Freeman & Ivor Williams

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## OVERVIEW

This is the trip report for the group of John Black, Marcia Jacklin, Ivor Williams and Lynne Freeman, very passionate birders from Buffalo, Canada. We started our tour in central Chile focusing on endemics, in second half of the trip we traveled to Patagonia to look for the southernmost species of the American continent. We traveled more than 2000 kms visiting different landscapes that this unique and marvelous region can offer. From the Austral forest of *Nothofagus*, to the northern steppe of Tierra del Fuego and canyons of Torres del Paine and Sierra Baguales

We have seen 156 species, of which these are highlights: Stripe-backed Bittern, Diameded Sandpiper Plover, Chestnut-throated Huet-huet, Chucaco tapaculo, White-throated tapaculo, Magellanic Plover, Ruddy-headed Goose, Dolphin Gull, Aplomado Falcon, Lesser Rhea and Hooded Grebe.

## ITINERARY

### Day 1. Central Chile.

On our first day we started birding in central Andes, around Farellones. We were trying to watch the endemics of this area: Dusky-tailed Canastero, Chilean Tinamou and White-throated Tapaculo. We had good views of the Canastero, and pair of Tufted Tit-tyrant, but we were not lucky enough to see Chilean Tinamou, we only heard it.

The next target was the elusive White-throated Tapaculo. We saw two of them running quickly among bushes. Additionally, we saw Moustached Turca standing on hillside, a pair of Dark-bellied Cinclodes on the stream, and wonderful Giant Hummingbird flying above our heads.

We continued our trip, going up to the mountains, where we had seen first raptor species: Black-chested Buzzard-eagle, Variable Hawk, and some Andean Condors overflying mountains. Later we visited a mountain marsh, which allowed us to watch our first Rufous-banded Miners and White-browed Ground-tyrants. At this same place we saw Andean condors really close to us because there was a dead horse near. They were on a meal party!



Condor's party in Farellones

We left this place to go to Plaza los Pumas, where we had our lunch. From where, we also got a good views on White-sided Hillstar and beautiful Greater Yellow-finch.

We started to drive back to Santiago and stopping along the curvy road. We saw lots of Austral blackbirds, Tufted Tit-tyrants and Rufous collared-sparrow.

## Day 2

On our second day, we drove from Santiago until Vilches Alto, which is close to the Altos de Lircay National Reserve.

After four hours of driving we arrived to the Colbun Lake, where a surprise was waiting for us: we saw a beautiful Osprey (a common bird for the group, but a rare bird for Chile!). We have seen Andean gull, lots of Yellow-billed Pintail, Speckled Teal and an active colony of Burrowing Parakeets. It was amazing but we did not have the best views because of the fires and smoke.

Park was actually closed because of that but we visited an alternative trail, which was amazing! There we saw Chestnut-throated Huet-huet, Chucao tapaculo, Austral parakeet and Striped Woodpecker all of them important for the group. Finally, we tried looking for the Rufous-legged Owl, but we could not see it because of the season.

## Day 3

We started our day at the sunrise to get better views of tapaculos on our trail. We had great views of Chestnut-throated Huet-huet and Magellanic Tapaculo! That was amazing. While we were calling and watching Huet-huet, a Chilean hawk appeared! An unexpected surprise! We took good pictures of this rare bird, which was more interested in the Huet-huet than us. We spent all the morning enjoying ancient forests of Vilches.



Chestnut-throated Huet-huet seen on Altos de Lircay



Chilean hawk seen on Altos de Lircay area

In the afternoon we came back to the Colbun area, where we had better conditions than before. We saw White-tufted Grebe, many duck species, and we got better views of Burrowing Parakeets.

After that we left the area and we drove back to Santiago.

#### Day 4

On our fourth day we went to the coast of central Chile. We had two targets: the special Stripe-backed Bittern, and the endemic Chilean Seaside Cinclodes. We started on the San Jeronimo river mouth checking for the Stripe-backed Bittern. We had excellent views of three of them. In the same place we saw Spotted-flanked Gallinule, various duck species, breeding pairs of Pied-billed Grebe, and lots and lots of coots.

We continued our trip to a very nice place, where we had lunch and were looking for Chilean Seaside Cinclodes – we could see a pair of this endemic species.

At Cartagena lagoon we saw Lake Ducks, Red Shovelers, and a lifer for Lynne: Cinnamon teal (rare in eastern Canada), Black-necked swans and lots of terns and gulls.

Finally, we went to the Maipo River Mouth, place of the Gray gull (lifer for most of them), thousands of Franklin's gulls, and lots of shorebirds (especially Semipalmated sandpiper). After visiting this wonderful place, we came back to Santiago.

## Day 5

On the last day with Fernando leading the trip, in central Chile, we went to El Yeso Valley. The main goal was looking for the Diameded Sandpiper Plover! It is a specialty of Chile. We started having breakfast and birding at the same time. We were getting very good views of Crag Chilia and Moustached Turca, California quails, Black-winged ground-doves and Chilean flickers.

We continued the trip by seeing Yellow-rumped siskins, Mourning Sierra-finches, Rufous-banded miners, Mountain parakeets and White-browed Ground-tyrants on a marsh beside to the road. We visited a shrubed-place, where we saw the beautiful Sharp-billed canastero, and lots of toads and frogs.



Mountain parakeet seen on the Yeso Valley

After getting good views of Yeso water reservoir we walked some minutes by a small stream and we found one Diameded Sandpiper Plover! We spent some minutes with it, taking pictures, but we tried to avoid staying too much to avoid the disturbance. We also saw Crested duck and Yellow-rumped Siskin as well.

Along the way we stopped once again to try to see some additional birds. We saw South-American snipes, Gray-breasted seedsnipes and White-browed ground-tyrants.

With all these species spotted we decided to go back to Santiago.



Diomeded Sandpiper Plover seen on the Yeso valley

### Day 6 Patagonia,

Leader Cristofer de la Rivera

I met the group on the second half of the tour. Together we started a Patagonian journey in Punta Arenas, where as soon as we touched the land and claimed our bags, went to Humedal 3 Puentes, the local wetland near the city and where we got our first lifers for the trip in the south: Flying-steamer Duck and White-rumped Sandpiper. The same day in the afternoon, we drove on southern road from Punta Arenas to San Juan River to visit the Ruddy-headed Goose Reserve, a protected area with perfect landscape for nesting grounds. On the way we saw the Magellanic and Blackish Oystercatchers, Kelp, Ashy-headed, Ruddy-headed and Upland Goose the four types of geese of this region. We also visited the *Nothofagus* forest and had great views of the Austral Parakeet, Spectacle Duck, Fire-eyed Diucon, Black-faced Ibis, Thorn-tailed Rayadito and a long distance call of the Magellanic Woodpecker.

### Day 7

The second day we took ferry to cross the mythical Strait of Magellan to reached Tierra del Fuego (The Land of Fire). It was a two hours navigation with excellent weather conditions (perhaps too good with no wind, so less birds flying), despite of that, Black-browed Albatross, a few Magellanic-diving Petrels, Magellanic Penguin and Two King Penguin were species that we have see.

After our arrival to Porvenir we went straight to salty lagoons to look for the scarce Magellanic Plover, a very important specie for this group! So we started looking over the rocky area where two were among Baird's Sandpiper, Rufous-chested Dotterel, Austral Canastero and Blue-and-white Swallows.

At the end of the day I decided to visit one last lagoon 7 km away. We were looking for the unique Hooded Grebe registered a few weeks earlier, and first time in 20 years in Tierra del Fuego. We were very happy because we had a very close encounter with this



single individual among a group of 244 Silvery Grebe. In the following days we visited the same lagoon twice and we didn't see it again. We saw Coscoroba Swans, Black-necked Swans, South American Tern, and White-tufted Grebe at the same lagoon.

### Day 8

On the third day in Patagonia we visited the King Penguin Colony in Bahía Inútil. We had an excellent visit because we saw 84 adults and 10 chicks. On the road we have seen more fuegian steppe birds mixed with coastal ones: Chilean Skua, Short-billed Miner, Cinnamon-bellied Ground-tyrant, Black-chested Buzzard-eagle, just to mention some of the sightings that day.

We arrived to the King Penguin colony, and spent about an hour enjoying the views of these spectacular creatures. We were still in the "hunt" for Magellanic Woodpecker so we moved to a very old nothofagus forest to look for it. We didn't have luck but we saw a couple of Austral Pigmy Owl, plus all the common birds of this landscape. On the way we got to see Lesser Yellow-legs, Chiloe Wigeons and Chilean Swallows.



Austral pigmy-owl seen on Patagonia

### Day 9

On forth day, driving day, we had to cover long distances. Early in the morning we took the northern exit of the town Porvenir towards short ferry crossing called Punta Delgada. In this first part we saw Magellanic Horned Owl, Aplomado Falcon, more than 100 Tawny-throated Dotterel, Patagonian Yellow-finch, pretty good for a fuegian morning.

Once in the continent we started to look for continental steppe birds, so it was time for Band-tailed Earthcreeper, Silver Teal, and the impressive Lesser Rhea, all of them in this shrubby-flat ecosystem. We went through extense and vast steppes on our way to Puerto Natales and Torres del Paine. On the road we got great views of Least Seedsnipe and



some Rufous-colored Sparrows. Finally, we reached our destination in Puerto Natales, the entrance to the NP Torres del Paine.

### Day 10

On fifth and last day of the tour, earlier than any other day, we started to drive heading towards the mountains. We visited two different sierras in the search of forest and high Andean species, plus the amazing views of the peaks of Torres del Paine. So we started with Torrent Duck in our first hike within the park, and also saw Chilean Flicker, Austral Blackbird, and Cinereous Harrier. There are great views of glaciers! We kept driving within the park stopping in different lagoons and lookouts, until we reach the lagoon with higher rush vegetation, the perfect ambient for the extremely shy Austral Rail. We set the playback equipment and the little bird started to call back just a few meters away from us! Sadly, after 30 min of trying to look for it in different places, it never showed up.



Torres del Paine area

Then we spent the second half of the day in Sierra Baguales, a higher sierra where we could drive through the valley and look for northern species that reach this latitude. As soon as we got there we found the Patagonian Mockingbird, Grey-flanked Cinclodes and Sharp-billed Canastero, getting higher in a small pond we saw Red Shoveler, and Chilean Flamingo. I would say that we arrived a little bit late so we didn't have much bird activity left.

In general I think it was an excellent trip, clients were satisfied (and by the way had a lot of birding skills), excellent weather conditions. We traveled more than 2200 kms by the sea and land, and saw more than 110 species in 5 days in the southernmost part of the continent.

## **BIRD LIST (156 species)**

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

Detailed checklists available on eBird

### **ORDER STRUTHIONIFORMES**

#### **Family Rheidae [Rheas]**

Lesser Rhea *Rhea pennata*

### **ORDER TINAMIFORMES**

#### **Family Tinamidae [Tinamous]**

Chilean Tinamou *Nothoprocta perdicaria* (just heard)

### **ORDER ANSERIFORMES**

#### **Family Anatidae [Swans, Geese and Ducks]**

Black-necked Swan *Cygnus melancoryphus*

Coscoroba Swan *Coscoroba coscoroba*

Upland Goose *Chloephaga picta*

Kelp Goose *Chloephaga hybrida*

Ashy-headed Goose *Chloephaga poliocephala*

Ruddy-headed Goose *Chloephaga rubidiceps*

Torrent Duck *Merganetta armata*

Flying Steamer Duck *Tachyeres patachonicus*

Flightless Steamer Duck *Tachyeres pteneres*

Crested Duck *Lophonetta specularioides*

Spectacled Duck *Speculanas specularis*

Chiloe Wigeon *Anas sibilatrix*

Yellow-billed Teal *Anas flavirostris*

Yellow-billed Pintail *Anas georgica*

Silver Teal *Anas versicolor*

Cinnamon teal *Anas cyanoptera*

Red shoveler *Anas platalea*

Lake Duck *Oxyura vittata*

## **ORDER PODICIPEDIFORMES**

### **Family Podicipedidae [Grebes]**

White-tufted Grebe *Rollandia rolland*

Great Grebe *Podiceps major*

Silvery Grebe *Podiceps occipitalis*

Hooded Grebe *Podiceps gallardoi*

## **ORDER PHOENICOPTERIFORMES**

### **Family Phoenicopteridae [Flamingos]**

Chilean Flamingo *Phoenicopterus chilensis*

## **ORDER SPHENISCIFORMES**

### **Family Spheniscidae [Penguins]**

King Penguin *Aptenodytes patagonicus*

Humboldt Penguin *Spheniscus humboldti*

Magellanic Penguin *Spheniscus magellanicus*

## ORDER PROCELLARIIFORMES

### Family Diomedidae [Albatrosses]

Black-browed Albatross *Thalassarche melanophris*

### Family Procellariidae [Petrels and Shearwaters]

Southern Giant Petrel *Macronectes giganteus*

Sooty Shearwater *Puffinus griseus*

### Family Hydrobatidae [Storm-Petrels]

Wilson's Storm Petrel *Oceanites oceanicus*

### Pelecanoididae [Diving Petrels]

Magellanic Diving Petrel *Pelecanoides magellani*

## ORDER SULIFORMES

### Family Phalacrocoracidae [Cormorants]

Neotropic Cormorant *Phalacrocorax brasilianus*

Magellanic Cormorant *Phalacrocorax magellanicus*

Imperial Cormorant *Phalacrocorax atriceps*

## ORDER PELECANIFORMES

### Family Ardeidae [Hérons]

Black-crowned Night Heron *Nycticorax nycticorax*

### Family Threskiornithidae [Ibises]

Black-faced Ibis *Theristicus melanopis*

## **Family Pelecanidae (Pelicans)**

Peruvian pelican *Pelecanus thagus*

## **ORDER CATHARTIFORMES**

### **Family Cathartidae [New World Vultures]**

Andean Condor *Vultur gryphus*

## **ORDER ACCIPITRIFORMES**

### **Family Accipitridae [Hawks and Eagles]**

Cinereous Harrier *Circus cinereus*

Variable Hawk *Geranoaetus polyosoma*

Chilean Hawk *Accipiter bicolor chilensis*

Black-chested Buzzard-Eagle *Geranoaetus melanoleucus*

## **ORDER GRUIFORMES**

### **Family Rallidae [Rails and Coots]**

Austral Rail *Rallus antarcticus*

Plumbeous Rail *Pardirallus sanguinolentus*

Spot-flanked Gallinule *Porphyriops melanops*

Red-gartered Coot *Fulica armillata*

White-winged Coot *Fulica leucoptera*

Red-fronted Coot *Fulica rufifrons*

## ORDER CHARADRIIFORMES

### Family Charadriidae [Lapwings and Plovers]

Tawny-throated Dotterel *Oreopholus ruficollis*

Southern Lapwing *Vanellus chilensis*

Two-banded Plover *Charadrius falklandicus*

Rufous-chested Dotterel *Charadrius modestus*

Black-bellied plover *Pluvialis squatarola*

Semipalmated plover *Charadrius semipalmatus*

### Family Haematopodidae [Oystercatchers]

American Oystercatcher *Haematopus palliatus*

Blackish Oystercatcher *Haematopus ater*

Magellanic Oystercatcher *Haematopus leucopodus*

### Family Pluvianellidae [Magellanic Plover]

Magellanic Plover *Pluvianellus socialis*

### Family Recurvirostridae [Avocets and stilts]

White-backed Stilt *Himantopus mexicanus melanurus*

### Family Scolopacidae [Sandpipers]

South American Snipe *Gallinago paraguaiiae*

Whimbrel *Numenius phaeopus*

Hudsonian Godwit *Limosa haemastica*

Greater Yellowlegs *Tringa melanoleuca*

Lesser Yellowlegs *Tringa flavipes*

Ruddy Turnstone *Arenaria interpres*

Surfbird *Aphriza virgata*

White-rumped Sandpiper *Calidris fuscicollis*

Semipalmated Sandpiper *Calidris pusilla*

Baird's Sandpiper *Calidris bairdii*

#### **Family Thinocoridae [Seedsnipes]**

Least Seedsnipe *Thinocorus rumicivorus*

#### **Family Stercorariidae [Skuas]**

Chilean Skua *Stercorarius chilensis*

#### **Family Laridae [Gulls and Terns]**

Brown-hooded Gull *Chroicocephalus maculipennis*

Franklin Gull *Leucophaeus pipixcan*

Gray gull *Leucophaeus modestus*

Dolphin Gull *Leucophaeus scoresbii*

Kelp Gull *Larus dominicanus*

Elegant Tern *Thalasseus elegans*

South American Tern *Sterna hirundinacea*

#### **Family Rynchopidae [Skimmers]**

Black skimmer *Rynchops niger*



## ORDER COLUMBIFORMES

### Family Columbidae [Pigeons]

Rock Pigeon *Columba livia*

Chilean Pigeon *Patagioenas araucana*

Eared Dove *Zenaida auriculata*

Black-winged Ground Dove *Metriopelia melanoptera*

## ORDER STRIGIFORMES

### Family Strigidae [Owls]

Great Horned Owl *Bubo virginianus*

Austral Pygmy Owl *Glaucidium nana*

## ORDER CAPRIMULGIFORMES

### Family Trochilidae

White-sided Hillstar *Oreotrochilus leucopleurus*

Giant Hummingbird *Patagona gigas*

Green-backed Firecrown *Sephanoides sephaniodes*

## ORDER CORACIIFORMES

### Family Alcedinidae [Kingfishers]

Ringed Kingfisher *Megaceryle torquata*

## ORDER PICIFORMES

### Family Picidae [Woodpeckers]

Striped Woodpecker *Veniliornis lignarius*

Chilean Flicker *Colaptes pitius*

Magellanic Woodpecker *Campephilus magellanicus* (just heard)

## **ORDER FALCONIFORMES**

### **Family Falconidae [Falcons]**

Southern Caracara *Caracara plancus*

Chimango Caracara *Milvago chimango*

American Kestrel *Falco sparverius*

Aplomado Falcon *Falco femoralis*

## **ORDER PSITTACIFORMES**

### **Family Psittacidae [Parrots]**

Austral Parakeet *Enicognathus ferrugineus*

Burrowing Parakeet *Cyanoliseus patagonus*

## **ORDER PASSERIFORMES**

### **SUBORDER TYRANNI [Suboscines]**

#### **Family Rhinocryptidae [Tapaculos]**

Magellanic Tapaculo *Scytalopus magellanicus*

Dusky Tapaculo *Scytalopus fuscus* (just heard)

White-throated Tapaculo *Scelorchilus albicollis*

Chucao Tapaculo *Scelorchilus rubecula*

Chestnut-throated Huet-huet *Pterotochos castaneus*

Moustached Turca *Pterotochos megapodius*

#### **Family Furnariidae [Ovenbirds]**

Common Miner *Geositta cunicularia*

Short-billed Miner *Geositta antarctica*  
Rufous-banded Miner *Geositta rufipennis*  
White-throated Treerunner *Pygarrhichas albogularis*  
Band-tailed Earthcreeper *Ochetorhynchus phoenicurus*  
Crag Chilia *Ochetorhynchus melanurus*  
Buff-winged Cinclodes *Cinclodes fuscus*  
Gray-flanked Cinclodes *Cinclodes oustaleti*  
Dark-bellied Cinclodes *Cinclodes patagonicus*  
Seaside Cinclodes *Cinclodes nigrofumosus*  
Wren-like Rushbird *Phleocryptes melanops*  
Thorn-tailed Rayadito *Aphrastura spinicauda*  
Plain-mantled Tit-Spinetail *Leptasthenura aegithaloides*  
Des Murs's Wiretail *Sylviothorhynchus desmursii* (just heard)  
Austral Canastero *Asthenes anthoides*  
Sharp-billed Canastero *Asthenes pyrrholeuca*  
Dusky-tailed Canastero *Pseudasthenes humicola*

#### **Family Tyrannidae [Tyrant Flycatchers]**

White-crested Elaenia *Elaenia albiceps chilensis*  
Tufted Tit-Tyrant *Anairetes parulus*  
Austral Negrito *Lessonia rufa*  
Many-coloured Rush Tyrant *Tachuris rubrigastra*  
Dark-faced Ground Tyrant *Muscisaxicola maclovianus*  
Cinnamon-bellied Ground Tyrant *Muscisaxicola capistratus*  
White-browed Ground-Tyrant *Muscisaxicola albilora*  
Black-billed Shrike-tyrant *Agriornis montanus*

Great Shrike-tyrant *Agriornis lividus*

Fire-eyed Diucon *Xolmis pyrope*

Spectacled tyrant *Hymenops perspicillatus*

**Family Cotingidae [Cotingas]**

Rufous-tailed Plantcutter *Phytotoma rara*

**SUBORDER PASSERES [Oscines]**

**Family Hirundinidae [Swallows]**

Blue-and-white Swallow *Pygochelidon cyanoleuca*

Chilean Swallow *Tachycineta meyeni*

**Family Troglodytidae [Wrens]**

House Wren *Troglodytes aedon*

Sedge Wren *Cistothorus platensis*

**Family Turdidae [Thrushes]**

Austral Thrush *Turdus falcklandii*

**Family Mimidae [Mockingbirds]**

Patagonian Mockingbird *Mimus patagonicus*

Chilean Mockingbird *Mimus thenca*

**Family Motacillidae [Pipits and Wagtails]**

Correndera Pipit *Anthus correndera*

### **Family Thraupidae [Tanagers]**

Grey-hooded Sierra-finch *Phrygilus gayi*

Patagonian Sierra-finch *Phrygilus patagonicus*

Mourning Sierra-finch *Phrygilus fruticeti*

Patagonian Yellow-finch *Sicalis lebruni*

Grassland Yellow-finch *Sicalis luteola*

Greater Yellow-finch *Sicalis auriventris*

Common Diuca-finch *Diuca diuca*

### **Family Emberizidae [Sparrows]**

Rufous-collared Sparrow *Zonotrichia capensis*

### **Family Icteridae [New World Blackbirds]**

Austral Blackbird *Curaeus curaeus*

Yellow-winged Blackbird *Agelasticus thilius*

Long-tailed Meadowlark *Sturnella loyca*

### **Family Fringillidae [Finches]**

Black-chinned Siskin *Spinus barbata*

Yellow-rumped Siskin *Spinus uropygialis*

## **MAMMALS**

Armadillos | Dasypodidae

**Pichi** *Zaedyus pichiy*

Rabbits & Hares | Leporidae

**Old World Rabbit** *Oryctolagus cuniculus*

**Brown Hare** *Lepus capensis*

Camels | Camelidae

**Guanaco** *Lama guanicoe*

Dolphins | Delphinidae

**Peale's Dolphin** *Lagenorhynchus australis*

**Commerson's Dolphin** *Cephalorhynchus commersonii*

Eared Seals | Otariidae

**Southern Sea Lion** *Otaria bryonia*

Dogs | Canidae

**Southern Grey Fox** *Pseudalopex griseus*

**Culpeo Fox** *Pseudalopex culpaeus*

Skunks | Mephitidae

**Patagonian Hog-nosed Skunk** *Conepatus humboldti*