

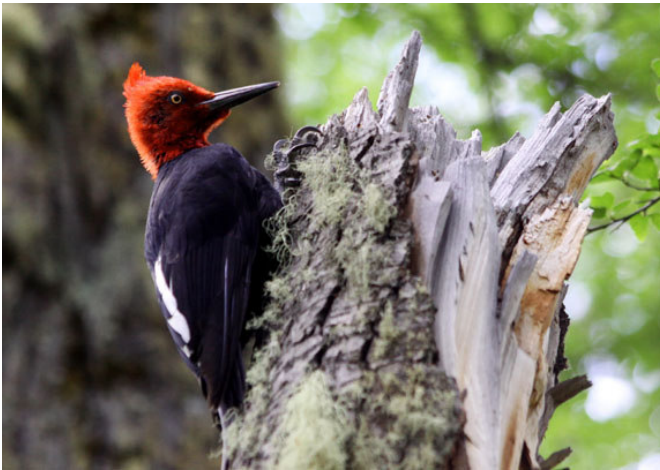


Rockjumper Birding Tours

Worldwide Birding Adventures

Argentina *Specialties of Patagonia*

19th – 30th November 2008



Magellanic Woodpecker and Moreno Glacier All photos by David Shackelford

Top 10 birds as voted by participants:

1. Magellanic Woodpecker
2. Andean Condor
3. Spectacled Tyrant
4. Lesser Rhea
5. Black-chested Buzzard-Eagle
6. Burrowing Parrot
7. Many-colored Bush-Tyrant
8. Black-necked Swan
9. Lesser Seedsnipe
10. Hooded Grebe



Magellanic Penguin and Group Photo at southernmost point of the Pan-American Highway

Tour Summary

Southern Argentina is as diverse a region as it is vast, extending from the rolling Pampas grasslands and dry desert coast to the southern forests of Patagonia flanking the high snow-covered Andes. A congenial and high-spirited group, we had a fantastic experience covering this extensive territory over land, air, and sea all the while admiring the unforgettable birds and wildlife combined with breathtaking scenery and landscapes.

Our first intended destination, the Costanera Sur Nature Reserve, located literally within the sprawling city of Buenos Aires was unusually dry this year, so we instead turned north into the open Pampas and marshlands of Otamendi Nature Reserve, located close to the winding Parana River. Almost immediately after stepping out of our vehicle in this unique biome we were assaulted with a profusion of birds including the stunning Scarlet-headed Blackbird, Giant Wood-Rail, elegant Long-winged Harrier, Great Pampa-Finch, Long-tailed Reed-Finch, Curve-billed Reed-Haunter, and the eye-catching male Spectacled Tyrant among many others. Nearby thorny scrub and woodlands produced the attractive Diademed Tanager, Chicli Spinetail, awesome scope views of the migrant Ash-colored Cuckoo, and Dusky-legged Guan before we hiked to a scenic viewpoint looking over the surrounding wetlands that offered views of Maguari Stork and the appropriately named Southern Screamer that shouted hoarsely across the marshland.

We next flew south along the coastline to the town of Trelew where a noisy colony of spectacular Burrowing Parrots greeted us before learning of the unique colonial history of this area. Exciting new birds kept coming fast and furious as we scanned through several wetlands in the area where Coscoroba and the elegant Back-necked Swans vied for our attention over a myriad of other waterfowl such as numerous Red Shoveler, Chiloe Wigeon, Lake Duck, White-cheeked Pintail, Spectacled Duck, Silver Teal, and the unique parasitic Black-headed Duck. Flocks of gorgeous pink Chilean Flamingos casually sifted the water's surface along with Black-faced Ibis sounding off like a toy bugle and migratory Hudsonian Godwits that probed along the adjacent mudflats.

Distracted by the amusing antics of a giant rabbit-like rodent called the Mara, numerous Guanacos, and groups of Lesser Rheas that sauntering across the scrubby landscape followed by numerous tiny chicks, we also paused to look into the eyes of the massive Southern Elephant Seals that basked on the beach in massive numbers. Sometimes weighing in excess of three tons, the males were both impressive and very intimidating! Sightings of Rock and Imperial Shags soon had us scoping the surf while erect Great Grebe dove into the ocean and our first Southern Giant Petrels skimmed past before we found the

real prize – a pair of localized Chubut Steamerduck that we scoped in admiration for several minutes. Southwards at Punto Tombo we walked through the largest colony of Magellanic Penguins on earth estimated during peak season to number nearly 800,000 individuals! It was fascinating to watch these adorable creatures as they inquisitively approached and closely inspect us before continuing on their way to nearby underground nesting burrows shared with the tiny gerbil-like Patagonian Cavy. Peering into the burrows we watched several Magellanic Penguins actively feeding their dark fluffy newborn chicks as South American Terns and predatory Antarctic Skuas flew along the red volcanic cliffs and Elegant Crested Tinamou scuttled past through the undergrowth.

Making our way to the Valdes Peninsula we first boarded a vessel into the southern bay to witness a piece of the thousands of Southern Right Whales that annual migrate to this location to give birth. We sighted more than a dozen of these amazing creatures surfacing and fluking while a mother and calf played only a few meters from our boat. At one point the calf even pushed up against the boat to within arms-length and proceeded to roll about and finally spout almost in our faces before submerging into the depths again. It was a fascinating experience. The surrounding peninsula itself was a desolate scene of short thorny scrub in an arid environment that upon closer inspection hosted a collection of interesting wildlife such as the endemic Rusty-backed and Black-crowned Monjitas, both Wing-banded and Patagonian Mockingbirds, a pair of Patagonian Yellow-Finch we found nesting in a mud cavity, Scale-throated Earthcreeper, the reticent Patagonian Canastero, Gray-bellied and Lesser Shrike-Tyrants, and the endemic Carbonated Sierra-Finch among many others.

Leaving the coastal desert behind, we next boarded an aircraft to the foothill steppes of the southern Andes. This dramatic landscape was dominated by the imposing ice covered peak of Fitzroy towering over the countryside like a castle in the sky. One of our first new birds of this area was the charming Lesser Seedsnipe that we scoped along the open gravel plains before watching our first of several Andean Condors soar magnificently overhead and across the mountains, a sight we will never forget. Venturing deep into the heart of remote Patagonia we were pleased to find a lone Patagonian Gray Fox and later we had a great encounter with the adorable Pichi for several minutes, a small hairy species of armadillo with a cute name! Carefully scanning over a secluded highland lake we first found numerous Silvery Grebes before locating our primary target, the dazzling Hooded Grebe, a gorgeous species that is notoriously difficult to search out due to its habit of constantly shifting locations. We absorbed this mega species through the scope as we watched it diving and feeding before continuing on our way traveling along the windy steppes where sightings of Chocolate-vented Tyrant and Cinnamon-bellied Ground-Tyrant were only outweighed by the antics of the cute black and rufous Austral Negrito and a stunning group of alert Tawny-throated Dotterels.

Winding our way in into the pristine temperate forest of the world famous Glacier National Park on two separate occasions, we were greeted with clear blue skies complimented by numerous waterfalls cascading down the snow-covered mountain slopes. Black-chested Buzzard-Eagles cruised by overhead and we enjoyed outrageous close views of several scarce Spectacled Duck before the secretive Black-throated Huet-huet enticed us further into the forest with its ethereal song and an unusually confident Magellanic Tapaculo danced in front of our eyes. Our birding experience continued at an incredible pace as we watched a responsive Austral Pygmy-Owl scowling at us nearby while anxious Austral Thrush, the beautiful Patagonian Sierra-Finch, and pleasantly-named Fire-eyed Diucon all joined in to mob the predator. Undoubtedly one of the highlights of this fantastic reserve is the accessibility it allows to the massive Moreno Glacier, one of the most spectacular and accessible glaciers on earth. From the boardwalk we were able to approach fantastically close to this gigantic natural wonder as chunks of compacted ice cracked away into the turquoise water below creating riveting sounds that echoed sharply towards us.

Of course, one of the most charismatic birds of South America and an icon of Patagonia, we spent considerable time searching for the remarkable Magellanic Woodpecker, one of the largest and most striking members of this mesmerizing bird family. Our experience was absolutely classic, an unforgettable series of events that make the quest just as memorable as the bird itself! We began early one morning walking into a lush grove of Lenga trees where we soon heard its distinctive double rap pounding sounding off almost like gunfire through the forest. Excitedly we moved into position noticing the baseball-sized chunks that had been ripped out of the surrounding tree trunks by this powerful denizen of the forest. Before we had a chance to locate the bird while perched it flashed by flying less than ten feet above our heads so close we could hear the sound of the air rushing between its wings leaving us only with the vision of its massive silhouette disappearing deep into the forest. Despite our continued efforts we were not able to relocate this bird or others in different sections of the reserve. After a full day a field enjoying the spectacular scenery of Glacier National Park enhanced by the brilliant red Fire Bushes dotting the landscape often with a Chilean Flicker or Rufous-tailed Plantcutter perched nearby, we began our return journey late that afternoon still wanting more of the incredible woodpecker that had appeared so briefly. We made one final stop in the first location where we had encountered the woodpecker but found the area to be eerily silent other than a few Austral Parakeets that were curiously passing flowers from one individual to the other. After almost half an hour of waiting quietly we could feel disappointing reality beginning to sink in, but almost as we were about to turn around to depart we saw an obscure figure fly in and land in the distance – a gorgeous male Magellanic Woodpecker! We stood frozen admiring this amazing bird and to our astonishment it continued moving towards us until it was literally barely more than four meters away! Astonishingly, this handsome bird performed for several minutes so close we had to put down our binoculars just to soak it all in. What a marvelous bird and what an experience of a lifetime we were able to share together!

After our final flight southward to the remote coastal settlement of Ushuaia, the southernmost city in the world, we drove north over the Andean Cordillera to the city of Rio Grande. In the most horrific weather conditions imaginable including driving wind and a frigid blizzard we amazingly still managed to score big in the surrounding grasslands with the increasingly rare mainland subspecies of Ruddy-headed Goose as well as the range-restricted Austral Canastero that aggressively responded while perching proudly and bursting into lively song. We were soon compensated for enduring the chilly glacial weather by soaking in the warm jacuzzi at our final lodge of the tour idyllically overlooking the Beagle Channel where Flightless Steamer-Duck and the smartly decorated female Kelp Goose literally could be seen from our doorstep!

Parking our vehicle at the southernmost tip of the Pan-American Highway that stretches northward to Alaska, we spent the next day exploring the ancient woodlands of Tierra del Fuego National Park. Thick gnarly Southern Beeches dominated the forest with colorful lichens and bearded mosses adding character where we obtained repeated sunlit views of the striking White-throated Tree-runner while noisy groups of Thorn-tailed Rayadito gleaned insects from the bark crevices. A confiding Dark-bellied Cinclodes and several sleek White-throated Caracaras entertained us during an outdoor lunch with beautiful weather surrounded by snow-covered mountains. After watching the historic narrow-rail train passing through the reserve that afternoon we were fortunate to spend another magical session admiring again the Magellanic Woodpecker, this time a spectacular female sporting a ridiculously long curled crest that bounced comically as she ripped away bark only a few meters above our heads.

We concluded our adventures with a catamaran voyage into the Beagle Channel, a scenic passage saddled between the mountainous borders of Argentina and Chile. With relatively mild weather and not even out of the harbor we were already admiring the complex patterns of a Pintado Petrel, an unusual sighting this far from the ocean as well as one White-chinned Petrel and two Magellanic Diving-Petrels. Approaching a set of small rocky islands there were hundreds of Imperial Shags attending young chicks plus numerous South America Sea-Lions being pestered by the vivid Dolphin Gull. Sleek Black-browed Albatross wheeled through the air around us and we were very pleased at our farthest point during the pelagic to find a small nesting colony of recently established Gentoo Penguin as we found ourselves surrounded by hundreds of Magellanic Penguins providing a fitting finale to our travel adventures and a great day out on the water. That evening we celebrated our success throughout the tour which included many of the finest birds and wildlife of Argentina combined with phenomenal scenery and great company.

Although this amazing tour was concluding we already had our eyes on the next adventure; we were continuing onwards aboard a Russian ice-strengthened vessel bound for the fascinating world of Antarctica...

Birds encountered:

Note: Nomenclature and taxonomy generally follows J. F. Clements *Birds of the World*. A few additions have been made as we discussed to honor species recognized by IOC.

Key to abbreviations:

ENDEMISM

(E): an endemic species (NE): a near-endemic species I: an introduced species

TINAMOUS *TINAMIDAE*

Elegant Crested-Tinamou

Eudromia elegans

This attractive species was pleasantly common and conspicuous especially in the Valdes Peninsula area where we found numerous individuals often accompanying tiny chicks.

RHEAS *RHEIDAE*

Lesser Rhea

Pterocnemia pennata

We enjoyed a multitude of sightings both in the coastal lowlands on the Valdes Peninsula as well as the higher steppes of the Andes Mountains. A stately bird that we also found with sometimes dozens of chicks, in this case being protected by the male.

GREBES *PODICIPEDIDAE*

White-tufted Grebe

Rollandia rolland

Several sightings of this attractive species during the tour with especially memorable views of a pair feeding a chick at less than four meters away near El Calafate.

Pied-billed Grebe

Podilymbus podiceps

Great Grebe

Podiceps major

We first scoped several in the ocean surf at Punto Tombo and enjoyed regular views thereafter with an especially great sighting in Tierra del Fuego National Park.

Silvery Grebe

Podilymbus occipitalis

Hundreds found on the same lagoon as we located the subsequent species.

Hooded Grebe (NE)*Podilymbus gallardoi*

We drove for quite some distance into the remote Patagonian steppe until we reached this isolated lagoon that fortunately held a single bird that we scoped for half an hour watching it feed. A very localized but beautiful species.

PENGUINS SPHENISCIDAE**Gentoo Penguin***Pygoscelis papua*

We found a small established colony of about nine nesting pairs surrounded by the more numerous Magellanic Penguins while on the boat excursion along the Beagle Channel.

Magellanic Penguin*Spheniscus magellanicus*

Although we saw this confiding species on several occasions throughout the tour, at Punto Tombo we witnesses thousands upon thousands of these amazing creatures including sightings of nesting behavior, males braying like a donkey, feeding chicks, and even inquisitive individuals that examined us within only a few inches!

ALBATROSSES DIOMEDEIDAE**Black-browed Albatross***Diomedea melanophris*

Amazing views of about two dozen birds wheeling around us as we cruised along the Beagle Channel.

PETRELS & SHEARWATERS PROCELLARIIDAE**Antarctic (Southern) Giant-Petrel***Macronectes giganteus*

Numerous at every coastal stop along the tour including some great eye-level views of birds cruising by the rocky cliffs on several occasions.

Hall's (Northern) Giant-Petrel*Macronectes halli*

Just one or two birds found among many other Southern Giant-Petrels at the Valdes Peninsula.

DIVING-PETRELS PELECANOIDIDAE**Magellanic Diving-Petrel***Pelecanoides magellani*

Just a few birds were seen fluttering away from the boat along the Beagle Channel.

CORMORANTS PHALACROCORACIDAE**Neotropic (Olivaceous) Cormorant***Phalacrocorax brasilianus*

Fairly common in areas visited surrounding Buenos Aires.

King Shag (Cormorant)*Leucocarbo albiventer*

Commonly encountered in suitable coastal habitat from the Valdes Peninsula southward to Tierra del Fuego.

Imperial Shag (Cormorant)*Leucocarbo atriceps*

We found small numbers of this species, split from the previous species by some authorities, in the Beagle Channel where we recognized it by the more extensive white on the cheek patch.

Rock Shag (Cormorant)*Leucocarbo magellanicus*

First sighted at Punto Tombo where we had our first encounters near the Chubut Steamer-Duck and seen thereafter along the Beagle Channel in small numbers.

SCREAMERS ANHIMIDAE**Southern Screamer***Chauna torquata*

We heard this species calling madly while birding in the wetlands of Otamendi and had scope views of two individuals from the overlook.

DUCKS, GEESE, SWANS ANATIDAE

Andean Duck*Oxyura ferruginea*

Fairly common at most wetlands in the highlands where we had up to thirty birds daily.

Lake Duck*Oxyura vittata*

Just a couple sightings of this attractive species with good numbers at a wetland outside the Valdes Peninsula.

Black-necked Swan*Cygnus melanocorypha*

An incredible bird, we enjoyed numerous sightings of this elegant creature at many different wetlands although I do not think we ever tired of it!

Coscoroba Swan*Coscoroba coscoroba*

We would this species in similar places as the previous species although usually less numerous.

Upland Goose*Chloephaga picta*

Abundant throughout the southern portions of our tour where we often found hundreds of birds daily.

Kelp Goose*Chloephaga hybrida*

Fairly common along the coastal areas with kelp along the shoreline; the highly patterned female is particularly attractive compared to the white male.

Ashy-headed Goose*Chloephaga poliocephala*

Another attractive waterfowl species that we first found in Glacier National Park with further sightings in Tierra del Fuego National Park.

Ruddy-headed Goose*Chloephaga rubidiceps*

A species that continues to diminish at an alarming rate on mainland South America, we were lucky to find two birds despite the difficult weather conditions near Rio Grande.

Flightless Steamerduck*Tachyeres pteneres*

Common along the coast once we reached Ushuaia and numerous even outside our hotel.

Chubut (White-headed) Steamerduck (E)*Tachyeres leucocephalus*

We located three pairs during our time near the Valdes Peninsula and Punto Tombo with a memorable first sighting on the beach near several large Southern Elephant Seals.

Flying Steamerduck*Tachyeres patachonicus*

First seen in a wetland near El Calafate with several additional sightings in fresh water in Tierra del Fuego.

Brazilian Teal*Amazonetta brasiliensis*

A nice sighting of two birds in the wetlands of Otamendi.

Chiloe (Southern) Wigeon*Anas sibilatrix*

Increasingly common as we headed southward and numerous views of attractive individuals including a hardy pair that managed to save their tiny chicks from a stray dog.

Speckled Teal*Anas flavirostris*

Fairly common at most wetland sites throughout the tour.

Crested Duck*Anas specularioides*

First seen on the coastal waters of the Valdes Peninsula and seen regularly thereafter throughout the tour.

Spectacled Duck*Anas specularis*

Absolutely amazing views of three gorgeous individuals within only five meters of our vehicle in the northern section of Glacier National Park; normally a tricky waterfowl species to catch up with.

Yellow-billed (Brown) Pintail*Anas georgica*

Fairly common at most wetland sites throughout the tour.

White-cheeked Pintail*Anas bahamensis*

Just one sighting of two birds scoped at a wetland outside the Valdes Peninsula.

Silver Teal*Anas versicolor*

Several views of this uncommon waterfowl species towards the beginning of our tour with our best views scoped at a wetland outside the Valdes Peninsula.

Cinnamon Teal *Anas cyanoptera*

Three sightings total during the first part of the tour at various wetlands.

Red Shoveler *Anas platalea*

Common throughout the tour in large numbers.

Rosy-billed Pochard *Netta peposaca*

First a male seen well at a pond in Buenos Aires followed by another few pairs showing well at wetlands outside the Valdes Peninsula.

Black-headed Duck *Heteronetta atricapilla*

An uncommon parasitic species that we enjoyed very good views of at a wetland outside the Valdes Peninsula.

FLAMINGOS *PHOENICOPTERIDAE*

Chilean Flamingo *Phoenicopterus chilensis*

A gorgeous bird that we enjoyed on numerous occasions with especially memorable views in flight as they cruised above us and landed on Lake Argentina.

HERONS & BITTERNS *ARDEIDAE*

Snowy Egret *Egretta thula*

One bird found feeding in the wetlands at Otamendi.

Cocoi (White-necked) Heron *Ardea cocoi*

One individual flew over us during our morning birding the Otamendi wetlands.

Great Egret *Casmerodius albus*

Just one or two birds seen at the Valdes Peninsula.

Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis*

Seen in large numbers in the northern section of our tour in pastures.

Black-crowned Night-Heron *Nycticorax nycticorax*

Several birds seen from our accommodation near El Calafate.

IBIS & SPOONBILLS *THRESKIORNITHIDAE*

White-faced Ibis *Plegadis chihi*

Several birds were seen on the first day of the tour in Otamendi.

Black-faced Ibis *Theristicus melanopis*

Pleasantly common during the southern portion of our tour with hundreds of nesting birds at our accommodation near El Calafate.

STORKS *CICONIIDAE*

Maguari Stork *Ciconia Maguari*

Just one lone bird that showed through the scope in the wetlands of Otamendi.

NEW WORLD VULTURES *CATHARTIDAE*

Black Vulture *Coragyps atratus*

One bird, apparently quite unusual here, flying over the thorn forest of Otamendi.

Turkey Vulture *Cathartes aura*

Increasingly common as we headed southwards until we had daily sightings in Ushuaia.

Andean Condor *Vultur gryphus*

Wonderful views on no less than seven occasions of this massive vulture soaring effortlessly above the mountains.

KITES, HAWKS, EAGLES ACCIPITRIDAE

Long-winged Harrier

Circus buffoni

We had great views of a single bird flying over the wetlands at Otamendi.

Cinereous Harrier

Circus cinereus

Common in suitable wetland habitat with more than twenty birds including nesting individuals on a single day in the steppes of remote Paagonia.

Black-chested Buzzard-Eagle

Geranoaetus melanoleucus

First encountered along the rocky cliffs as we entered the northern section of Glacier NP and seen again several times surrounding Ushuaia.

Variable Hawk

Buteo polyosoma

We found this species soaring over us and nesting along the roadside on the Valdes Peninsula.

CARACARAS AND FALCONS FALCONIDAE

White-throated Caracara

Phalacrocorax albogularis

We found numerous birds only around the Ushuaia dump where this species was common.

Southern Caracara

Polyborus plancus

Common and conspicuous throughout our tour.

Chimango Caracara

Milvago chimango

Another very common raptor throughout our trip with several close perched birds on numerous occasions.

American Kestrel

Falco sparverius

Just a few sightings of this widespread species near the coastal areas of Punto Tombo.

Aplomado Falcon

Falco femoralis

Sightings enjoyed on two occasions near El Calafate with both pairs perched on roadside fence posts.

Peregrine Falcon

Falco peregrinus

Nice views of a bird hunting over the Valdes Peninsula along the shoreline.

RAILS, CRAKES, COOTS RALLIDAE

Plumbeous Rail

Pardirallus sanguinolentus

We heard this species both at Otamendi as well as again at a small wetland near our accommodation outside of El Calafate.

Giant Wood-Rail

Aramides ypecaha

We found one bird along the edge of the dirt road in the transition area of Otamendi between the wetlands and the thorny forest.

Common Moorhen

Gallinula chloropus

A couple birds seen near Buenos Aires and once more at a wetland near Punto Tombo.

White-winged Coot

Fulica leucoptera

Several close encounters with this species during the tour with good numbers especially near Buenos Aires.

Red-gartered Coot

Fulica armillata

Common throughout our tour included several pairs attending fuzzy black chicks.

LIMKIN ARAMIDAE

Limpkin

Aramus guarauna

Just one representative of this monotypic family that we watched in the wetlands of Otamendi.

SNIPES & SANDPIPERS SCOLOPACIDAE**South American Snipe***Gallinago paraguaiae*

Especially during our drive into remote Patagonia from El Calafate we enjoyed scope views of perched birds and numerous birds displaying wildly above our heads.

Hudsonian Godwit*Limosa haemastica*

Fairly common at wetlands near Punto Tombo where we had several sightings of this long-distance migrant.

Greater Yellowlegs*Tringa melanoleuca*

This migrant was seen on several occasions throughout our tour with our first sightings in Otamendi.

Lesser Yellowlegs*Tringa flavipes*

We encountered this species foraging in a wetland near Punto Tombo.

Ruddy Turnstone*Arenaria interpres*

Three birds were seen together along the rocky shores of the Valdes Peninsula.

White-rumped Sandpiper*Calidris fuscicollis*

An increasingly numerous migrant as we headed further south with largest numbers along the ponds surrounding Rio Grande.

Baird's Sandpiper*Calidris bairdii*

Another fairly common migrant that we saw in fair numbers especially along the edge of Lake Argentina.

Pectoral Sandpiper*Calidris melanotos*

First noticed at Otamendi with scattered sightings thereafter during the tour.

Wilson's Phalarope*Phalaropus tricolor*

Several encounters with this regular migrant in scattered wetlands throughout the tour.

Red Phalarope*Phalaropus fulicarius*

An unexpected vagrant, we found a single cooperative bird while carefully scanning for the Magellanic Plover along the shores of Lake Argentina.

MAGELLANIC PLOVER PLUVIANELLIDAE**Magellanic Plover***Pluvianellus socialis*

A monotypic family according to many authorities, after considerable searching along the shores of Lake Argentina we found three birds that we watched for more than an hour turning in circles and turning over rocks to feed.

SEEDSNIPES THINOCORIDAE**White-bellied Seedsnipe (NE)***Attagis malouinus*

During the final morning of the tour we trekked up the Martial Glacier and were rewarded with scope views of this very difficult species right along the scree and snow line.

Least Seedsnipe*Thinocorus rumicivorus*

Fairly common in the steppes of Patagonia with several nice sightings of males and females including scope views of our first pair. On numerous occasions we flushed this species off the road edge.

Gray-breasted Seedsnipe*Thinocorus orbignyianus*

We heard this species calling from the rocky hillside en route to our site for the Hooded Grebe.

OYSTERCATCHERS HAEMATOPODIDAE**American Oystercatcher***Haematopus palliatus*

Common along the northern coasts of our tour.

Blackish Oystercatcher*Haematopus ater*

Several memorable sightings along coastal areas throughout the tour with our first sightings along the Valdes Peninsula.

Magellanic Oystercatcher *Haematopus leucopodus*

Replacing American Oystercatcher in the south, we enjoyed many great views of this attractive species.

STILTS & AVOCETS *RECURVIROSTRIDAE*

White-backed Stilt *Himantopus melanurus*

Numerous birds located in suitable wetland habitat throughout the tour.

PLOVES & LAPWINGS *CHARADRIIDAE*

Two-banded Plover *Charadrius falklandicus*

Great views of a pair first on the Valdes Peninsula with numerous birds scoped in the vicinity of Rio Grande later in the tour.

Tawny-throated Dotterel *Oreopholus ruficollis*

We were treated to amazing views of several of these very attractive birds while driving out into the remote Patagonian steppe from El Calafate.

Southern Lapwing *Vanellus chilensis*

Common and conspicuous throughout the tour with sometimes up to one hundred birds in a single day.

GULLS & TERNS *LARIDAE*

Dolphin Gull *Larus scoresbii*

An attractive species that was pleasantly common along the southern shores near Ushuaia.

Kelp Gull *Larus dominicanus*

Common and conspicuous in coastal and wetland habitat throughout the tour.

Brown-hooded Gull *Larus maculipennis*

Also fairly common throughout the tour though never as numerous as the preceding species.

South American Tern *Sterna hirundinacea*

First sighted along the Valdes Peninsula with excellent views obtained on several occasions thereafter throughout the tour including scoped birds near our hotel in Ushuaia.

SKUAS *STERCORARIIDAE*

Chilean Skua *Catharacta antarctica*

Fairly common especially along the Beagle Channel where we found numerous birds.

Antarctic (Brown) Skua *Catharacta antarctica*

Regularly encountered at coastal areas with our greatest numbers at the large Magellanic Penguin colony at Punto Tombo.

PIGEONS & DOVES *COLUMBIDAE*

Rock Dove (I) *Columba livia*

Available in urban areas.

Picazuro Pigeon *Columba picazuro*

Numerous sightings of this large dark pigeon our first morning birding in Otamendi.

Eared Dove *Zenaida auriculata*

Abundant throughout the tour especially in areas surrounding Buenos Aires.

Picui Ground-Dove *Columbina picui*

Several nice sightings including scope views at the edge of thorny forest in Otamendi.

White-tipped Dove *Leptotila verreauxi*

Heard calling in the thorny forest of Otamendi.

PARROTS & PARAKEETS PSITTACIDAE**Burrowing Parrot***Cyanoliseus patagonus*

What a stunningly colorful species; we enjoyed amazing views of birds perched, interacting, and in flight with our finest views en route to the Valdes Peninsula where we watched a nesting colony attending their underground burrows.

Austral Parakeet*Enicognathus ferrugineus*

Initial scope views in Glacier National Park simply could not be improved upon in Tierra del Fuego National Park where we eventually walked away from this southerly species.

Monk Parakeet*Myiopsitta monachus*

Commonly encountered while birding in Otamendi on our first full day of the tour.

CUCKOOS CUCULIDAE**Ash-colored Cuckoo***Coccyzus cinereus*

This migrant species is often difficult to find in South America, and we were fortunate to have literally point-blank views of a responsive calling individual that we watched for more than ten minutes at only a few arms-lengths away!

Guira Cuckoo*Guira guira*

Somehow we missed this species near Buenos Aires but picked it up later while en route to the Valdes Peninsula.

Striped Cuckoo*Tapera naevia*

Heard calling in the thorny forest of Otamendi.

OWLS STRIGIDAE**Austral Pygmy-Owl***Glaucidium nanum*

After a few series of whistles in the stunted beech forest of northern Glacier National Park we had a response and were soon enjoying great views of this little owl calling directly over our heads!

Burrowing Owl*Athene cunicularia*

Scattered sightings of this widespread species including nice views of a bird that proceeded to swoop down in pursuit of a Patagonian Cavy.

HUMMINGBIRDS TROCHILIDAE**Glittering-bellied Emerald***Chlorostilbon aureoventris*

Fairly common but no less attractive on our first morning birding the dirt road of Otamendi.

Gilded Hummingbird (Sapphire)*Hylocharis chrysura*

Two singing birds were scoped during our day birding in Otamendi.

KINGFISHERS CERYLIDAE**Ringed Kingfisher***Megaceryle torquata*

One bird showed well near our accommodation feeding on fish along the coast.

WOODPECKERS PICIDAE**Checkered Woodpecker***Picoides mixtus*

This species was only seen with some participants in the thickets Costanera del Sur in Buenos Aires.

Golden-breasted Woodpecker*Colaptes melanolaemus*

Nice views of a close pair in the taller forest of Otamendi.

Chilean Flicker*Colaptes pitius*

Great scope views of a single bird and others heard in Glacier NP.

Campo Flicker*Colaptes campestris*

Nice views of several very attractive birds in the open areas surrounding Otamendi.

Magellanic Woodpecker*Campephilus magellanicus*

I hardly know what to write for this species account – the bird of the trip for everyone! We simply could not improve upon our views both in Glacier National Park with a gorgeous male and later we finally walked away from an outstanding female sporting an outrageous crest hammering only five meters above our heads in Tierra del Fuego NP.

OVENBIRDS FURNARIIDAE**Common Miner***Geositta cunicularia*

Our best sightings of this species was along the dirt road at Otamendi our first day of the tour.

Short-billed Miner*Geositta antarctica*

Two sightings of this fairly indistinct miner including views near Rio Grande.

Scale-throated Earthcreeper*Upucerthia dumetaria*

Great views of this attractive and distinctive earthcreeper with our finest views on the Valdes Peninsula.

Bar-winged Cinclodes*Cinclodes fuscus*

This species was first seen in Tierra del Fuego NP and later fairly common along the scree above Ushuaia while searching for the White-bellied Seed-Snipe.

Dark-bellied Cinclodes*Cinclodes patagonicus*

We had great views of birds both in Tierra del Fuego NP as well as on one of the islands in the Beagle Channel.

Rufous Hornero*Furnarius rufus*

We found a nesting pair feeding frogs to their chicks in Otamendi.

Thorn-tailed Rayadito*Aphrastura spinicauda*

A charismatic little bird that is also very responsive, we enjoyed multiple views both in Glacier NP as well in Tierra del Fuego NP.

Plain-mantled Tit-Spinetail*Leptasthenura aegithaloides*

We coaxed out a cooperative pair at Punto Tombo followed by further views on the Valdes Peninsula.

Chicli (Spix's) Spinetail*Synallaxis spixi*

Two birds responded aggressively to recordings in the thorny forest of Otamendi.

Yellow-chinned Spinetail*Certhiaxis cinnamomea*

We had nice views of a single bird perched on a snag in the reeds while birding in Otamendi.

Lesser Canastero*Asthenes pyrrholeuca*

Fairly common by sound in the scrub near the Valdes Peninsula with views on several occasions.

Short-billed Canastero*Asthenes baeri*

We managed to find just one bird this year which we called into view in the scrub of Punto Tombo.

Patagonian Canastero*Asthenes patagonica*

After some searching we enjoyed nice views of a single distinctive and vocal bird on the northern side of the Valdes Peninsula.

Austral Canastero (NE)*Asthenes anthoides*

Another distinctive canastero, it was a windy endeavor but we finally managed great views of three responsive birds that sat up on the stunted vegetation near Rio Grande.

Freckle-breasted Thornbird*Phacellodomus striaticollis*

A couple vocal birds showed well at Otamendi including scope views of one cooperative bird showing the mottling on its chest among other features.

Wren-like Rushbird*Phleocryptes melanops*

One of the characteristic sounds of the wetland reeds, we managed several views of this shy but intricately patterned species throughout our tour.

Curve-billed Reedhaunter *Limnornis curvirostris*

With the aid of sound recording we coaxed this bird into view for excellent study of this retiring species for several cooperative minutes.

White-throated Treerunner *Pygarrhichas albogularis*

A stunning endemic of the Southern Beech forests of Patagonia, we enjoyed great views both in Glacier National Park and again in Tierra del Fuego National Park of a bird feeding along an open dead limb in the sunlight.

PLANTCUTTERS *COTINGIDAE*

White-tipped Plantcutter *Phytotoma rutila*

An uncommon bird on this route, we found a single male en route to the Valdes Peninsula.

Rufous-tailed Plantcutter *Phytotoma rara*

Fairly common but no less attractive, we enjoyed multiple views of this interesting species in the surrounding areas of Glacier National Park especially numerous near the firebushes.

TYRANT FLYCATCHERS *TYRANNIDAE*

White-crested Elaenia *Elaenia albiceps*

Increasingly common as we continued south during our tour and especially abundant in the Southern Beech forests.

Small-billed Elaenia *Elaenia parvirostris*

We found this species in the thorny forest of Otamendi our first day of the tour.

Sooty Tyrannulet *Serpophaga nigricans*

We were pleased to have great views of this interesting tyrant flycatcher that prefers reed beds.

White-crested Tyrannulet *Serpophaga subcristata*

Nice views of two birds in the thorny scrub of Otamendi where we found them calling to each other.

Tufted Tit-Tyrant *Anairetes parulus*

An attractive little tyrant flycatcher, we found several birds along our journey with very nice views near Punto Tombo and again in Tierra del Fuego National Park.

Many-colored Rush-Tyrant *Tachuris rubrigastra*

A really stunning species that we enjoyed outstanding views of two adults feeding two young in a remote wetland in the Patagonian steppes.

Tawny-crowned Pygmy-Tyrant *Euscarthmus meloryphus*

We coaxed two birds into close range for good views in the thorny forest of Otamendi.

Bran-colored Flycatcher *Myiophobus fasciatus*

One bird showed well in the reeds in Otamendi.

Fire-eyed Diucon *Xolmis pyrope*

We had repeated great views in the beech forests of southern Patagonia including one bird mobbing an Austral Pygmy-Owl.

Black-crowned Monjita *Xolmis coronata*

We were fortunate to scope a pair that showed for several minutes while en route to the Valdes Peninsula.

Rusty-backed Monjita (E) *Neoxolmis rubetra*

We enjoyed great scope views of this Argentinean endemic on the Valdes Peninsula.

Chocolate-vented Tyrant *Neoxolmis rufiventris*

Seen several times along the roadside in southern Patagonia where we stopped on two occasions for great scope views.

Gray-bellied Shrike-Tyrant*Agriornis microptera*

We found this species on the Valdes Peninsula while searching for earthcreepers.

Great Shrike-Tyrant*Agriornis lividus*

An unexpected bonus bird while driving a dirt road with low shrubby scrub more than one hundred miles from El Calafate.

Dark-faced Ground-Tyrant*Muscisaxicola macloviana*

We had good views of a couple birds while exploring the glacier surroundings above Ushuaia our final morning.

Cinnamon-bellied Ground-Tyrant*Muscisaxicola capistrata*

We had great views of this uncommon species on two occasions both in the remote Patagonian steppe.

Ochre-naped Ground-Tyrant*Muscisaxicola flavinucha*

The glacier surroundings above Ushuaia produced three of these distinctive birds while we searched for the White-billed Seed-Snipe.

Austral (Rufous-backed) Negrito*Lessonia rufa*

This attractive little species was pleasantly common in the southern portion of the Patagonian steppe and we enjoyed up to forty birds per day.

White-winged Black-Tyrant*Knipolegus aterrimus*

Just one pair this year that showed well in a rocky ravine en route to the Valdes Peninsula.

Spectacled Tyrant*Hymenops perspicillata*

Common, striking, and one of our trip favorites that followed us for most of the tour in appropriate wetland habitats.

Yellow-browed Tyrant*Satrapa icterophrys*

We enjoyed great views of a single bird that perched for several minutes in the scrub at Otamendi allowing for scope views.

Cattle Tyrant*Machetornis rixosus*

One bird was seen by some of us at Otamendi.

Tropical Kingbird*Tyrannus melancholicus*

Seen regularly near Buenos Aires and another out-of-place bird on the Valdes Peninsula.

Fork-tailed Flycatcher*Tyrannus savanna*

Several sightings of this attractive species on the first days of our tour.

Streaked Flycatcher*Myiodynastes maculatus*

We found a couple birds that cooperated nicely in the scope while birding in Otamendi our first day.

Great Kiskadee*Pitangus sulphuratus*

Regularly seen in the vicinity of Buenos Aires; one of those unmistakable sounds of the Neotropics.

THRUSHES TURDIDAE**Chiguanco Thrush***Turdus chiguanco*

A couple birds seem to have moved onto the Valdes Peninsula and we awoke to its lively song each morning while on the peninsula.

Rufous-bellied Thrush*Turdus rufiventris*

Commonly seen on the northerly portion of our tour where this species was mixed in with Creamy-bellied Thrush.

Austral Thrush*Turdus falcklandii*

Pleasantly common and sighted daily in southern Patagonia including nice views of several spotted juveniles.

Creamy-bellied Thrush*Turdus amaurochalinus*

Seen only our first day birding at Otamendi where several birds made an appearance.

MOCKINGBIRDS MIMIDAE**Chalk-browed Mockingbird***Mimus saturninus*

Bold and attractive, we found several birds during our time birding in the vicinity of Buenos Aires.

Patagonian Mockingbird*Mimus patagonicus*

This songster was common and conspicuous throughout southern Patagonia where we enjoyed daily encounters.

White-banded Mockingbird*Mimus triurus*

We were pleased to find several attractive pairs at the northern end of the Valdes Peninsula.

STARLINGS STURNIDAE**European Starling (I)***Sturnus vulgaris*

This introduced species was seen in Buenos Aires.

WRENS TROGLODYTIDAE**House Wren***Troglodytes aedon*

A familiar sound for many of us and encountered in large numbers especially in Otamendi on our first day of the tour.

GNATCATCHERS POLIOPTILIDAE**Masked Gnatcatcher***Polioptila dumicola*

We had good views of a few birds in the scrub around Otamendi our first day on tour.

SWALLOWS HIRUNDINIDAE**White-rumped Swallow***Tachycineta leucorrhoa*

Fairly common in the surroundings of Buenos Aires especially around the wetlands of Otamendi.

Chilean Swallow*Tachycineta meyeni*

A species that replaces White-rumped Swallow further south, we commonly found this species further south in Patagonia with numerous memorable views.

Brown-chested Martin*Phaeoprogne tapera*

We found this species flying over the wetlands at Otamendi.

Gray-breasted Martin*Progne chalybea*

We had a couple sightings in the Buenos Aires area including at the airport.

Southern Martin*Progne modesta*

Several nice sightings in the vicinity of the Valdes Peninsula including close perched views near our hotel.

Blue-and-white Swallow*Notiochelidon cyanoleuca*

Regularly encountered during the first half of the trip and easily distinguished from Chilean Swallow by its lack of a white rump patch.

Barn Swallow*Hirundo rustica*

Several sightings towards the beginning of our tour of this widespread migrant.

OLD WORLD SPARROWS PASSERIDAE**House Sparrow (I)***Passer domesticus*

Available in urban areas during the tour.

PIPITS MOTACILLIDAE**Correndera Pipit***Anthus Correndera*

Good views first at a wetland near Punto Tombo and then found again in the open grasslands near Rio Grande in the south.

Short-billed Pipit *Anthus furcatus*

We managed to obtain views of a single bird in the grasslands of the Valdes Peninsula.

SERINS *FRINGILLIDAE*

Hooded Siskin *Carduelis magellanica*

Several sightings while birding our first day at Otamendi.

Black-chinned Siskin *Carduelis barbata*

Once we reached forested areas in southern Patagonia this species was pleasantly common in flocks sometimes more than fifty strong.

NEW WORLD WARBLERS *PARULIDAE*

Tropical Parula *Parula pitiayumi*

A few sightings of this pretty songster in the small forests of Otamendi.

Masked Yellowthroat *Geothlypis aequinoctialis*

Fairly common at Otamendi where we found about six birds and heard others.

NEW WORLD SPARROWS *EMBERIZIDAE*

Rufous-collared Sparrow *Zonotrichia capensis*

Common and conspicuous throughout much of our journey.

Sayaca Tanager *Thraupis sayaca*

Fairly common near the fruiting trees in Otamendi.

Gray-hooded Sierra-Finch *Phrygilus gayi*

Seen on several occasions throughout the tour with our first views of a cooperative pair just outside of El Calafate.

Patagonian Sierra-Finch *Phrygilus patagonicus*

Great views of this attractive species with our most memorable views of a perturbed pair mobbing the Austral Pygmy-Owl in Glacier National Park.

Mourning Sierra-Finch *Phrygilus fruticeti*

Abundant on the Valdes Peninsula where we had to shoo birds from landing on our scopes on more than one occasion!

Carbonated Sierra-Finch (E) *Phrygilus carbonarius*

An attractive Argentinean endemic that we found on two occasions while en route to Punto Tombo.

Yellow-bridled Finch *Melanodera xanthogramma*

We enjoyed great looks at several pairs while exploring the high open areas below Martial Glacier near Ushuaia.

Long-tailed Reed-Finch *Donacospiza albifrons*

At Otamendi we were fortunate to get nice scope views of a single bird that vocalized and responded to playback.

Common Diuca-Finch *Diuca diuca*

Sporadic sightings on numerous occasions on the Valdes Peninsula as well as further south in suitable habitat.

Black-and-rufous Warbling-Finch *Poospiza nigrorufa*

Fairly common but no less attractive found in various habitats while enjoying the Otamendi Nature Reserve.

Black-capped Warbling-Finch *Poospiza melanoleuca*

We found a single vocal bird in the thorny forest near the headquarters of Otamendi Nature Reserve.

Patagonian Yellow-Finch*Sicalis lebruni*

Several great views with our most memorable sighting of a nesting pair along the coast of the Valdes Peninsula.

Saffron Finch*Sicalis flaveola*

Another species that we found in small numbers in the transitional habitats at Otamendi.

Grassland Yellow-Finch*Sicalis luteola*

Nice looks at displaying birds at Otamendi and further views in an area of wetlands and scrub near Punto Tombo.

Great Pampa-Finch*Embernagra platensis*

We enjoyed great scope views of three individuals in the wetlands of Otamendi our first full day of birding.

Ultramarine Grosbeak*Cyanocompsa brissonii*

We heard the distinctive call of this species in the thorny forest edge of Otamendi, but were busy tracking down the Ducky-legged Guan.

NEW WORLD BLACKBIRDS ICTERIDAE**Yellow-winged Blackbird***Agelaius thilius*

Common and conspicuous both in the wetlands of Otamendi and further south near El Calafate.

White-browed Blackbird*Leistes superciliaris*

We scoped several birds on our first day birding in Otamendi.

Long-tailed Meadowlark*Sturnella loyca*

This attractive species was common throughout our tour in suitable grassland and open habitats once we headed south from Buenos Aires.

Brown-and-yellow Marshbird*Pseudoleistes virescens*

Pleasantly common in the wetlands of Otamendi where we encountered up to twenty birds including displaying males.

Scarlet-headed Blackbird*Amblyramphus holosericeus*

What a brilliant bird, we enjoyed numerous views of some spectacular males in the wetlands at Otamendi.

Austral Blackbird*Curaeus curaeus*

This southern species was first located near El Calafate and later scoped again en route to Rio Grande.

Shiny Cowbird*Molothrus bonariensis*

Common in the transitional habitats around Buenos Aires and while birding at Otamendi.

Mammals encountered:**Large Hairy Armadillo***Chaetophractus villosus*

A single animal scurried across the road in front of our vehicle while heading south towards Punto Tombo.

Pichi (Pygmy Armadillo)*Zaedyus pichiy*

What an amazing experience! We all enjoyed rushing out of the vehicle in the remote Patagonian steppe far from anywhere when one of these creatures ran across our path and we were able to get some amazing close views.

Patagonian Gray Fox*Dusicyon griseus*

Always on the move, but seen three times near El Calafate and again near Rio Grande.

South American Sea Lion*Otaria byronia*

Nice views of numerous animals including females and impressive males on the Valdes Peninsula as well as further southward.

Southern Elephant Seal

Mirounga leonina

Fairly numerous along the beaches of Punto Tombo north to the Valdes Peninsula where we saw mostly females since the majority of the males had already departed.

Southern (Black) Right Whale

Eubalaena glacialis

Another amazing experience, we found up to a dozen of this awesome creatures on a boat trip out of the Valdes Peninsula including several mothers attending to their young sometimes almost within arm's reach!

Guanaco

Lama guanicoe

Common and conspicuous, often with young at this time of year, we encountered numerous herds first on the Valdes Peninsula and throughout the tour thereafter.

American Beaver

Castor canadensis

This introduced species was surprisingly visible this year and we enjoyed multiple close sightings, although the beaver continues to wreak havoc on the native peat bogs.

Patagonian Cavy

Microcavia patagonum

Nice views on several occasions of this cute little mammal with our best views at the Magellanic Penguin colony at Punto Tombo.

Patagonian Mara

Dolichotis patagonum

Several really nice encounters with this bizarre looking mammal on the Valdes Peninsula.

Brown Hare

Lepus europaeus

This introduced species was both common and conspicuous throughout much of our tour.

European Rabbit

Oryctolagus cuniculus

We found numerous animals in Tierra del Fuego NP including several color phases.

Rockjumper Birding Tours
Worldwide Birding Adventures
PO Box 13972, Cascades, 3202, South Africa
Tel: +27 33 394 0225
Fax: +27 88 033 394 0225
Email: info@rockjumper.co.za
Alternative Email: rockjumperbirding@yahoo.com
Website: www.rockjumper.co.za