



## Chile 2012 Set Departure Tour



*One of Chile's best endemics (Slender-billed Parakeet) on one of Chile's best plants (Chilean Firebush)*

November 2 – 16, 2012

Guided by Andrew Spencer

All photos in this report taken by the guide

I'll admit it – Chile is one of my favorite places to guide, anywhere. You might wonder why – it doesn't have the sky-high lists of other countries in South America. I've seen more birds in a day in a number of countries than I see in a whole trip to Chile. But what it lacks in number of species it more than makes up for in the undeniable coolness of those species. And combine that with a superb infrastructure, excellent weather, good food, and world-class scenery and you have all the makings of a magical place.

On this year's set departure tour of Chile we only ran the central and southern portions, but managed to nearly clean up on our targets. Included among these were all eight of Chile's tapaculos, all of the mainland endemics, and many other spectacular species. We missed a few of the species we had on last year's tour, but made up for them with sightings of some much-wanted species including the newly described **Ticking Doradito**, rare **Great Shrike-Tyrant**, and excellent visuals of the reclusive **Stripe-backed Bittern**.

### **Day 1: Arrival in Santiago and the Lampa Wetlands**

Thankfully everyone arrived in Chile right on time, and we were out the door of the hotel on schedule for an afternoon of birding north of Santiago. Here we visited the Lampa Wetlands, a series of inland marshes that are among the best near the capitol city, and a good introduction to the wetland species of Chile. In fairly short order we found **Red-gartered** and **Red-fronted Coots**, **Yellow-winged Blackbird**, **Chiloe Wigeon**, and with some playback a reclusive **Wren-like Rushbird**. With a bit more work we were enjoying some excellent views of a **Many-colored Rush-Tyrant**, easily the most colorful flycatcher anywhere and always a much-wanted bird.



In the grasslands and shrubs around the periphery of the marsh we picked up some of the more common open-country birds, including **Long-tailed Meadowlark**, **Grassland Yellow-finch**, and **Correndera Pipit**. A more thorough check of the marsh didn't produce much new, so we worked our way back towards the road, and decided on one last check from the bridge over the marsh. And boy did that pay off! The very first bird I saw upon stepping on the bridge was a female **Black-headed Duck**



hugging the edge of the reeds, though only one other person was able to get on it. But even better, right as I started to turn my back to head to the car I caught a glimpse of a bird fly into the marsh, and with some strategic placement everyone soon had absolutely stunning views of a **Stripe-backed Bittern** as it flew across an open channel and landed on top of a tall clump of reeds. This species is always difficult to find, much less see that well!

On a tip from John and Nancy, who had arrived in Santiago a couple of days early, we decided to head to a small park right by our hotel. We quickly found the main goal species here, **Spot-flanked Gallinule**, which proceeded to give us repeated close and open views of both adults and juveniles.

## **Day 2: Santiago to Viña del Mar via the Maipo River mouth**

Leaving Santiago early, we worked our way westward and towards the coast. The first birding came at a roadside pond near the Leyda Wetlands, where a few **Red Shovelers** were an excellent early find for the trip, while a single **Dark-bellied Cinclodes** was a bit earlier on the tour than usual.



The Maipo River mouth is one of the better-known sites in central Chile, and we spent a good part of the morning there. Immediately out of the car we found a few **Surfbirds** on the rocks right by the parking lot, followed by the more abundant **Whimbrel** and **Gray Gull** along the shoreline. The dunes immediately above the ocean gave us our first **Austral Negritos**, and good numbers of **Peruvian Boobies** floated by offshore.

Working our way over the dunes and towards the river mouth we soon encountered our first **Spectacled Tyrant**, a male holding a territory by a small marsh. The flats along the river were full of birds, including large flocks of **Black Skimmer** and **Elegant Tern**, while some **Coscoroba** and **Black-necked Swans** loafed

by at close range. Shorebird variety was a bit lower than usual, though, with **Baird's Sandpiper** making up the bulk of those present.

It was in the brushy vegetation along the edge of the river that Jason struck yet again, when he asked what a small yellow bird he was looking at was. Expecting to see a Rush-Tyrant or a Grass-Finch, I lifted my bins and instead found myself looking straight at a **Ticking Doradito**, a rarely seen and recently described bird that I had almost no hope of finding! And to top it all off, we got to watch the doradito for over a half-hour as it returned to the same clump of tall, grass-like vegetation and perform its funny little display, twitching its body from side to side and throwing its head back while singing a weird, guttural song! The bird may not have looked like much, but it certainly made one of the experiences of the trip, for the guide at least!

Wrapping up at the Maipo River (and picking up a **Ruddy Turnstone** on the way out), we headed south for a ways to look for Great Shrike-Tyrant. We struck out on the shrike-tyrant, but we did manage to find our only **White-cheeked Pintail** of the tour, and enjoy the site of a family of Black-necked Swans float down a river.

Post lunch we swung by the Batuco Wetlands near San Antonio, and spent some time picking through more waterbirds. Our first **White-tufted** and **Silvery Grebes** were quickly



found, and lots of **Lake Ducks** allowed a close study, but it took some searching until we found our target **Black-headed Duck**. Jason pulled out another great find when he spotted a **Austral Pygmy-Owl** sitting in the reeds just off the road, and we spent a good fifteen minutes enjoying scope views of this diminutive owl.

The remainder of the afternoon was occupied with driving north to Viña del Mar, and the

birding along the coastline around the city. The main goal here was the Chilean endemic **Seaside Cinclodes**, which we found in short order as it hopped among the boulders and rocks along the rough coastline. The cinclodes wasn't the only reward for our efforts, though, and we also had excellent views of a close **Inca Tern**, many **Peruvian Pelicans**, a couple of **Blackish Oystercatchers**, and the usual parade of common oceanfront species.



### Day 3: Quintero Pelagic and the coastline north of Viña del Mar

Pelagics, you either love them or hate them. But either way, it's hard to deny that Chile has the best ones in South America. We dedicated a morning to take advantage of this fact, and we were not disappointed! The boat we used, leaving from the port of Quintero, was rather small, and bounced around a lot on the rather large waves, but we still managed to have excellent looks at nearly every species we were hoping for, and often many individuals of each.

The pelagic species started rolling in barely after we'd left the harbor. As expected, **Sooty Shearwaters** were the first pelagic we saw, and many of them, but following not long after were the first of a number of **Peruvian Diving-Petrels**, and a **Pink-footed Shearwater**. The first Mollymawks showed up next, with many **Black-browed** and **Salvin's Albatrosses**. A few small flocks of **Red Phalaropes** bounced on the waves as we worked our way offshore, and some flyby **Guanay Cormorants** gave us some nice views.

As we ventured further offshore we started to see a wider variety of pelagic species. Our first *Procellaria* was a **White-chinned Petrel**, but they were soon followed by excellent numbers of

the uncommon **Westland Petrel**, allowing us some very nice close comparisons of these similar species. The first **Cape Petrels** brought appreciative remarks from everyone on board, and were voted one of the birds of the day. An ever-increasing number of mollymawks, shearwaters, and petrels added to the frenzy, and it was Chilean pelagic birding at its best.

But probably no other sighting of the morning had the impact of our first **Royal Albatross**. One of the true giants of the bird world, watching these majestic and graceful birds soar across the waves brought joy to all who witnessed it. A few other odds and ends wrapped up our pelagic haul, including **Wilson's Storm-Petrel**, a single **Southern Giant-Petrel**, and, closer to shore, some **Humboldt Penguins**.



Back on terra firme, our next goal of the day was just to the south of the harbor. And we found it even before we made it to our stakeout, when a **Great Shrike-Tyrant** perched along some roadside wires made us screech to a halt. Unfortunately, it flew before all could get a good look at it, though we refound it later in the afternoon for another chance.

The tyrant in the bag, our last birding venture of the day involved us driving further north, where at Cachagua a good-sized **Humboldt Penguin** colony right offshore gave us longer and better (though more distant) views of these comical, and local, birds.

#### Day 4: Parque Nacional La Campana and drive to Guayacan

You'd be excused for thinking you were in California when you're standing among the dry hills of central Chile. The matorral woodland between Valparaíso and Santiago is strongly reminiscent of the chaparral of parts of the western US. And for the birder this habitat is an important stop on a tour of Chile, harboring at least three of Chile's endemics, and a number of specialties.

One of the best locations to get into the dry matorral is at La Campana National Park, and it was here that we spent most of a morning.

It didn't take us long to find some new birds for the trip list. Right out of the car a rattling call alerted us to a female **Striped Woodpecker** in a nest cavity, while our first **Chilean Pigeons** shot by overhead. Some small flocks



moving through the woodland were mostly made up of the super-abundant "**Chilean**" **White-crested Elaenia** and **Thorn-tailed Rayadito**, and playback of a pygmy-owl brought in a very angry **Austral Pygmy-Owl**.

But we had bigger targets in mind, so heading up a side-trail we started looking for the two tapaculos endemic to the area. And unfortunately they were less than cooperative. A few distant songs and nary a sign of movement rewarded our efforts, though a nearby pair of **Dusky-tailed Canasteros** were welcome. Finally, we had to resort to scrambling up a steep hill, and crawling through some dense brush, but it all paid off when a stunning **White-throated Tapaculo** hopped right into view at close range! And to top it off, a very



distant **Moustached Turca** flew off a song perch, and a closer **Chilean Flicker** flew by before we made it down.

Unfortunately, a couple of our group weren't able to scramble up the slope, so we continued further into the park to try to find more tapaculos. And as it always seems to work out, the bird cooperated beautifully after we'd spent so much effort on getting it before. Not that anyone was complaining, mind! We also found our first **Fire-eyed Diucon**, and came away with more good sightings of the more common species.

The rest of the afternoon was taken up with the drive back to Santiago and on to the foothill town of Guayacan, our base for the next two nights.

### Day 5: Embalse El Yeso

Since this year we weren't doing the extension in northern Chile, the area around El Yeso provided our only highland birding of the tour. Being further south in the country, treeline wasn't exceptionally high, so the drive from Guayacan up to and above the reservoir didn't take terribly long, and covered a good range of habitats on the way.

Our first birding stop was along the road up, where steep canyon walls and dense



shrubby gave us the perfect habitat for our first target. And it didn't take long – a little playback and we were staring right at a **Crag Chilia**, a startlingly Canyon Wren-like furnariid endemic to Chile. The same habitat also proved good for far better views of **Moustached Turca**, which we had two of running around in the open more like a tiny quail than a tapaculo.

The two lower elevation target species under our belts, we broke treeline and started looking for the various high elevation specialties on the menu. First up was our first of many ground-tyrants, the small **Spot-billed Ground-Tyrant**, soon followed by a **Scale-throated Earthcreeper** and some **Plumebeous Sierra-Finches**.

Flycatchers in southern South America have diversified to a remarkable degree, filling many niches that passerines use further north. In the El Yeso area this is especially

apparent in the abundance of ground-tyrants, which act very much like Mountain Bluebirds from North America, or wheatears from the Old World. We had six species during our morning at El Yeso, and the next up was the localized **Black-fronted Ground-Tyrant**, which joined the abundant **White-browed Ground-Tyrant** starting at the mid-elevation areas we visited. The same spot as our first Black-fronted Ground-Tyrants also had large numbers of **Yellow-rumped Siskins** and two male **White-sided Hillstars**, as well as large flocks of **Black-winged Ground-Doves**.

A long drive past the fairly birdless reservoir brought us up to the highest elevations of the trip, and the wetter *bofedal* type bogs unique to the central and southern Andes. These bogs are remarkably birdy, and we had barely started our walk of the largest of these when we found our first **Gray-breasted Seedsnipe** and flushed a couple of **South American Snipe**.

But any birder visiting a *bofedal* bog is looking for one bird above all others, and we were no exception. Luckily, unlike last year, we only had to search for about 20 minutes before Jason suddenly announced "I have the sandpiper-plover!" and there it was! A pair of **Diademed Sandpiper-Plovers** sat in the middle of the creek running through the bog! Usually this bird can be quite shy, but for whatever reason this pair wasn't, and we were soon enjoying stunning views. The reason for the relative boldness of the plovers soon became apparent when we saw two very young chicks being brooded by one of the pair, the first DSP chicks I had ever seen and easily a highlight of the trip.





Eventually we tore ourselves away from the DSPs, and walked the other way up the bog. Good numbers of **Rufous-banded Miners** were flushed throughout, but it took some searching until we found a single **Gray-flanked Cincloides** among the more common **Buff-winged Cincloides**. Tons of ground-tyrants included **Cinereous**, a few **Rufous-naped**, and a single **Ochre-naped** among the more abundant **White-browed**. **Gray-hooded Sierra-Finches** were abundant, and we saw a good number more **Gray-breasted Seedsnipe**, including some performing extended flight songs.

Having found nearly every bird we were looking for, we began to contemplate heading back. At the very end of the bog we found a **Cordilleran Canastero** hiding among some rocks, and on that note decided to call it a morning. A quick lunch later we were descending the mountain, with occasional stops to see what we could find. The last new bird of the day was another excellent spot by Jason, a distant pair of **Torrent Ducks** on the rushing river below the reservoir, followed by another male lower down.

### Day 6: Drive to Talca, Lago Colbun, and Altos de Lircay

Day 6 was somewhat of an unusual day, the only day we spent the morning driving instead of birding. Four hours later we were standing near the shores of Lago Colbun, and the day's birding started. The habitat here was significantly wetter than the Santiago area, and the birdlife showed some noticeable changes. Our first stop was at one of my stakeouts from previous Chile trips, and with a good deal of effort we were enjoying some close (if somewhat dark) views of a **Chestnut-throated Huet-Huet** just off the road. A heard-only Dusky Tapaculo refused to cooperate, but luckily we'd had it earlier in the trip.

A singing **Band-tailed Sierra-Finch** further down the road proved to be the only one of the trip. Lago Colbun itself was shockingly low, and very few ducks were present. We were in luck, however, when we



found a pair of **Spectacled Ducks** on the river above the lake – my usual stakeout pond for them was dry, so I was a bit worried about this one! A male **Rufous-tailed Plantcutter** gave us some excellent views, but the real highlight here was a large flock of **Burrowing Parakeets** that played around us for an extended period.

With some time left in the afternoon we decided to head up to the Altos de Lircay for some last minute birding. The dense *Nothofagus* forests here gave us our first taste of the tall temperate forests of southern South America. Some **White-throated Treerunners** were our first of the tour, but in general the forest was quiet. As we walked up the trail I pointed out a large cavity as the work of a **Magellanic Woodpecker**, and decided to play the tape in case one was nearby. No one was more surprised than I was when a female woodpecker stuck its head out of the cavity! It was an excellent end to the day, and we headed back down to Talca for the night.

Well almost for the night. Our only nighttime owling of the trip involved a drive back to Lircay in the dark to try for Rufous-legged Owl. Unfortunately, this year the bird only called back from the forest, and refused to come in. Hearing the monkey-like cackling was certainly quite an experience, though it would have been better to get a visual!

### Day 7: Altos de Lircay and drive to Angol

Our luck the day before didn't leave us with many targets at Lircay. And this turned out to be a good thing – bad weather had started to arrive overnight. The early morning varied between clear and fog, but before long the mountain had completely soaked in, and we barely avoided getting rained on.



But we still managed to get in a productive morning of birding. Still down in the lowlands, a stop at a roadside field proved serendipitous when the distinctive whistle of a **Chilean Tinamou** sounded off right by the car. Despite how close it called from, it took quite a bit of effort before everyone had good views of the bird running

through an open patch, but hey, that's more than you can say for most tinamou encounters!

Higher up a flock of birds on the road proved to not be the expected pigeons, but a large group of **Austral Parakeets** gathering grit, a rather more satisfying view than the day before! The same area also gave us our best views of perched **Chilean Pigeon**.



The Altos de Lircay themselves were surprisingly warm for the morning, with occasional fog drifting through and heavy humidity in the air. Sensing that we would not have much time before the weather went south we moved through the forest quickly, teasing out some **White-throated Treerunners** and **Fire-eyed Diucons** from the abundant **White-crested Elaenias**, while Jason also saw the only **Chilean Hawk** of the tour and had a **Magellanic Woodpecker** fly by.

Arriving at the denser forest further in we soon had excellent looks at our first **Chuca Tapaculo** as it scurried through underbrush at close range and perched in the open for short periods. An excellent spot by Jim turned out to be an adult **Rufous-tailed Hawk**, which unfortunately didn't stay in view for long.

Extensive playback for Patagonian Forest Earthcreeper turned up empty, and by this point dense fog had rolled in, so we packed it out and back to the van, to start our long drive south to Angol.

### Day 8: Nahuelbuta National Park and drive to Osorno

We were quite thankful in the morning when we woke up and saw that the persistent rain had ceased. Our typically early start found us along the road to Nahuelbuta National Park



right around dawn, and our very first stop gave us a new bird for the trip – a **Magellanic Tapaculo** that cooperated beautifully by flying across the road multiple times and perching in the open repeatedly.

The remainder of the road in had a number of the common open-country birds we had been seeing throughout the trip, though a female **Torrent Duck** from the Manzano bridge was nice to see. A check of the field where we had seen Hellmayr's Pipit on last year's tour was unproductive, unfortunately, though a pair of flyby **Slender-billed Parakeets** was our first encounter with this endemic.

But it was shortly after this point where one downside of all the

rain the day before became apparent – the road turned to slop just short of the park

entrance, and our low-slung van couldn't handle it. I'll admit I was rather disheartened – we still had a few targets to get in the park that would be difficult to get later. Luckily we had plenty of time, so we parked the van and hoofed it towards the park entrance, hoping to make it far enough to get into some good habitat.

It didn't take long for it to become clear that we had chosen correctly. Right at the entrance to Nahuelbuta the habitat changed for the better, and it barely took any playback to get a response from a **Black-throated Huet-Huet!** It did take significantly more effort to actually see the bird, but soon enough we were enjoying point-blank in the open views of this spectacular large tapaculo. And then it got better! Not only did we get to see two adults, it soon became apparent they had an older juvenile bird in tow, one that was significantly less shy than the parents and allowed repeated excellent looks.

While watching the huet-huet the explosive song of a **Chuca Tapaculo** suddenly echoed through the woods. Since John and Nancy hadn't seen the one the previous day, I played the tape, and in mere moments there it was, perched up right in front of us with food in its bill and a challenge in its eye.



The road further into the park turned into even more of a mudhole, and the nearest habitat for our other targets being a long hike, I decided to try along the entrance road some more for the birds we had been hoping to see further in. This strategy soon paid off when a pair of **Ochre-flanked Tapaculos** answered aggressively and quickly from a large patch of bamboo. It barely even took any maneuvering before we were treated to unobstructed views!

The second of our remaining targets took a bit more work. Finally, in the largest patch of roadside bamboo, a diminutive **Des Murs's Wiretail** answered my playback. Easily one of the coolest furnariids of the tour, it was both a relief and a delight to watch it flit through the bamboo, offering repeat views of its bizarre trail.



Our targets in the bag, albeit not from where we expected to be birding most of the morning, we continued our southward journey. Birding was fairly limited on the drive, but a lucky few of us were treated to a nice view of an adult **Rufous-tailed Hawk**.

### **Day 9: Chiloe, flight to Punta Arenas, and the Straits of Magellan**

Since we had already found Slender-billed Parakeet the day before, it was decided to use our last morning in central Chile to head to Chiloe Island. The main attraction here was the short ferry right across the Chacao Channel, but we also hoped to pad the list a bit with some shorebirding.

As expected, the ferry ride did an admirable job as a “poor-man’s pelagic”. The most abundant species was **Sooty Shearwater**, with hundreds flying down the middle of the channel. Sprinkled among them were a few **Pink-footed Shearwaters**, and a single adult **Parasitic Jaeger**. Cormorants also featured prominently, with **four** species seen: **Neotropic, Red-legged, Imperial, and Magellan (Rock) Cormorants** all swinging by at close range. Nearing the coast of Chiloe the pelagic flavor tapered off, but was replaced by a pair of **Flightless Steamer-Ducks** at moderately close range, a first for the trip.



Back on terra firme, we started our whirlwind tour of the island. Right by the ferry landing we quickly found a few **Hudsonian Godwits** (up to 25% of the world population winters on the island), as well as the more common **Whimbrel** and **Baird’s Sandpiper**. The

number of **Black-necked Swans** was truly staggering, more than anywhere else on the trip.

Not far inland Jim called out a pair of **Slender-billed Parakeets** flying by. Luckily for us they landed right by the road in a flowering tree, and proceeded to eat the bright red flowers right in front of us, in perfect light (see cover photo)! Though we had seen the species the day before, the views as they sat there along the side of the road were among the best I've ever had of this Chilean endemic, and a highlight of the day.

The Caulin estuary gave us more of the same shorebirds, including a large flock of the godwits, and our first **Greater Yellowlegs**, but not a whole lot else of interest. The ferry ride back across to the mainland didn't add much new, so we headed to the airport and our flight to Punta Arenas.



Arriving right on schedule, it wasn't long before we had our next rental van and were headed south for the next birding stop. Barely out of the airport we saw the first of many **Southern Fulmars** moving along the shoreline, closely followed by our first **Upland Geese**, **Crested Ducks**, and **Magellanic Oystercatchers**. A

few kilometers south of Punta Arenas we finally found our main goal of the afternoon, a gorgeous female **Kelp Goose** loafing on the rocky shoreline. Although her very different mate was not found, good numbers of **Flying Steamer-Ducks** were seen along the shore with a few of their flightless cousins, and a small flock of **Ashy-headed Geese** rounded out our sheldgoose haul.

### **Day 10: Punta Arenas to Pali Aike National Park to Tierra del Fuego**

The windswept Patagonian steppe has some of the most unique birding in South America. There aren't very many birds, and the windspeed is often a higher number than the day list, but the birds you do find are almost universally high quality. Perhaps no day drove that point home more than this one, when we left Punta Arenas early for the grasslands of Pali Aike National Park.



The birding began almost as soon as we left town, when we found our first of over 100 **Lesser Rheas** of the morning. Arriving at the Pali Aike entrance road, we started scouring the open grassland for our target birds. It didn't take long to find a male **Least Seedsnipe** perched up on a small tussock, and while watching this diminutive shorebird a stunning **Rufous-chested**

**Dotterel** popped its head up right next to the seedsnipe! With a bit of positioning and playback we soon had killer views of the dotterel, at the same time discovering that the seedsnipe we had just seen was protecting three tiny fluffy chicks that brought oohs and aahs from everyone.

Working our way further up the road we had barely made it any further when a flash of yellow in front of the car proved to be the incredibly handsome **White-bridled Finch!** Slamming on the brakes, we got to watch this wonderfully cooperative bird for an extended period. And then, continuing our lucky trend, we had



barely moved on before a pair of **Tawny-throated Dotterels** appeared next to the road! This species is typically quite a bit shyer than its Rufous-chested cousin, but by the end of the morning we had found twenty or so birds, and everyone had their fill of this truly gorgeous shorebird.

The number of species we were still looking for was quickly dwindling, and it didn't take us long to find one of the remaining ones, a **Chocolate-vented Tyrant** defending a territory near the second group of dotterels we came across. This large tyranid is among the best looking in the entire family, and one of the best birds of Patagonia (as far as I'm concerned anyway!) We even got to hear its simple but rarely heard song as it defended its patch of steppe.



Wrapping up our time along the Pali Aike entrance road were a few other species new for the trip, among them **Two-banded Plover**, **Common Miner**, and **White-rumped Sandpiper**. The numbers of displaying **Least Seedsnipe** was an unexpected bonus, given that the previous year we had seen none at this site and had to work hard for the species along the Straits of Magellan.

After a quick lunch at a restaurant in San Gregorio we worked our way up towards the Argentinian border, hoping to find the very local Band-tailed Earthcreeper at a stakeout I had found the previous year, but we had to settle for our first



**Austral Canasteros**. The wetlands at Buque Quemado were more productive, though, with a pair of the uncommon **Silvery Teal**, some **White-winged Coot**, and our first **Chilean Flamingos**.

Having found our targets on the mainland, Tierra del Fuego was calling. The short ferry crossing at Punta Delgada gave us our first chance to bird on the water on the Straits of Magellan, and we weren't disappointed. A goodly number of **Magellanic Diving-Petrels** were definitely the highlight, though watching the many **Magellan (Rock) Cormorants** flying by with nesting material was also quite a site, and in the mammal department good looks at the striking Commerson's Dolphin were much appreciated.

Arriving at the island, we had barely drive more than a couple of kilometers before Jim spotted a pair of the rare **Ruddy-headed Goose**, and then another pair, both of which allowed some excellent studies of this hard to identify species, in direct comparison with the much more common Upland Goose. With our last sheldgoose of the tour in the bag we worked our way to Cerro Sombrero and our hotel for the night.

### **Day 11: Tierra del Fuego**

Tierra del Fuego doesn't have very many species on it – even fewer than mainland Patagonia – but it does have some of the most valued species of the tour. And these were our goals for our full day on the island.



The first target, and probably the most humble looking, was quickly found right outside of Cerro Sombrero when we found a number of **Short-billed Miners** right along the road, and enjoyed an extended study of this confusing species. The next target species, though, was much more interesting. Arriving at a large, rock-fringed saline lake, it didn't take long scanning with the scope to find first one, then another **Magellanic Plover**. These weird, dove-like shorebirds with hot pink legs are often one of the most wanted birds for people visiting Chile, in part due to their placement in their own monotypic family. After our initial scope view we descended to the lakeshore, enjoying some excellent, up-close views of this beautiful little shorebird.



The same lake was also good for a few other birds that we hadn't seen in a few days, including a couple of **Chilean Skuas** loafing among the more common **Kelp Gull**, and a pair of **Coscoroba Swans** out in the water.

We still had about an hour before lunch, so we decided to make a quick check of the waterfront around Porvenir. This quickly paid off when we found a number of cooperative **Dolphin Gulls**, including some stunning adult birds that allowed a close approach. More Chilean Skuas and a **Flightless Steamer-Duck** rounded out our pre-lunch birding.



The afternoon was spent on the long, dusty drive to Bahia Intuitil south of Porvenir. We



only had one target down here, but it was a doozy, and barely after arriving we were watching, spellbound, as 38 **King Penguins** sat on the shore of a small stream, preening, calling, display, and even mating! It was easily one of the best experiences of the trip!

We didn't run into a whole lot else new during

the afternoon, but two large flocks (weirdly enough both number 43 birds) of **Chilean Flamingo** were a delightful dash of pink against the greens and grays of the steppe and saline lakes, and some wind-blown **Embothrium** trees in full scarlet bloom made for some excellent landscape photography. Large herds of Guanacos dotted the hillsides for most of the drive back to Porvenir, where we spent the night.





## Day 12: Tierra del Fuego to Punta Arenas

A rather unfortunate change in ferry schedules meant we had to skip the long ferry ride that returned directly to Punta Arenas, and go around via Punta Delgada again. Most of the drive off of Tierra del Fuego didn't give us any new bird species, though we did get repeat views of **Short-billed** and **Common Miners**, and a few more **Least Seedsnipe**. That all changed when we got to the ferry landing, though – while waiting for the ferry to appear I walked around a bit by the car, and quickly found a male **Patagonian Yellow-Finch** sitting on a fence nearby, and then Jason found a male and female pair nest building in a pipe along the seawall.

The ride across the strait was a bit less productive than our previous crossing, though the views of Commerson's Dolphins were better. After the long drive back to Punta Arenas we spent the afternoon scanning the waterfront, looking for birds we had missed earlier in the trip and getting better looks at others. Our main target, **Northern Giant-Petrel** was found after a lot of careful scrutiny of the many **Southern Giant-Petrels** around the town. Scads of **Southern Fulmars** added some excitement to the scanning, and some carefully placed crackers brought a small flock of **Dolphin Gulls** in for close inspection.

## Day 13: Punta Arenas to Torres del Paine National Park

Chile is a country of long drives, and this day was no exception. It was 340 km from Punta Arenas to Torres del Paine, but luckily there was plenty in the way of birdlife to see along the way! It started out with excellent views of a young **Black-chested Buzzard-Eagle**, along with a number of Lesser Rheas and a few **Cinereous Harries**. But the highlight of the morning's drive was a **Short-eared Owl** that hunted the roadside and landed a few times for some excellent views of this charismatic species.

As we neared the park another of the most wanted birds of the trip made its first appearance, in the form of a magnificent adult **Andean Condor** that floated by close to the car. This was John and Nancy's most wanted bird of the trip, and while we saw many more



the next couple of days, that view we had of the first one was among the best, and a sight to be remembered!

And speaking of sights to remember, the entrance road into Torres del Paine gave us a glut of those! The first views of the most beautiful mountains in South America are rather distant and not terribly impressive, but as you get closer, rounding each bend, they get bigger and better and increasingly beautiful. Finally, as we broke through the last intermediary ridge and to an overlook of the Serrano valley, there they were in all their glory! I have seen many of the beautiful places on the continent, and none have ever struck me with their beauty like Torres del Paine. And if you don't believe me, see the picture below!



But we were here for more than just the stunning views. So the afternoon was spent with one special bird in mind. I had warned everyone how difficult it would be to actually get a glimpse of that bird, and how even a "good" view was often fleeting, so it came as a complete shock to everyone (me included!) when an **Austral Rail** popped into the open not long after I started playback! And it came as an even greater shock when it came into the open again, and again, and again, and then even flew OUT of the marsh and landed practically at my feet! The views we had of this rare and local bird were simply out of this world, and the experience of the trip for me.

Other birds that we saw on the way too and from the Austral Rail marsh included a pair of **Spectacled Ducks** that had six little fuzzy chicks in tow, a pair of **White-tufted Grebes**



building a nest, and our first **Ruddy (Andean) Ducks** of the tour, as well as a few more **Andean Condors**. Not long after seeing the rail, though, the wind picked up to true Patagonian proportions (i.e., nearly blowing us off our feet, and certainly making birding difficult at best), and some rain rolled in, so we called it a day and headed back to the lodge.



#### **Day 14: Torres del Paine and the Sierra Baguales, drive to Puerto Natales**

Waking up in the morning to the sight of Torres del Paine is a truly sublime experience, and watching the mountains as they went from a rosy hue at dawn to full light was the perfect accompaniment to our breakfast. Our main birding destination for the morning, the Sierra de Baguales, was a bit of a drive away, but luckily the drive was through the park, so we got to see the various vistas in excellent early morning light, as well as pick up our first few condors of the morning and another **Spectacled Duck** and a pair of **Magellanic Oystercatchers** with chicks (far from the nearest oysters!) on the way through.

Exiting out the other end of the park and working our way into the Sierra, it wasn't long before we found our first **Patagonian Mockingbirds**. For whatever reason, this year they were especially evident, singing all over the place, chasing each other, and perching prominently, a much different experience than the previous year where we had to work for the bird. Even more appreciated was a pair of the very local **Band-tailed Earthcreepers** right by where I had found them the year before. **Mourning** and **Gray-hooded Sierra-Finches** abounded, and even more condors sailed by overhead.

Higher up in the Sierra the habitat, and birdlife, took on a more alpine feel. The first of many **Cinnamon-bellied Ground-Tyrants** for the day began to appear, **Rufous-banded Miners** performed their butterfly-like flight displays, and a few flocks of **Greater Yellow-Finches** flew off the road. But it wasn't until we had gone way up the mountain that we found the first pair of one of our most wanted targets here, a stunning **Yellow-bridled Finch** and his more subdued mate.



The highest portions of the Sierra that we visited wasn't terribly productive, though we did find six more of the finches and a male **Least Seedsnipe**, and it was getting close to time to head back towards the lodge. So working our way back down, we counted more and more condors, including a flock of twelve flying with the torres of Torres del Paine as a backdrop. Some close encounters with **Lesser Rheas** made for a good photographic opportunity, but in otherwise the drive back was fairly uneventful.

The last few birds we had in the park were found right after lunch, and included a **Gray-flanked Cinclodes** and some **Ashy-headed Geese**. Back in Puerto Natales, a brief check of the waterfront gave us some **Dolphin Gulls**, a slew of **Black-necked Swans**, and the usual saltwater birds.



### **Day 15: Puerto Natales to Punta Arenas, the Otway Penguin colony, and home**

The last day of the tour was mostly a travel day. The long drive from Puerto Natales towards Punta Arenas was fairly uneventful, though a **Chilean Skua** saw us off at Natales, and a male **Lesser Rhea** with nine young chicks along the drive was an appreciated sight.



Our last birding of the tour was at the Seno Otway penguin colony. The main attraction here of course was the many **Magellanic Penguins** that we got to see at their burrows, along the waterfront preening, displaying, swimming, and fighting, and calling like braying donkeys all around. A few other birds were also seen, including a **Chimango Caracara** picking away at a penguin carcass (a gruesome but interesting sight!), a cooperative **Austral Canastero**, and the usual Negritos and **Long-tailed Meadowlarks**.

An on time departure for Santiago, and points onwards brought an end to a very successful tour to Chile, one on which we saw nearly every target species, found them with remarkable swiftness, and had repeated good views of most of them!



## Trip List

The taxonomy of the list follows: **Clements, James F., White, Anthony W., and Fitzpatrick, John W. *The Clements Checklist of Birds of the World*. Cornell, 2007** with updates through 2012.

We saw a total of 206 species, with one heard only bird being marked with an “H”. Species endemic to Chile are marked with an “E”.

### **RHEAS: Rheidae**

Lesser Rhea (Rhea pennata)

### **TINAMOUS: Tinamidae**

Chilean Tinamou (E) (Nothoprocta perdicaria)

### **DUCKS, GEESE, AND WATERFOWL: Anatidae**

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 (Speculanus specularis)

Chiloe Wigeon (Anas sibilatrix)

Yellow-billed Teal (Anas flavirostris)

Yellow-billed Pintail (Anas georgica)

White-cheeked Pintail (Anas bahamensis)

Silver Teal (Anas versicolor)

Cinnamon Teal (Anas cyanoptera)

Red Shoveler (Anas platalea)

Black-headed Duck (Heteronetta atricapilla)

Ruddy (Andean) Duck (Oxyura jamaicensis)

Lake Duck (Oxyura vittata)

### **NEW WORLD QUAIL: Odontophoridae**

California Quail (I) (Callipepla californica)

### **GREBES: Podicipedidae**

White-tufted Grebe (Rollandia rolland)

Great Grebe (Podiceps major)

Silvery Grebe (Podiceps occipitalis)

### **FLAMINGOS: Phoenicopteridae**

Chilean Flamingo (Phoenicopterus chilensis)

### **PENGUINS: Spheniscidae**

Humboldt Penguin (Spheniscus humboldti)

Magellanic Penguin (Spheniscus magellanicus)



King Penguin	( <i>Aptenodytes patagonicus</i> )
<b>ALBATROSSES: Diomedidae</b>	
"Northern" Royal Albatross	( <i>Diomedea epomophora sanfordi</i> )
Black-browed Albatross	( <i>Thalassarche melanophris</i> )
Salvin's Albatross	( <i>Thalassarche salvini</i> )
<b>PETRELS AND SHEARWATERS: Procellariidae</b>	
Southern Giant-Petrel	( <i>Macronectes giganteus</i> )
Northern Giant-Petrel	( <i>Macronectes halli</i> )
Southern Fulmar	( <i>Fulmarus glacialis</i> )
Cape Petrel	( <i>Daption capense</i> )
White-chinned Petrel	( <i>Procellaria aequinoctialis</i> )
Westland Petrel	( <i>Procellaria westlandica</i> )
Sooty Shearwater	( <i>Puffinus griseus</i> )
Pink-footed Shearwater	( <i>Puffinus creatopus</i> )
<b>STORM-PETRELS: Hydrobatidae</b>	
Wilson's Storm-Petrel	( <i>Oceanites oceanicus</i> )
<b>DIVING-PETRELS: Pelecanoididae</b>	
Peruvian Diving-Petrel	( <i>Pelecanoides garnotii</i> )
Magellanic Diving-Petrel	( <i>Pelecanoides magellani</i> )
<b>PELICANS: Pelecanidae</b>	
Peruvian Pelican	( <i>Pelecanus thagus</i> )
<b>BOOBIES: Sulidae</b>	
Peruvian Booby	( <i>Sula variegata</i> )
<b>CORMORANTS: Phalacrocoracidae</b>	
Neotropic Cormorant	( <i>Phalacrocorax brasilianus</i> )
Red-legged Cormorant	( <i>Phalacrocorax gaimardi</i> )
Guanay Cormorant	
Magellan (Rock) Cormorant	( <i>Phalacrocorax magellanicus</i> )
Imperial Cormorant	( <i>Phalacrocorax atriceps</i> )
<b>HERONS: Ardeidae</b>	
Stripe-backed Bittern	( <i>Ixobrychus exilis</i> )
Black-crowned Night-Heron	( <i>Nycticorax nycticorax</i> )
Cattle Egret	( <i>Bubulcus ibis</i> )
Cocoi Heron	( <i>Ardea coccyz</i> )
Great Egret	( <i>Ardea alba</i> )
Snowy Egret	( <i>Egretta thula</i> )
<b>IBISES: Threskiornithidae</b>	
Black-faced Ibis	( <i>Theristicus melanopus</i> )
<b>VULTURES: Cathartidae</b>	
Turkey Vulture	( <i>Cathartes aura</i> )
Black Vulture	( <i>Coragyps atratus</i> )
Andean Condor	( <i>Vultur gryphus</i> )
<b>HAWKS: Accipitridae</b>	
White-tailed Kite	( <i>Elanus leucurus</i> )
Cinereous Harrier	( <i>Circus cinereus</i> )
Bicolored (Chilean) Hawk	( <i>Accipiter bicolor chilensis</i> )

Black-chested Buzzard-Eagle	( <i>Geranoaetus melanoleucus</i> )
Harris's Hawk	( <i>Parabuteo unicinctus</i> )
Variable Hawk	( <i>Buteo polyosoma</i> )
Rufous-tailed Hawk	( <i>Buteo ventralis</i> )

**FALCONS AND CARACARAS: Falconidae**

Southern Caracara	( <i>Caracara plancus</i> )
Chimango Caracara	( <i>Milvago chimango</i> )
American Kestrel	( <i>Falco sparverius</i> )
Apomado Falcon	( <i>Falco femoralis</i> )

**RAILS AND COOTS: Rallidae**

Austral Rail	( <i>Rallus antarcticus</i> )
Plumbeous Rail	( <i>Pardirallus sanguinolentus</i> )
Spot-flanked Gallinule	( <i>Gallinula melanops</i> )
Red-gartered Coot	( <i>Fulica armillata</i> )
Red-fronted Coot	( <i>Fulica rufifrons</i> )
White-winged Coot	( <i>Fulica leucoptera</i> )

**PLOVERS: Charadriidae**

Southern Lapwing	( <i>Vanellus chilensis</i> )
Two-banded Plover	( <i>Charadrius falklandicus</i> )
Rufous-chested Dotterel	( <i>Charadrius modestus</i> )
Diademed Sandpiper-Plover	( <i>Phegornis mitchellii</i> )
Tawny-throated Dotterel	( <i>Oreopholus ruficollis</i> )

**OYSTERCATCHERS: Haematopodidae**

American Oystercatcher	( <i>Haematopus palliatus</i> )
Blackish Oystercatcher	( <i>Haematopus ater</i> )
Magellanic Oystercatcher	( <i>Haematopus leucopodus</i> )

**AVOCETS AND STILTS: Recurvirostridae**

Black-necked (White-backed) Stilt	( <i>Himantopus mexicanus melanurus</i> )
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**MAGELLANIC PLOVER: Pluvianellidae**

Magellanic Plover	( <i>Pluvianellus socialis</i> )
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**SANDPIPERS: Scolopacidae**

South American Snipe	( <i>Gallinago paraguaiiae</i> )
Hudsonian Godwit	( <i>Limosa haemastica</i> )
Whimbrel	( <i>Numenius phaeopus</i> )
Greater Yellowlegs	( <i>Tringa melanoleuca</i> )
Ruddy Turnstone	( <i>Arenaria interpres</i> )
Surfbird	( <i>Aphriza virgate</i> )
Sanderling	( <i>Calidris alba</i> )
White-rumped Sandpiper	( <i>Calidris fuscicollis</i> )
Baird's Sandpiper	( <i>Calidris bairdii</i> )
Red Phalarope	( <i>Phalaropus fulicarius</i> )

**SEEDSNIPE: Thinocoridae**

Gray-breasted Seedsnipe	( <i>Thinocorus orbignyianus</i> )
Least Seedsnipe	( <i>Thinocorus rumicivorus</i> )

**JAEGERS AND SKUAS: Stercorariidae**

Chilean Skua	( <i>Stercorarius chilensis</i> )
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Parasitic Jaeger (*Stercorarius parasiticus*)

**GULLS AND TERNS: Laridae**

Brown-hooded Gull (*Chroicocephalus maculipennis*)

Dolphin Gull (*Leucophaeus scoresbii*)

Gray Gull (*Leucophaeus modestus*)

Franklin's Gull (*Leucophaeus pipixcan*)

Kelp Gull (*Larus dominicanus*)

Inca Tern (*Larosterna inca*)

South American Tern (*Sterna hirundinacea*)

Sandwich Tern (*Thalasseus sandvicensis*)

Elegant Tern (*Thalasseus elegans*)

**SKIMMERS: Rynchopidae**

Black Skimmer (*Rynchops niger*)

**PIGEONS AND DOVES: Columbidae**

Picui Ground-Dove (*Columbina picui*)

Black-winged Ground-Dove (*Metriopelia melanoptera*)

Rock Pigeon (I) (*Columba livia*)

Chilean Pigeon (*Patagioenas araucana*)

Eared Dove (*Zenaida auriculata*)

**PARROTS AND PARAKEETS: Psittacidae**

Burrowing Parakeet (*Cyanoliseus patagonus*)

Austral Parakeet (*Enicognathus ferrugineus*)

Slender-billed Parakeet (E) (*Enicognathus leptorhynchus*)

**OWLS: Strigidae**

(H) Rufous-legged Owl (*Strix rufipes*)

Austral Pygmy-Owl (*Glaucidium nanum*)

Burrowing Owl (*Athene cunicularia*)

Short-eared Owl (*Asio flammeus*)

**HUMMINGBIRDS: Trochilidae**

Green-backed Firecrown (*Sephanoides sephaniodes*)

White-sided Hillstar (*Oreotrochilus leucopleurus*)

Giant Hummingbird (*Patagona gigas*)

**KINGFISHERS: Alcedinidae**

Ringed Kingfisher (*Megaceryle torquata*)

**WOODPECKERS: Picidae**

Striped Woodpecker (*Veniliornis lignarius*)

Chilean Flicker (*Colaptes pitius*)

Magellanic Woodpecker (*Campephilus magellanicus*)

**OVENBIRDS: Furnariidae**

Common Miner (*Geositta cunicularia*)

Short-billed Miner (*Geositta antarctica*)

Rufous-banded Miner (*Geositta rufipennis*)

Band-tailed Earthcreeper (*Ochetorhynchus phoenicurus*)

Crag Chilia (E) (*Ochetorhynchus melanurus*)

Scale-throated Earthcreeper (*Upucerthia dumetaria*)

Buff-winged Cinclodes (*Cinclodes fuscus*)

Gray-flanked Cinclodes	( <i>Cinclodes oustaleti</i> )
Dark-bellied Cinclodes	( <i>Cinclodes patagonicus</i> )
Seaside Cinclodes (E)	( <i>Cinclodes nigrofumosus</i> )
Wren-like Rushbird	( <i>Phleocryptes melanops</i> )
Thorn-tailed Rayadito	( <i>Aphrastura spinicauda</i> )
Plain-mantled Tit-Spinetail	( <i>Leptasthenura aegithaloides</i> )
Des Murs's Wiretail	( <i>Sylviorthorhynchus desmursii</i> )
Cordilleran Canastero	( <i>Asthenes modesta</i> )
Austral Canastero	( <i>Asthenes anthoides</i> )
Sharp-billed Canastero	( <i>Asthenes pyrrholeuca</i> )
Dusky-tailed Canastero (E)	( <i>Asthenes humicola</i> )
White-throated Treerunner	( <i>Pygarrhichas albogularis</i> )

#### **TAPACULOS: Rhinocryptidae**

Chestnut-throated Huet-huet (E)	( <i>Pteroptochos castaneus</i> )
Black-throated Huet-huet	( <i>Pteroptochos tarnii</i> )
Moustached Turca (E)	( <i>Pteroptochos megapodius</i> )
White-throated Tapaculo (E)	( <i>Scelorchilus albicollis</i> )
Chuca Tapaculo	( <i>Scelorchilus rubecula</i> )
Ochre-flanked Tapaculo	( <i>Eugralla paradoxa</i> )
Magellanic Tapaculo	( <i>Scytalopus magellanicus</i> )
Dusky Tapaculo (E)	( <i>Scytalopus fuscus</i> )

#### **FLYCATCHERS: Tyrannidae**

"Chilean" White-crested Elaenia	( <i>Elaenia albiceps chilensis</i> )
Tufted Tit-Tyrant	( <i>Anairetes parulus</i> )
Ticking Doradito	( <i>Pseudocolopteryx citreola</i> )
Many-colored Rush Tyrant	( <i>Tachuris rubrigastra</i> )
Austral Negrito	( <i>Lessonia rufa</i> )
Spectacled Tyrant	( <i>Hymenops perspicillatus</i> )
Spot-billed Ground-Tyrant	( <i>Muscisaxicola maculirostris</i> )
Cinereous Ground-Tyrant	( <i>Muscisaxicola cinereus</i> )
Ochre-naped Ground-Tyrant	( <i>Muscisaxicola flavinucha</i> )
Rufous-naped Ground-Tyrant	( <i>Muscisaxicola rufivertex</i> )
White-browed Ground-Tyrant	( <i>Muscisaxicola albilora</i> )
Cinnamon-bellied Ground-Tyrant	( <i>Muscisaxicola capistratus</i> )
Black-fronted Ground-Tyrant	( <i>Muscisaxicola frontalis</i> )
Black-billed Shrike-Tyrant	( <i>Agriornis montanus</i> )
Great Shrike-Tyrant	( <i>Agriornis lividus</i> )
Fire-eyed Diucon	( <i>Xolmis pyrope</i> )
Chocolate-vented Tyrant	( <i>Neoxolmis rufiventris</i> )
Patagonian Tyrant	( <i>Colorhamphus parvirostris</i> )

#### **COTINGAS: Cotingidae**

Rufous-tailed Plantcutter	( <i>Phytotoma rara</i> )
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#### **SWALLOWS: Hirundinidae**

Blue-and-white Swallow	( <i>Pygochelidon cyanoleuca</i> )
Chilean Swallow	( <i>Tachycineta meyeni</i> )
Barn Swallow	( <i>Hirundo rustica</i> )



**WRENS: Troglodytidae**

"Southern" House Wren (*Troglodytes aedon*)

**THRUSHES: Turdidae**

Austral Thrush (*Turdus falcklandii*)

**MOCKINGBIRDS: Mimidae**

Chilean Mockingbird (E) (*Mimus thenca*)

Patagonian Mockingbird (*Mimus patagonicus*)

**PIPITS: Motacillidae**

Correndera Pipit (*Anthus correndera*)

**SPARROWS AND ALLIES: Emberizidae**

Rufous-collared Sparrow (*Zonotrichia capensis*)

Gray-hooded Sierra-Finch (*Phrygilus gayi*)

Patagonian Sierra-Finch (*Phrygilus patagonicus*)

Mourning Sierra-Finch (*Phrygilus fruticeti*)

Plumbeous Sierra-Finch (*Phrygilus unicolor*)

Band-tailed Sierra-Finch (*Phrygilus alaudinus*)

Common Diuca-Finch (*Diuca diuca*)

White-bridled Finch (*Melanoderes melanoderes*)

Yellow-bridled Finch (*Melanoderes xanthogramma*)

Greater Yellow-Finch (*Sicalis auriventris*)

Patagonian Yellow-Finch (*Sicalis lebruni*)

Grassland Yellow-Finch (*Sicalis luteola*)

**ORIOLES, BLACKBIRDS, & MEADOWLARKS: Icteridae**

Austral Blackbird (*Curaeus curaeus*)

Yellow-winged Blackbird (*Agelastus thilius*)

Shiny Cowbird (*Molothrus bonariensis*)

Long-tailed Meadowlark (*Sturnella loyca*)

**FINCHES: Fringillidae**

Yellow-rumped Siskin (*Carduelis uropygialis*)

Black-chinned Siskin (*Carduelis barbata*)

**WEAVER FINCHES: Passeridae**

House Sparrow (I) (*Passer domesticus*)