

Chile trip report, 9th to 24th October 2013

WILDLIFE TRAVEL



Chile 2013

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Overview:

Chile is essentially a ribbon of land, sandwiched between the Andes to the east and the South Pacific to the west. It's the longest country in South America, stretching a remarkable 4,270 km/2,653 miles north to south, but averaging just 177 km (110 mi) east to west.

Taken as a whole Chile has a fairly small population (just over 17,000,000 [July 2012]), but much of it is concentrated around the fertile central valleys and in Santiago (which has a population of over 6,000,000). Central areas are thus congested, heavily farmed, and – from a wildlife point of view - somewhat uninspiring. However, the country has a gratifyingly large number of national parks and nature reserves which protect the more outstanding examples of habitat and biodiversity. Casual hunting is thought to be declining and wildlife is often surprisingly approachable. There is massive pressure for development along the coast, which is growing as the economy strengthens, but (and especially outside the weekends) we often had parks and eg small herds of Vicuna almost to ourselves – though in such a narrow strip of land the rumble of the thousands of trucks on the main highways was never that far away.

Our trip took in three distinct regions: central Chile (the central valley, coastal sites near Santiago, and Farellones); the northern coast and the puna and altiplano near the Bolivian border (the latter explored from our base in Putre); and the coastal/lowland Atacama Desert (our base here was Bahia Inglesa). By moving around the central and northern half of Chile we were able to experience a range of biomes and geographical regions that were both breathtaking (literally!) and varied. In two weeks we walked along coastal cliff tops, took a boat trip (out of Arica), visited areas of the extremely arid Atacama, drove miles across the undulating altiplano (the most extensive area of high plateau on Earth outside of Tibet), and stood beneath a dazzling sky dominated by the magnificent Andes mountains with their snow-capped volcanoes and peaks. This meant that we also travelled from sea-level to well over 4500m/15000', a daunting difference but one all members of the group handled with ease.

Covering such huge distances – Santiago and Arica are around 1600km/1050miles apart – is relatively easy as Chile has a good and improving road system (centred around constructing or upgrading the Pan American Highway or *Ruta 5*) and a modern and well-connected domestic air service with high levels of customer service. We took several internal flights (on Sky) and drove many hundreds of miles, and found the country to be generally safe, driving standards to be high, and what police check-points we went through were efficient, quick, and hassle-free.

Logistically we had gratifyingly few problems. Chile is politically stable (as of writing, there are elections which might change things) and friendly. Spanish is the national language and English is not widely-spoken but most people we met were happy to try to help us out when required (and of course we had Claudio with us at all times). Mobile phone coverage is extensive, all the hotels we used had wi-fi connectivity and consistent power supplies, and the food we ate at the hotels or nearby restaurants was fresh, well-prepared, and tasty.

To identify and understand the wonderful range of nature here takes skill and experience. While Chile is not as biodiverse as eg Amazonian regions (there are no rainforests and eg no primates), it has a good selection of unique animals and plants, many of which are spread rather thinly across narrow altitudinal bands and micro-climates (typically the harsher the environment the fewer animals and plants it can sustain, and the Atacama and the upland of the Andes can definitely be classed as harsh environments). There are good guide books and other materials available (with more on the way), but these are largely in Spanish and (particularly when it comes to the plants) require at least some working knowledge of the various families that are here!

Far easier to have a Guide like Claudio on hand of course, and I'd once again like to express my admiration and gratitude to him for his patience, knowledge, and – as importantly – for sharing his genuine love for Chile, a country I quickly came to enjoy hugely and which, writing this just weeks after coming home, I miss greatly...

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10th Oct/Day 2:

After a 14 hour flight overnight flight, we drove up to Olmue – our base for the next three days – where we could freshen up and then head out. We met up with our excellent driver Dario (aka 'Mr Tapaculo'), packed up the smart Mercedes-Benz Sprinter we would be using for this part of the trip, and set off into the central valley sunshine calling out the first of many **Southern Lapwings, Chilean Mockingbirds, Turkey Vultures** and **Chimango Caracaras** as we went. Of course, as most of us had never been to Chile before everything was new and very tempting, and as we drove up into the hills (with the Andes gleaming behind us in the distance) it wasn't long before a short stop was called for. Claudio guided the bus to a small layby with stunning views and we went for the first of the many short walks we'd be making over the coming fortnight.

Walking up a dusty side-track we were quickly submerged in an arid, sweet-smelling world that perhaps looked vaguely familiar to anyone who'd been to the southern US or Mexico, but was certainly very different to the UK! We were soon looking at various *Compositae*, a bewildering variety of introduced plants (the yellow **Californian Poppy** is very common in lowland Chile), and our first cactus, the widespread ***Echinopsis chilensis***. While absorbing the short whistling song of the omnipresent **Rufous-collared Sparrows**, exotically-named birds like **Fire-eyed Diucon**, the Chilean race of **White-crested Elaenia**, **Common Diuca Finch** and **Grey-hooded Sierra Finch** whipped in and out of the scrub, and our first **Variable Hawk** (a species closely related to our own Common Buzzard) soared overhead. Skipper butterflies whirled past and one of the group found a superbly camouflaged stick insect climbing shakily up a identically-coloured twig.

It was a good introduction to just how confused we were all going to feel while we found our feet over the next few days, and after 45 minutes or so we carried on to our hotel in Olmue. Set in nicely-maintained gardens that would bring us good views of **Chilean Pigeon, Austral Thrush, Green-backed Firecrown**, White-crested Elaenia and more 'sparrows' (Rufous-collareds again but **House Sparrows** bred in the roof), we ate a quick lunch (learning as we did just how vast the portions are in Chile) and were soon back on the road.

Whilst the hills and the nearby La Campana National Park (NP) towered over the hotel, Claudio decided that a trip to the coast and a bracing breeze would waken us all up far better! An hour's drive took us to the coast road through Vina del Mar and onto a number of bays with rocky islets. With Valparaiso as a backdrop to the left of us and a strong swell sweeping ashore we quickly found a selection of Humboldt current bird species - including our first **Peruvian Pelican, Peruvian Booby**, all three local cormorants (**Neotropic, Guanay** and **Red-legged**), **Grey** and **Kelp Gulls**, and (surprisingly) a single **Humboldt Penguin** - plus our first Chilean endemic, the dark-brown **Chilean Seaside Cinclodes** (one of four cinclodes species we saw on the trip – fleeting views of a **Buff-winged Cinclodes** in the same area soon followed - this one behaved somewhat like the more familiar Rock Pipit of Europe as it searched boulders at the water's edge for food).

Other species here included **Blue-and-White Swallows** flitting along the beach, a selection of shorebirds (**Blackish** and **American Oystercatchers, Hudsonian Whimbrel** (recently 'split' from the European/Asian races by most authors), and **Ruddy Turnstone**) and two unexpected seabirds: **Southern Giant Petrel** and brief views of a smaller dark petrel with a more active flight pattern that Claudio recognised as a **White-chinned!**

All rather wonderful, especially as we also had our first views of **South American Sea Lions** just offshore too, but – judging by the reactions of many of the group – the real stars were our first **Inca Terns**. Dark, different, with unique facial plumes this striking and beautiful large tern is restricted to the Humboldt Current and breeds only on the coasts of Peru and Chile - and in a drain outlet in the sea wall we were standing on hence the outstanding views!

With the day drawing in we made one final stop, the nearby wetland and beach at the mouth of the Aconcagua River at the northern end of the town. Here the wide, shallow freshwater butted up against several large sand banks before it flowed into the sea. Yet more new birds were on view: a male **Yellow-winged Blackbird** in a line of reeds, **White-backed Stilts** picking through the shallows with **Baird's Sandpipers** (a shorebird breeding in Canada and wintering down in southern South America), a single **Black Skimmer**, several **Brown-hooded Gulls** lounging on one of the sandbanks amongst the much larger Kelps, and a pair of the goose-sized **Great Grebe**, a rather magnificent species and by some way the largest grebe in the world.

Other species we picked up here (all of which would see again on several occasions) included three of the region's coots (**Red-fronted, Red-gartered**, and **White-winged**), **Eared** and **Picui Ground Doves**, and **Long-tailed Meadowlark**.

Quite an interesting day (to put it mildly hopefully) and quite an introduction to what was evidently going to be a fabulous two weeks.

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11th Oct/Day 3:

It's something of a tradition amongst Wildlife Travellers to stretch each day out as long as possible to fit in every opportunity to see 'wildlife'.

Day three began close to the hotel for the early risers among us, with a dawn hike starting from the nearby Granizo entrance of La Campana NP. Just a handful of us woke with the cockerels (and the cold morning air), and we were rewarded with good (-ish) views of some very oddly named birds indeed – including **Thorn-tailed Rayadito**, **Dusky-tailed Canastero**, **Tufted Tit-tyrant**, **Great Shrike Tyrant**, and a hooting **Austral Pygmy Owl** (which Peter taped and played at random moments for the next 12 days to check that Claudio and I were still awake and 'on the ball!'). The star bird though was the wonderfully-named **Moustached Turca**, a large tapaculo endemic to Chile. Somewhat like a small, brown chicken, this is a bird with strangely huge feet (a fact reflected in its scientific name *Pteroptochos megapodius*) and a fantastic hooting call that we would hear repeatedly at other rocky locations (not Peter this time, despite being restricted to Chilean foothills and cliffs this is – happily – a widespread and very vocal species). Claudio picked up a few other species calling somewhere off in the lifting mist (**White-throated Treerunner** and **Striped Woodpecker**, neither of which we subsequently saw on the trip), but with breakfast also calling – and camera cards filled with Turca images – we headed back to the hotel for 08:30.

In what seemed like a blink of an eye later, we were back on the bus heading for a more distant entrance of La Campana NP, Ocoa. Home to good numbers of the now rare endemic **Chilean Wine Palm** *Jubaea chilensis* (a tree with a trunk like an elephant's legs), La Campana was designated by UNESCO as a Biosphere Reserve in 1983. Charles Darwin climbed its highest peak, *Cerro La Campana* (the Bell Mountain) in 1834, but while we probably all applaud his efforts such exertions were not on the menu for us. Instead we began our morning rather leisurely, photographing palms, watching **Mountain Degu** (a rather pretty rodent) scurrying through the grasses by a low stone wall, and getting good views of **Southern House Wren**, Grey-hooded Sierra Finch, and Common Diuca Finch.

The National Park protects some of Chile's most important Mattoral habitat (one of the world's five Mediterranean climate regions, which are all located in the middle latitudes on the west coast of continents). We were soon walking a path towards a signposted look-out and identifying some stunning plants, including the magnificent endemic Mattoral bromeliad *Puya chilensis* (much favoured by the **Giant Hummingbird**, which while the largest hummingbird in the world is a name that is clearly hyperbolic), *Lobelia excelsa*, *Schizanthus pinnatus*, and the striking (and urticaceous) *Loasa tricolor*. If a few of us weren't certain what 'urticaceous' meant before we touched this particular plant, we were left in no doubt afterwards...

However it soon became apparent that a lack of rain had delayed the flowering of many plant species. We did see a small number of butterflies – including **Four-eyed Lady**, **Aristolochia Swallowtail** (Chile's only swallowtail), and what was probably **Branded Skipper** - and also picked up a few interesting non-plant species (a pair of the introduced **California Quail** were popular as was a gorgeous **Jewel Lizard** *Liolaemus tenuis* basking on a tree trunk) but a decision was made to escape the midday heat and head to the nearby Mantagua Coastal Wetland.

Consisting of shallow muddy areas, a large lagoon, dunes, and some non-native eucalypts and pines, Mantagua is a well-laid-out and visitor-friendly site (though – with my leader's hat on for a moment – a boardwalk we needed to cross to get from one side of the inflow to the other had me mentally running through my risk assessment checklist). Our first proper look at a wetland (our visit to the mouth of the Aconcagua River had been necessarily short), we had high expectations that our bird list would see many new additions – and I think it's true to say we weren't disappointed. New birds came thick and fast. **Lesser Yellowlegs** fed near **South American Snipe**, **Great Snowy Egrets** flew over **Pied-billed Grebes** – and caught up in the moment it's true to say that both Claudio and I were a little guilty of not explaining the identification features of some of them: hopefully a detailed work through of the three coots on site (White-winged, Red-gartered, and Red-fronted, all of which we'd skipped through the day before) corrected that.

This was also our first chance to see a wide range of South American waterbirds, and on a walk around the edge of the lagoon we managed to find **Chiloe Wigeon**, **Cinnamon Teal**, **Red Shoveler**, **Yellow-billed Teal**, **Yellow-billed Pintail**, and **Lake Duck**! **Spot-flanked Gallinule** were fairly common too, we had distant views of our first **Plumbeous Rail**, an oiled **Grey/Red Phalarope** appeared out of nowhere, and (our first major surprise of the trip) two **Snowy-crowned Terns** were using some wooden fence posts in the middle of the water as a base for fishing sorties.

Wetland habitats also hold their own set of passerines, and we had views (from very good to very brief) of four target species. A **Dusky Tapaculo** (a Chilean endemic) gave very brief but just identifiable views as it slipped between impossibly tangled vegetation in the sand dunes; a **Spectacled Tyrant** (a very typical flycatcher of reed beds) was

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found below the visitor centre on our way back; a pair of **Wren-like Rushbirds** nesting out in the lagoon in a reedbed were identifiable more on location, shape and behaviour than on plumage details; but we did all get extremely good views of our last target bird – **Many-coloured Rush-tyrant**. The Spanish name for this species is *Siete colores* (seven colours), which points to just how 'many colours' this tiny flycatcher wears. Somewhat frustratingly we only had excellent views of a juvenile bird (more quattro colores than siete) but given how hard this species can be to see I don't think anyone was complaining!

Other birds here included our first **Grassland Yellow Finch**, **Shiny Cowbird**, and **Rufous-tailed Plantcutter** (the latter Chile's only Cotinga if DNA analysis is to be believed), and we had great views of **Chilean Swallow**, Long-tailed Meadowlark, Tufted Tit-spinetail, and Giant Hummingbird. And while some good-natured ribbing took place when a coot swam into sight in place of the previously called-out **Coypu**, a quick chat with the staff confirmed that this large rodent does indeed breed here...

An excellent and enjoyable site to visit. Hopefully its purchase by a group of conservation organisations will safeguard it into the future: major developments are visible on its edges and while some urban wetlands can be outstanding they do need to be warded and plenty of resources made available to them for biodiversity to thrive. Fingers crossed!

12th Oct/Day 4:

The keener birders amongst us again began the next day with another dawn visit to Campana, walking the same path up to the abandoned mine near the Olmue entrance. The fog was notably thicker than the previous morning (and it was chillier too) but in the hour we gave ourselves we again had good views of Austral Pygmy-owl, Moustached Turca, and Dusky-tailed Canastero. The 'star bird' (which only Peter and Claudio saw on this occasion) was our third tapaculo, the **White-throated**. Another endemic this is a typically skulking and difficult to see species, though for those of us who missed this one there would be chances later in the trip...

On the way back down to the hotel a woodpecker flew very briefly alongside the bus, bouncing over us as it crossed the road. Remarkably it then landed in a tree just above a sharp bend, giving us extended (though not good given the mist and terrible light) views of the only **Chilean Flicker** of the trip.

Back in the bus after breakfast we were soon heading for Los Molles and a remnant of a once-widespread but very important cliff-top habitat that historically stretched right along this part of the Chilean coast but which has now been mostly lost to housing. Driving down an extremely bumpy road between rows and rows of new housing, we turned past a poorly-maintained wooden hut and into a poorly-marked car-park.

At first sight the site didn't seem too exciting (perhaps the thick cloud and poor light heightened the initial impression), but once we'd got out of the bus and begun to look around we were soon (I think literally) gasping at the amazing range of plants which covered an area that could be walked around in under thirty minutes. Two bromeliad species (*Puya chilensis* and *P. venusta*) were perhaps most obvious given their height and intense colours, but scattered all along the path and the edge of the rocky cliffs were smaller but equally spectacular plants like the gorgeous *Alstroemeria pelegrina* and the deep-blue *Pasithea coerulea*, plus *Fuschia lycoides*, *Sisyrinchium graminifolium*, *Oziroë arida*, *Happlopappus foliosus*, *Leucocoryne coquimbensis*, *Nolana paradoxa* and *Cistanthe grandiflora*. Cacti were also prolific with *Eriogyne curvispina* and *E. subgibbosa* and *Echinopsis chiloensis ssp. littoralis* perhaps the most breathtaking. The remarkable **Moustached Orchid** *Bipinnula fimbriata* (the only orchid we saw during the trip) was in full flower here too and understandably attracting the photographers. Striking and beautiful plants seemed to be everywhere and it wasn't difficult to imagine what's been lost as the cliffs are built on. Hopefully more areas will be protected before they're developed...

While the plants took pride of place, the rough conditions out at sea and an onshore wind did mean that we saw many seabirds passing relatively close by. Some we'd seen well on our first day (the boobies, pelicans, oystercatchers, and gulls for example), a few others we'd seen before but now had much better views (Southern Giant Petrel for example) but others were new - though sometimes frustratingly difficult to see. These included whirling mixed flocks of **Sooty Shearwater** and far smaller numbers of the pale-bellied **Pink-footed Shearwater**, the auk-like **Peruvian Diving Petrel**, and most surprisingly (and surely a result of those strong onshore winds) a very distant **Salvin's Albatross** which was dipping in and out view as it rode the wind currents.

A very beautiful site, Los Molles was a highlight of the entire trip (and we had many highlights!) but after a few hours it was time to move on.

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Our next location was further along the coast: the Humboldt Penguin colony at Monumento Nacional Isla Cachagua. Basically a very large rock separated from the mainland by a wide and fast-flowing channel, Cachagua Island is the rather lovely but guano-covered home of a small colony of penguins which are easily – if distantly – watched from a purpose-built viewpoint at one end of a very popular beach (which is excellent for Hudsonian Whimbrel and Blackish Oystercatcher).

Humboldt Penguins are easily disturbed and will stop breeding if people get too close, but happily it's illegal to land on the island. That doesn't apply to the Kelp Gulls or Turkey Vultures which circle the colony of course, but it has meant that the colony has survived in what is a well-visited area. Around the world other colonies haven't fared so well. Occasionally a second species, the Magellanic Penguin, is found here too, but while we tried our best to turn a Humboldt into the rarer species we couldn't manage it. The channel is often used by the **Marine Otter** but despite keeping 'eyes peeled' this hoped-for 'proper otter' wasn't seen on this occasion either.

It's human nature to want to see everything of course, but wildlife-watching is something of a lottery – which is how it should be of course. If every sighting was guaranteed how much fun would that be? In the same vein, not all wildlife or plantlife lives or grows in such scenic locations as Los Molles or Cachagua. And our next stop certainly proved that.

What looks like a large and rather unremarkable flooded gravel pit on the edge of a sprawling chemical works, the Ventanas Industrial area seemed at first to be one stop too many in a very packed three days. However, if it hadn't been a worthwhile stop then surely Claudio wouldn't have guided us there? Of course not, and – despite the surroundings, the dark clouds and a very cold wind – there were birds a-plenty.

While we had repeat views of many of the waterfowl species we had seen yesterday (including Lake Duck), we added both **Black-necked** and **Coscoroba Swans** (this was the only location in which we saw the latter), and the pretty **White-tufted Grebe**. On a distant shore we picked up the first **Austral Negrito** of the trip (its Andean cousin was still to come of course) and on the far side of the pit our first **Greater Yellowlegs** (just below the car park was a roost of well-over a hundred Hudsonian Whimbrels, another Nearctic breeding shorebird wintering in Chile).

With the clouds descending even our first **Rufous-banded Miner** couldn't lift the gathering weariness of some of our group, many of whom had returned to the bus – only to come spilling out again as a Coypu swam the entire length of the gravel pit! Persistence pays, and while it's hardly the most exciting mammal in Chile this was our final sighting of the species.

13th Oct/Day 5:

This morning we headed to El Parral Nature Reserve. Almost due east of Santiago, this reed-fringed wetland 'feels' much like wetland reserves in the UK and North America, with well-marked trails, boardwalks, and covered platforms on the edge of the water.

We arrived mid-morning, and sadly yesterday's clouds and fog hadn't yet lifted. Still, it was obvious straight away that there were plenty of birds here – some now almost familiar (Southern Lapwing, Cattle Egret, Yellow-billed Teal, Yellow-billed Pintail, Southern House Wren, Austral Blackbird etc) and some less so (a lovely Rufous-tailed Plantcutter gave us great views on a wire over the road, and we photographed a pair of Plumbeous Rails – er, making new Plumbeous Rails). We also had good views of a mysterious 'duck' swimming across the main waterbody, which we soon realised was a **Black-crowned Night-heron**: both Claudio and I have seen literally thousands of this very widespread heron before but neither of us have seen one imitating a duck. Talking of herons Peter had a possible brief view of a **Stripe-backed Bittern**, but given the distance it was impossible to be 100% certain whether it was one or not. Nevertheless all very interesting, and all before we had even entered the reserve!

Once inside the reserve we made the best of the next few hours, checking everything we could and adding **Silvery Grebe** to our ever-expanding list and watching a Wren-like Rushbird building its nest to a backdrop of a group of Black-necked Swans. Claudio had noted that Dusky Tapaculos were calling from the dense waterside vegetation and decided – more in hope than in certainty – to try to call one into the open using a taped call. While not impossibly small (it's 5" from bill-tip to tail-tip) the species is often described as 'mouse-like' for good reason. Nevertheless we all managed to get identifiable views as it warily circled our phantom male, crossing paths and occasionally very briefly emerging from deep cover.

The tapaculo was one of the trip highlights so far as far as I was concerned (which I appreciate is hardly important but I thought I'd mention it), but by lunchtime the general feeling was that much as we had all enjoyed the site we had 'done' wetlands for the time being. It was time to move on to the next phase of the holiday.

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With our flight to the north planned for the next day we needed to be in Santiago that evening. In the meantime we would be making a first visit into the Andes, by crossing the breadth of Chile (not quite the difficult task it sounds really given the narrowness of the country) and climbing up to the ski-resort of Farellones at around 2,340m above sea level (7,874') – via a nerve-tingling road noted for its 40 hairpin bends.

It took just a few hours to reach the mountains (no doubt helped because it was Sunday and the notoriously traffic-clogged routes through Santiago were almost clear), and as we climbed up and up the views became ever more spectacular. While we'd admired the mountains above Santiago from a distance, seeing them close up was something entirely different. Massive folds and slopes, snow, startlingly bright sunshine, and air of such purity it almost sparkled. No doubt each of us could write pages of descriptions...but this is hardly the place. Suffice to say that we were impressed.

With a change of scene comes a change of bio-diversity, and above Santiago lies the Southern Andean steppe eco-region. As mentioned earlier it's a general rule of thumb that fewer species can be supported at higher altitude (cold nights, less plants able to grow, less food available, winter ice cover etc), and it's also true that for much the same reasons what species are found are more thinly distributed. Nevertheless mountain wildlife is always interesting, and usually almost totally different to what's found in the lowland.

One of the key target species for any trip to the Andes is a bird with one of the largest wingspans on the planet, the **Andean Condor** (only the Wandering and Southern Royal Albatrosses, and the Dalmatian and Great White Pelicans can be larger). The species certainly dwarfs the occasional Variable Hawk that can be seen in the air at the same time. Unrelated to the Asian vultures, the Andean Condor is thought to have evolved from a long-gone ancestor that also gave rise to the Storks, but whether this will prove to be the case as molecular studies themselves evolve is impossible to say. What is the case, though, is that leaping out of the bus on a ridge between two vallies as an enormous black bird with heavily fingered wings and complete mastery of the wind sails past is thrilling!

Before reaching Farellones we may have had concerns that any Condors we might see would be distant specks, but during the morning (and especially at our next stop, close to a stream and within sight of the vast ski resort itself) we had wonderful views of these impressive birds. In decline across their whole range, the mountains would be poorer without them.

It wasn't only the condors that were new or that were giving good views of course. Everywhere we looked there were birds, and we were introduced to our first representatives of a number of new families too. Just by the stream we found both **White-fronted** and **Ochre-naped Ground-tyrants**, a pair of beautiful **Black-faced Ibises** probed the soft soil further upstream, and we saw both our first **Black-winged Ground-dove** and **Greater Yellow Finch** too.

Across the road from where we'd parked we found a family group of Rufous-banded Miner and Grey-hooded Sierra Finches hopping around the rocks within a few feet of our first **Cordilleran Canastero**. A Buff-winged Cinclodes (a species we'd seen only briefly on our first afternoon) searched the stream margins for invertebrates, and while watching it we realised that the 'soft ground' we were standing on actually housed a colony of (**Highland?**)**Tuco Tuco**, a gopher-like species with strikingly orange incisors that digs long tunnels in the soil thereby causing the springiness we could feel underfoot.

What of other 'nature'? Plants were rather limited up here but, again, what we saw were interesting. Our Plant List records that we saw species such as **Moscharia pinnatifida** and **Adesmia corymbosa**: few were identified at the time though and hopefully as this Report circulates the gaps can be filled? Perhaps of more note at the time was our discovery of a very approachable spider that appears to be a **Chilean Rose Tarantula** – and which Claudio described as either non-toxic or the most dangerous spider on earth! Subsequent research suggests that the species is actually quite docile, but that's the sort of information you need *before* you decide whether to let one run over your hand or not.

The tarantula's favoured food (in captivity anyway) is crickets, which were in very short supply indeed at such a high altitude. Presumably the spider survives the winter by hibernating in sealed burrows, and perhaps the few lizards we saw (which I've not been able to identify yet) do the same. The temperature certainly began to drop as the afternoon wore on, and with more Andean Condors 'tucked away' along with our only **Band-tailed Sierra Finches** (seen below our final stop) we decided to head back to Santiago and the airport hotel to prepare for the second phase of our trip: the North and the altiplano.

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14th Oct/Day 6:

I suspect for many of us the highlight of this holiday was always going to be the Atacama Desert; particularly the altiplano, the saline lakes, and the volcanoes and peaks of the Andes in northern Chile. Considering what we'd already seen it would have to be very, very special indeed to eclipse the previous few days, but there's no doubt that we were all very excited as we touched down at the airport at Arica – gateway to the Llauca Valley and the extraordinary road that winds from sea-level to over 14000' and on into Bolivia.

With the equivalent of three full days in Putre in the offing, and plenty of daylight available, instead of heading east into the mountains we first made a stop along the coast to look at the remnant wetlands at the mouth of the Lluta River. We had of course spent plenty of time in various wetlands already, but these marshes and tidal flats were well over 1200km/750mls to the north and almost in Peru. Many of the species promised to be different, and might well include more northerly species and altitudinal migrants from the mountains. So it proved.

Besides the quite staggering numbers of Turkey Vultures (I've certainly never seen so many in one place) there were birds a-plenty and this was a very rewarding stop. The first patch of water we looked at – a lagoon right on the coast – gave us six new birds for the trip in as many minutes: two gulls (an immature **Band-tailed Gull** and an immature **Andean Gull** – the latter overwinters at low altitude but breeds on highland lakes), an immature **Little Blue Heron**, and three species of shorebird – **Killdeer** (a scarce resident in Chile this is the best site for the species), a moulting adult **Spotted Sandpiper**, and a small flock of 'spinning' **Wilson's Phalaropes** (we had both Baird's Sandpiper, Hudsonian Whimbrel, and Greater and Lesser Yellowlegs here too, meaning six boreal breeding shorebird species all within 1km of each other).

Looking properly at our first group of ducks we discovered **White-cheeked Pintail** (the only ones we saw on the trip) and a single **Puna Teal** amongst the more widespread Cinnamon Teals. In the same field of view were more Wilson's Phalaropes and (unexpectedly) a **Puna Ibis**, as well as four 'white' heron species (Cattle, Snowy, Great, and another immature Little Blue) all in a line giving us a chance to test our ID (and memory) skills. And just to really remind us all how confusing things can get when you're birding somewhere new, we found a new Coot (**Slate-coloured/Andean**), a new swallow that looked like our **Barn Swallow** and in fact was (but a Nearctic subspecies), and what looked like our own Moorhen but which wasn't as it has been spilt from the Old World species and – based on its call –renamed the **Laughing Gallinule!**

Landbirds were perhaps less difficult to keep up with, but we still had to get used to a new ground-dove (**Pacific**), a new meadowlark (**Peruvian**), and a new subspecies of Rufous-collared Sparrow (which is actually a bunting incidentally) which was strikingly better marked than the southern birds we'd all become used to – and which even sung differently. On top of that was a long-tailed, grey, warbler like bird with a peculiarly yellowish bill that was difficult to see well and has a name that reflects none of its most conspicuous characters: **Slender-billed Finch** (which on current thinking is actually a tanager). All very confusing and exhausting – but hopefully exhilarating too.

Whilst the wildlife 'down here' was wonderful thoughts were inevitably turning to the wildlife 'up there' and after about an hour we began a long drive that would take us from sea-level to a potentially headache-inducing altitude of 3,500 m (11,483') and the town of Putre. On our way up the (remarkable) road that zigzags up the mountains and into Bolivia, an unscheduled stop by some cultivated fields in the lower reaches of the Llauca Valley resulted in us notching up our first **Vermillion Flycatcher**, **Chestnut-throated Seedeater**, and **Sand (Bank) Martin**, and the only **Croaking Ground-doves** of the trip.

With a change of vehicles and yet another excellent meal (one of very many over the two weeks) we felt suitably refreshed. Having had good views of a pair of Vermilion Flycatchers (and Peter seeing a flyover **Aplomado Falcon** missed by the rest of us) we set off again, steadily climbing away from the lush, fertile vallies into an area of the Atacama that is devoid of rain and receives no meltwater. It appeared almost sterile: bare, sandy coloured, and baked dry, even bacteria and fungi struggle to survive here. It was a remarkable contrast, only lessened when we entered a narrow altitudinal zone home to a remarkable near-endemic plant: **Browningia candelari**, the **Candelabra Cactus**. Growing in stony soil almost devoid of any other signs of life, these odd, isolated cacti stand in a strange zone between the well-watered 'oasis' valley bottom and the altiplano. Spiny from top to bottom (presumably an ancient defence evolved when camelids were far more numerous and widespread?), it was as difficult to work out the distribution of each individual plant as it was to understand why they would be so clearly confined within a band of some 800m. Presumably pollinated by a moth (one that survives very cold nights), and though not deep-rooted somehow finding enough water to survive, what *Browningia candelari* lacked in cuteness, colour, or character it made up for in the sheer number of questions its very existence brought up...

Chile trip report, 9th to 24th October 2013

Uphill progress on a road that is sometimes very steep and very winding can be slow. When it's also the route by which an endless line of trucks deliver almost every drop of fuel that enters land-locked Bolivia the going can be frustratingly slow. By late afternoon we were still not quite at Putre so stopped at a viewpoint on the edge of steep cliffs where we searched for our first **Mountain Viscacha**, an impossibly charismatic chinchilla that looks something like a cross between a long-whiskered rabbit and a small kangaroo with a curly tail. The views we had were distant and not good, but they at least set us up for the much better views to come.

With (unusually) thick clouds threatening heavy rain in an area that sometimes sees no rain for years on end we soon drove on, stopping again only when we reached another viewpoint that looked out over the mining town of Putre, our base for the next three days, and towards the stunning backdrop of the Taapaca volcanic complex. From above Putre doesn't look especially interesting (though that could be my opinion only of course), but it is the last stop before the altiplano and Bolivia, and to be standing at over 3000m in the shadow of the Andes is something wonderful in itself anyway. It was also obvious very quickly that the wildlife here was very different to the valley below. Hopping around the viewpoint were two new birds (**Greenish Yellow-finch** and **Mourning Sierra Finch**) and we added more (**Andean Swallow**, **Chiguanco Thrush**, **Hooded Siskin**, and **Ash-breasted Sierra-finch**) by the hotel as we pulled into Putre (or moments afterwards anyway) at the end of another long and exciting day.

15th Oct/Day 7:

The clouds of yesterday seem to have broken up by dawn, and we had a chance to take a brief look around. Putre nestles rather untidily on a plateau irrigated by meltwater. Allotments and gardens attract birds and some mammals (we saw an introduced **Brown Hare** bounding across a dusty field) and there is little sign of the casual hunting that blights so many villages worldwide. Away from the village the birds are more thinly distributed, but responding to the abundance of seeds and invertebrates associated with the planted food, introduced eucalypts, and numerous streams we found surprisingly large flocks of mourning-finches, good numbers of Chiguanco Thrushes, and numerous doves and pigeons (inc **Spot-winged Pigeon**, Pacific Dove, and **Bare-faced Ground-dove**). Perhaps surprisingly (given that most of us probably think of them as being tropical) three species of hummingbird occur here: **Andean Hillstar** (the commonest of the three by some way), **Sparkling Violet-ear** and Giant Hummingbird.

It was a quick introduction to the local birds, and happily under cloudless skies. Regrouping during a much-needed breakfast we discussed how the altitude was impacting us. While all of us were feeling some shortness of breath (and mild headaches are the norm for a few days after moving from sea-level to this sort of altitude) we were otherwise feeling in good spirits and keen to get out to explore (which allayed genuine fears that at least one or two of us may have been knocked down by climbing so high!).

After breakfast Claudio (whose 40th birthday it was - *feliz cumpleaños*, amigo) led a more extensive walk around the town – both to show us around and to make absolutely certain we managed at 3000m before taking us any higher. Hopefully the rest of the group will remember this walk with as much satisfaction as me, as we added more new – and usually very approachable – birds to our Trip List. Just outside the hotel we found **Black-hooded Sierra Finch**, a **Canyon Canastero** played hide and seek in some fairly dense bushes with a **Yellow-bellied Tit-spinetail**, our only **White-throated Earthcreeper** tried to disguise itself as a cinclodes (we found **Cream-winged Cinclodes** by the army base not long after), and we had better and longer views again of the birds some of us had seen earlier in the morning. A wonderful few hours. On top of that we also had our first 'record' of Llama, a docile and charming species that doesn't actually exist in the wild but which (with Alpaca) is widely kept for its meat and for clothing. Seeing a llama walking down a road in the Andes still brings a smile to my face...

As referred to previously, the widespread plantings attracted significant numbers of insects including bumble-bees and some rather fearsome-looking large hoverflies, as well as small white butterflies with varying amounts of black markings (belonging to the genus *Tatochila* and perhaps *T.mercedes* but difficult to identify to species) and what appears to be known solely as **Grizzled Skipper** *Pyrgus bocchoris* (but which is not the same species with the same English name which is found from the UK to China - *P. malvae*). Confused? Me too...

Anyhow, while there's no doubt that by mid-morning we were all hot, a little breathless, and perhaps a little overwhelmed, the feared 'altitude sickness' was not an issue. As a result, declared Claudio, it was time to venture beyond Putre and head on to around 4000m and the altiplano proper. We began the slow crawl along a winding side-road to rejoin the main road to the altiplano – stopping only for a flock of **Black Siskin** and a very dark Puna Hawk, the high-altitude form of the more widespread Variable Hawk (though further study will likely reveal it to be a full species in its own right).

Chile trip report, 9th to 24th October 2013

The altiplano 'proper' begins just a few km east of Putre. That's easy enough to state, but describing the altiplano (and the Lauca Biosphere Reserve that protects 1380 sq km of it) is far more difficult. Superlatives queue up, and it's almost impossible to put into words how much everything changes when you let your gaze wander from the mountains and snow-capped volcanoes set against almost permanent blue skies down to the dirt-brown dry soil and on to the detailing in the unique *bofedales*, permanent green wetlands created from meltwater which follow the contours of shallow vallies and are packed with birds. It's a region of the world that feels like a privilege to be in, an adventure waiting to be explored, somewhere truly different, and all of it utterly unforgettable. Oh, and it's free to enter as well!

Lauca is where one of Chile's two wild camelid species, the **Vicuna**, still exists in good numbers. Beautiful, gentle-looking animals with dense pale cinnamon-coloured fur, Vicuna are typically seen in small family groups. Usually found near a water supply (they need to drink every day), Vicuna are often described as shy and wary, but within the National Park they are cautious but far more approachable than expected: clearly a result of habituation to people and the removal of hunting pressure (perhaps before the Spanish arrived and shot vast numbers of them, Vicuna were always less wary than now). Our first good views of these leggy, long-necked animals came when we stopped for a packed lunch by the Las Cuevas Trail. A small group kept one eye on us as we sat within 75m of them. A beautiful location, a bofedales stretched away into the distance on which we also found a great selection of new birds: **White-winged Diuca-finch**, **White-winged Cinclodes**, **Rufous-naped** and **Puna Ground-Tyrants**, plus the very scarce **White-throated Sierra-finch** (which we didn't see again on the trip).

Not only that, but Las Cuevas is also a superb place to see Mountain Viscacha which are evidently very used to groups of tourists sitting in *their* rocks and taking endless photos of them. If the views we'd had yesterday had been disappointing, we certainly had every opportunity to get to know these delightful chinchillas 'up close and personal' now. I don't like to speak for others on the trip, but for me a love affair began that lunchtime! Much more difficult, unfortunately, were the far less numerous **Bolivian Long-eared Mice** that very occasionally scuttled through a rock pile by the road. 'Tantalising' might be the best way to describe the fleeting glimpses they gave, but with so much else on offer such minor disappointments would be soon forgotten...

With the afternoon wearing on, and aware that this was our first day at this higher altitude, we moved on to check out areas on the western edge of the park, finding 'common' altiplano species like **Crested Duck** and **Andean Goose** (it's a simple name, but how evocative is 'Andean Goose'?) and the beautiful **Grey-breasted Seedsnipe**, one of just four seedsnipes in the world (all of them restricted to southern South America) and which confusingly look like long-winged grouse, have very short legs and bills, and which don't actually eat just seeds.

For me the seedsnipes were very high on my 'Most Wanted' list, but there was even better to come. Shortly afterwards we began one of the most unforgettable birding experiences of the whole trip. Parking in a small layby opposite a broad bofedales which looked as if was flowing downhill through a valley, we made the decision to (almost literally) hop across a narrow but fast-flowing stream and take a short walk uphill along the watercourse. More cinclodes and more ground-tyrants (including White-fronted Ground-tyrant again) soon followed, as did more seedsnipe: this time both Grey-breasted and the larger **Rufous-bellied**. Andean Geese were common, and we soon came across a bird that on first view made 'no sense' at all: white-rumped, undulating in flight, and very vocal it looked for all the world like a woodpecker. Unlikely in this treeless environment? It was of course our first **Andean Flicker**, a high altitude woodpecker that nests in large holes in cliffsides or road cuts. One gorgeous bird was soon followed by another, when we picked up a trio of **Puna Tinamou** trotting away from us up a hillside. Beautifully patterned these chicken-like birds' closest relatives are apparently the extinct Moas of New Zealand! All around us White-winged Diuca-finches were fluttering from one boggy patch to the next, and the sun beat down from a near cloudless sky. Heavenly! But we had walked much further (and for much longer) than anticipated and understandably a few of us made our way back to the bus while Claudio, Peter, and Jonathan headed towards the neck of the bofedales about 1000m further up the valley.

The rest of the group had been on the bus for a while before our intrepid trio returned. My birding intuition told me that they'd taken far longer than they would have done had they just wandered up, found nothing and returned back again. And my intuition was correct. They'd found and photographed a pair of one of *the* most sought-after birds of all: **Diademed Sandpiper-plover**. Confined to High Andean wetlands, the Diademed Sandpiper-plover is a remarkable looking species, the only plover on the planet with a sandpiper's bill, and a white 'diadem' which gives the bird its unusual (and unique) name. A truly great find, and – had Claudio not felt the call of a different kind of nature and stopped for a while – one that could easily have been missed: had he still been walking and breathing heavily he might never have heard the bird's high whistle.

Chile trip report, 9th to 24th October 2013

It had been a long and utterly remarkable day and the DSP was the cream on the pudding. With no way to top that wonderful find, we wound our way back to Putre and dinner on a real high (though possibly the altitude had something to do with that too!).

Back at the hotel Peter and I decided we weren't quite finished for the day, though. We dragged our weary bodies back to the area of fields and scrub near the Army base we'd birded in the morning to look for Ornate Tinamou and to see if we could re-find what we'd both felt almost certain had been a briefly seen Blue-and-Yellow Tanager. Neither was on show, unfortunately, but we did have wonderful views of an Aplomado Falcon which first mobbed a Variable Hawk then perched on top of a Pepper Tree. It was just about enough to keep us going on the slog back to the hotel (which after such a long hard day felt far further away than it might usually have done). But only just...

16th Oct/Day 8:

Today was of course our trip to Lake Surire and its fabulous flamingos. First though, we needed to get to the Lake...

It is, as the old (scientifically inaccurate) saying goes, 'Always darkest just before the dawn'. While heat is rapidly lost from high altitude deserts at night, it's also true that once the sun comes up the air warms rapidly. After what seemed like days (but was actually nearer three hours) dawn broke. The sun quickly helped revive our spirits, and as we piled out of the bus to stand shivering in the warming rays, life seemed a little better. And now that there was light to see, well...what an amazing place we were standing in.

To our left, and almost within reach, so it seemed, were the volcanoes that could be seen from Putre. From the road we could clearly see the snow line and the fumaroles steaming as they vented volcanic gases into the cold air. To our right the altiplano disappeared away to the horizon, studded with low-growing shrubby plants. Barring the occasional truck thumping its way along towards the lake to collect another load of minerals, we were all alone. Utterly beautiful, and the real start to what would be yet another fantastic day in Chile.

Though we soon picked up our only **Puna Miner** of the trip as it ran along the sand close to the road we wanted to get into the National Park 'proper' before stopping again. Our next stop, then, wasn't until a little further on, at the Ranger's station just beyond the gates that mark the entrance to Lauca National Park. It's worth noting that to the left of the station is a Ramsar site where a broiling stream tumbles through a narrow valley, because – albeit briefly and distantly – this was where we saw a **Torrent Duck**, a high altitude speciality that lives in the Andes on clean, fast-flowing, icy rivers and streams that belt down the sides of mountains. With many such habitats available in this part of the world surely we all get decent views of this enigmatic duck? You'd think...

Back on the bus we drove on toward the lake, checking suitable habitat for anything that moved, and driving through vistas where herds of domesticated Alpaca and Llamas merged perfectly with expanses of river bed, bofedales, and mountain ranges. I know how well-travelled most Wildlife Travel clients are, but the altiplano must surely be 'right up there' for many of us as one of the most beautiful places on the planet.

While great views of birds like Andean Goose, Andean Gull, Yellow-billed Teal, and Andean Swallow will always be welcomed (and remembered), our main target for the day was Lake Surire and the flamingos. The Salar de Surire Natural Monument is a broad expanse of white saltflat with several shallow lakes. Mining and distributing borax (which is white in crystalline form and is used for toughening glass and in various household laundry and cleaning products) explains the rumble of trucks which wind back and forth to and from what was once such a very isolated spot, but despite the industry based here the lake is one of the very few places on Earth where three species of wild flamingo can be seen side-by-side. And swinging around a corner to suddenly be confronted with **Andean, Chilean, and Puna/James's Flamingos** after driving through a desert for several hours is an incredibly memorable event. This report is already reaching book length so I won't go into the details of ID, but Claudio's suggestions of looking mainly at leg colour, bill colour, and the extent of black showing on the closed wing worked on the day (even if I struggle to remember them properly now). Add a hot dark coffee to the pink of the flamingos, the white of the minerals, the blue of the sky and an almost cloudless background dominated by the Arintica and Pukintika volcanoes, and (I hope I'm correct) the rigours of the early morning were quickly forgotten. It was truly a superb and unforgettable place.

Flamingos aren't the only birds here of course, and we soon found our first **Puna Plover** (feeding along the edge of pool with a Baird's Sandpiper), and our first **Andean Negrito**. As we drove around the lake, keeping a sharp eye out for the Andean Cats which are sometimes seen here (but not by us sadly), we also had great views of more Puna Tinamou as a small group skedaddled up a hillside.

Chile trip report, 9th to 24th October 2013

Our other target bird at the lake was Puna Rhea, an uncommon and declining taxon variously either considered a full species or a northern form of Lesser Rhea (we think a full species due to marked ecological differences between the forms). Considering their size they're actually quite hard birds to spot, and we put our finest eagle-eyed observer in charge of pinning one down. Would Kate succeed? Read on...

A second stop brought us to the edge of the lake next to some abandoned buildings and the beautiful orange-flowered cactus *Cumulopuntia boliviana*. Viscacha were common here (one of the reasons the cat is often seen hunting in the area), and out on the lake we had great views of **Andean Avocet** and more Andean Gulls. Vicuna nibbled the shrubs along the shoreline. It was a blissful location, but 'rhea-less'.

We drove on again, and reached a deserted ranger station with an outrageously stunning view across the lake. Here we unpacked another splendid lunch, which was eaten sitting amongst the rocks with yet more Viscacha for company. Nothing puts a difficult start behind you better than a good lunch, a hot drink, sunshine, and an incredible view. Suitably refreshed, and with Kate on full 'alert mode' we packed up and drove on again...and within minutes we had our **Puna Rhea** in view, though to be honest had the group been relying on me to spot them we would have returned to Putre 'empty handed' as they were quite some way off, across a stretch of scrubby desert and along the edge of a very dry stretch of the lake.

Getting (carefully) out of the bus to view them the rheas suddenly spooked and demonstrated just how fast they can run. I'm still convinced it wasn't us that disturbed them. It may have been the Andean Condor that appeared and drifted over, or it may have been something we couldn't see moving nearer to them, but nevertheless it did mean the rheas (ironically) moved to a point where we could see them better. Hopefully the group will have better photos than I managed, but at least we had two bites at the cherry. We also had reasonable views of another species that Claudio assured us is rarely photographed: a **White-tailed Shrike-tyrant** which was nesting in a small building.

What a day. There was though more to come, and as we wound our way back towards the park entrance a **Mountain Caracara** (one of the most striking of Chile's raptors in my opinion) drifted over the road and seemed to go down behind a bank. Crossing the road we found ourselves on the edge of a stunningly beautiful river valley, icy water tumbling over a rocky river bed, and birds everywhere. Three Mountain Caracaras were sat on a river bank, Black Siskin and our first **Bright-rumped Yellow-finches** scattered up in front of us, Andean Geese foraged nearby, and Jonathan picked up our first **Andean Lapwing**. Another high-altitude, thinly-scattered shorebird of the altiplano, Andean Lapwings have a huge range but there are probably less than 10,000 individuals (BirdLife International estimates). Superb stuff, and all of this with a few hours of daylight still left!

Our last stop for the day would be back at the ranger's station, and another search for the Torrent Duck. It is surprising just how tiring an 800m walk over a springy bog can be at 4000m after a very long day, and not surprisingly only about half the group made their way down to the stream where we'd seen the duck (startling another lovely Andean Lapwing as we went). When we started off from the station the duck was definitely there, and I for one was looking forward to great views of one of the key birds on the trip. However the duck decided otherwise. Now, while it's understandable that a tapaculo can vanish in dense vegetation, it's a little harder to work out just how a duck can vanish from in front of a group of birders on a narrow stream. One moment Claudio was slowly pushing a Torrent Duck towards a weir and towards the rest of us, the next it had gone. Just like that (as the late lamented Tommy Cooper might have said). Clearly it dived and swam (perhaps into a hole in the bank marked 'fourth dimension'), but it was an impressive display of escapology. Sadly, that would be our last attempt at a Torrent Duck on the trip and only Claudio had seen it properly, but it's hard to feel disgruntled at just one 'miss' in a wonderful day of 'hits'. Especially surrounded by such beautiful scenery, which is all the better seen during daylight and in the warmth!

So was that it for the day? No, we managed one more great sighting: a small herd of **Huemel** (or South Andean Deer), an Endangered species native to the mountains of Chile and Argentina and which features on the Presidential flag and the country's heraldic shield. As they fanned out across a hillside just outside of Putre (off the small side-road we'd crawled up in the darkness), we all grabbed yet more photographs before then heading back to the hotel and a very welcome supper at a nearby restaurant.

Chile trip report, 9th to 24th October 2013

17th Oct/Day 9:

So, how would we follow such a wonderful day? Difficult but not impossible in a place like the altiplano, especially as we still had the internationally renowned Lake Chungara to visit!

Setting out after a fairly leisurely breakfast we again headed up the winding side-road to rejoin the route across the plateau and into Bolivia. And once again we found the herd of Huemel. It shouldn't be particularly surprising that they'd be roughly in the same place just a day apart, but in so many parts of the world a herd of deer so close to a settlement the size of Putre would have been hunted or moved on.

While our 'target destination' was Chungara, a beautiful deep-blue lake next to the main road created when a huge slab of the Parinacota volcano disintegrated 8000 years ago, slid into a valley, and blocked existing meltwater drainage channels, there are always other things to see as well. Our first stop was at a small dam where Claudio introduced us to our fifth (yes, *fifth*) species of Chilean coot. With bright red feet the size of a small dinosaur (and an attitude to match), the **Giant Coot** is the bruiser of the coot world. Pumped up to the size of a Mallard, these whopping birds build mound nests from vegetation which they defend aggressively and noisily. I have to say I loved them, and it was a real thrill to be in 'Giant Coot territory' at last. Other birds here included more Andean Gulls, yellow-finches, Andean Negrito, Baird's Sandpiper, and Andean Geese.

Probably enough for one morning on many days, but not in Chile and we were soon off to the most beautiful bofedales yet, one which stretches around the small and mostly abandoned village of Parinacota (for which the volcano is named) and which was presumably a source of food and water when the village was fully occupied. Perhaps I shouldn't keep using this Report to highlight the places and the wildlife that I especially enjoyed, but I think I'm right in saying that everyone of us loved this location – and not just for the market stalls we found where brightly-coloured alpaca wool products were sold by an equally brightly-coloured villager!

Sending the bus ahead of us, we decided to walk along the twisting road that tracked the bofedales and were rewarded by amazing views of birds we may have already seen, but not nearly so close. We walked almost up to a loafing group of Crested Duck and a pair of Puna Ibis probing in a pool, Andean and Chilean Swallows flew just over our heads, and White-winged Diuca-finches, Andean Negritos, and Giant Coots were everywhere. We soon realised that we were also standing right below a colony of Andean Flicker which were using holes in a steep bank above us like a small flock of Sand Martins. We found an odd fly skittering across the surface of a pool, and even found prints made by an Andean Cat in fresh mud by the side of the road. Chuck in a glorious view, the mountains, and the sunshine and I don't suppose anyone would argue that this was not a bad way to spend an hour or so.

From here we went straight to the village itself. Few residents remain at this altitude, preferring a life in Santiago to a life herding alpaca and llama on the altiplano. Most of the buildings here were empty and shut up; the only people we saw were running the market stall referred to earlier which was a treasure trove but which surely sees few visitors. A particularly poignant sight was an abandoned playground which I imagine almost anywhere else would slowly rust away, but in the arid atmosphere here will probably remain *in situ* unused and unloved for hundreds more years.

However where people move out, wildlife tends to move in. A pair of Andean Flickers used a prominent position on a church tower to ensure there would be a next generation of Parinacota-based flickers, Black-hooded Sierra-finches explored holes in roofs like sparrows, White-winged Diuca-finches explored holes in walls like – er, sparrows, and a Blue-and-White Swallow gave wonderful views perched on a pole in the middle of the village.

Having shopped until we dropped (or at least until we got to thinking about lunch – remarkably we hadn't eaten since breakfast, and up at this altitude you need to keep your energy levels high) we carried our bags back into the bus and headed for one of the most scenic picnic spots I've ever visited: overlooking the stunning Lake Chungara and its snow-capped volcanic 'parent', Parinacota. Beautiful. Yes, the 'picnic site' also doubles a coach park, but – with Lady Luck definitely riding with us – we almost had the wooden picnic tables to ourselves, allowing a wander down to the lake side prior to setting up and enjoying another wonderful packed lunch under another almost cloudless sky. It really was a remarkable spot (one of those places that I think gave everyone one of those 'Wow, just look at where I am!' moments).

Birds (of course) again took centre stage (though the lake has two endemic species of fish, the pencil catfish *Trichomycterus chungarensis* and the pupfish *Orestias chungarensis*). By the lake we had excellent views of Silvery Grebes, wildfowl (including Andean Duck and Puna Teal), coots (including Andean Coots), and Andean Negrito (spot the 'Andean' theme emerging?). Back at the tables we had close-up looks at scavenging Andean Gulls and clearly much habituated Plumbeous and Black-hooded Sierra-finches (the latter confidently taking food from Peter 'Dr Dolittle' Edmonds' sticky fingers!). A new bird came in the shape of a very wary and active **Plain-breasted Earthcreeper** which bounced around some low-lying walls but never gave us all the views we may have liked...

Chile trip report, 9th to 24th October 2013

As we finished our food and truly relaxed into our surroundings our reverie was broken somewhat by the arrival of a phalanx of tour buses and their very loud occupants. It was – yet again – time to move on.

The announcement that we would be aiming to drive almost non-stop all the way back down to Arica on the coast was met with some scepticism (it had taken all day to drive up to Putre after all), but it is of course far easier and quicker to drive downhill when overtaking is easier and the empty trucks returning to Arica were able to get their average mph into double figures. We had one last stop before the journey really got underway and that was possibly at the most photogenic of all of the wonderful places we had visited.....a layby just off the main road. This point, at over 4500m (15000'), was unique in that we had a panorama of the beautiful Lake Chungara with a backdrop of 6 of the surrounding 6000m volcanoes – Parinacota, Sajama, Umarata, Acotango, Capurata and Guallatiri. After a last farewell to our friendly Black-hooded Sierra Finches we set off for Arica.

The drive back down (with one stop for an ice-cream at a dusty truck stop) took just a few hours, and steered us from above 4600m to sea level, past Putre for the last time, and back to 'civilisation'. It was in fact a very interesting drive, taking in the clearly-defined strata of the altiplano and pre-puna, the narrow band of Candelabra Cacti, the almost orange-coloured 'true desert' zone where nothing at all seems to live, and back down to the Lluta oasis valley, cultivated fields, and the attendant clouds of Turkey Vultures. And who will ever forget seeing the incredible sweeps and curves of the road laid out before us as we hugged the contours? Not me anyway.

So, our days in the Andes came to end. We'd seen remarkable birds, Vicuna and Viscacha, and walked around some of the most unforgettable scenery anywhere on earth. Would the rest of the trip be something of an anti-climax? Not a chance...

18th Oct/Day 10:

Our temporary base in Arica was the **Hotel Diego de Almagro** where we'd be spending just two nights, including the one at the end of our drive down from the mountains, before taking a flight to the south and the Atacama Desert.

A look at any guide book on Chile's wildlife will highlight the river valleys around Arica, the environs of the local museum, and the coastline (and just offshore). Several bird species are only ever recorded in Chile around Arica, and there is the real prospect of adding new birds to the Chilean list by exploring the region. However, while we undoubtedly had the 'exploring spirit' still flickering within us (despite all of us I think feeling the strain today after working so hard over the last few days), we needed to see as much as we could as quickly as we could. Which is why we began the day with yet another pre-dawn start.

Our first stop of the day was a true reality shock after the remoteness of Chungara and Surire, as several of us were driven to a wasteland of abandoned rubble, rubbish tips, and dust to look for **Peruvian Thick-knee**. Found in Chile only in the Lluta and adjacent Azapa vallies, this large shorebird should be easy enough to see, but is a master of freezing to the spot and blending like a feathered chameleon into the nearest pile of bricks and shrubbery. Despite some intense scanning – and wrinkling of noses – we couldn't find one. It was time (according to Claudio) to check the road around the San Miguel de Azapa Archaeological Museum.

The Museum is about a 45 minute drive from the hotel so we needed to both put our foot down and keep an eye on the time or we'd miss breakfast. It didn't take long to arrive (we were already halfway there of course) and I must admit my initial impressions were somewhat mixed, as we climbed out of the bus onto a bumpy, track surrounded by towering eucalypts, lined with small arable plots and unkempt gardens, and patrolled by dogs. The museum itself was still closed. This, surely, wasn't the legendary location I'd heard so much about?

Of course it was. Within a blisteringly good 40 minutes or so we racked up a list of birds that included some we'd seen before (welcome back Rufous-collared Sparrow, Eared and Pacific Doves, Chilean Mockingbird, American Kestrel, and the enigmatic Slender-billed Finch), but also many new ones. Looking back, highlights were actually more numerous than I could immediately recall when I sat down to write this, but they included our first **Blue-black Grassquit**, **Cinereous Conebill** (a rather wood warbler-like tanager flicking around a dense stand of bamboo at the top of the road), overflying naturalised **Red-masked Parakeets**, and a pair of gorgeous **Burrowing Owls** that peered at us through half-closed eyes as they stood by holes in the roadside banking just a few feet from the road itself. We also (eventually) found a small group of Peruvian Thick-knee standing on the edge of an orchard in the shade – strikingly attractive birds even at a distance. Also here were Vermilion Flycatchers and the 'Peruvian' form of **White-crested Elaenia** which is not only separable in the field from the widespread 'Chilean' form we'd seen in Olmue (it has a differently shaped crest and less clearly marked wingbars), has a different song, and has different migratory patterns – three criteria that surely mean it's a separate species (it's on my list anyway).

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But – even if we didn't get the best of views of all of them – it was the hummingbirds that made the morning most memorable. In a rather packed twenty minutes we saw three beautiful and striking species: **Oasis Hummingbird**, **Peruvian Shearwater**, and most importantly a **Chilean Woodstar**. The latter was once widespread and common, but is listed by the IUCN as Endangered and is now confined to northern Chile where it perhaps breeds only in the Azapa and Chaca valleys. Devastated by the loss of native flowering trees and by pesticide use in the numerous olive orchards that have replaced them, there are now just several hundred individuals left making it one of the rarest birds on the planet. Hard to believe that an hour before I'd been wondering whether the morning might be something of a disappointment!

With time running short (if we were to have breakfast anyway) we headed back to the hotel and the rest of the group, where we met up and were soon on our way again, this time to a rendezvous with a boatman and some very large sea lions...

As well as being a prime birding destination Arica doubles as a rather important port (I'm guessing in terms of economy the latter trumps the former, but each to their own). Numerous restaurants line the harbour frontage, and Claudio guided us to one he'd used many times in the past owned by a colleague who was the very epitome of 'salty sea-dog'. As is typical of harbours around the world, where there are fishing vessels there is wildlife that eats fish discards. And this one was no different, packed with swirling Grey and Kelp Gulls, Neotropic Cormorants, Peruvian Pelicans, and some truly massive South American Sea lions which were cruising around the wooden jetties on the edge of the water giving truly amazing views.

However, we were not going to be content with views from the back of a restaurant or from a jetty – no, we were going to go to sea! On what was undoubtedly (and unfortunately) a rather cloudy and unsettled day... Now at this point I need to acknowledge that not everyone in our group was ready to don a life jacket and head out into the Pacific in a small converted fishing boat. I do hope the next few paragraphs won't make painful reading for Val, who quite understandably given her dislike of choppy water decided to stay on dry land, but it has to be said that even by going out less than a mile from land we did end up with some startlingly good views of seabirds that would have been very difficult to see from the shoreline...

First things first though, and we began our mini-pelagic by chugging slowly across the harbour to the main breakwater to a flock of Inca Terns, the species we'd all fallen for way back (at least it seemed that way) on the coast at Vina Del Mar. As we chugged our skipper threw pieces of fish overboard, attracting not just the terns but gulls – including Band-taileds. It was a good start, and as we steered out of the harbour mouth and down the outer wall of the breakwater we picked up an adult Spotted Sandpiper and our best views yet of Red-legged Cormorant. Sea lions draped themselves over the colossal dolosse (the geometric concrete blocks used to bolster the breakwater), and large lines of Peruvian Boobies flapped by.

All of a sudden (at least that's how it felt to me) we were on our way west – next stop Easter Island some 3500km away! Of course, while that would have been *interesting*, we only had two hours and a very small boat, and what we were aiming for was a surprisingly calm patch of water about a mile offshore. Here we found tiny numbers of the physically tiny Peruvian Diving-petrel, and a related bird I'd not expected to see – **Elliot's Storm-petrel**, a wonderful little seabird of the Humboldt Current that skips over the water looking for planktonic crustaceans (petrel is derived from St. Peter's 'walking on the water'). Our first sighting came as two skittered away from us some distance away – by the time we docked again we'd seen around a hundred and watched them down to a few metres!

Show a birder a flock of birds and once they've sorted out the 'common' species they soon try to start finding something more unusual. Despite best efforts (and close scrutiny of the photos back home) we failed to turn an Elliot's into the very similar Wilson's Storm-petrel or pick out the larger all-dark Markham's, but Claudio's sharp eyes did notice a very unusual bird indeed: an immature **Masked Booby**. A vagrant in Chilean coastal waters, the nearest breeding population is on Easter Island. We may not have been able to sail that far, but this large sulid had come to us. And I'm very grateful to it for doing so.

It would have been marvellous to stay out on the water all day (though I doubt everyone reading this will agree with that) but that was never the plan, and we soon headed back to the harbour via more storm-petrels and large metal buoys decked out with some of the biggest sea lions in Chile. How they got up on top of them is anyone's guess but we drifted past literally tons of heaving mammalian flesh and fat and mightily impressive they were.

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And just before docking we had one last 'stop' to make. Sailing slowly past a derelict ship that hundreds of herons and cormorants had commandeered for nesting we found our target: two pairs of **Yellow-crowned Night-heron**, a species at its southern limit here in Arica and clearly quite at home amongst the more numerous Black-crowned Night-herons. Flanked by squabbling pelicans we chugged back to the harbour, Val, and yet another excellent lunch...

Our plans were to return to the hotel after lunch for a bit of 'R'n'R' then head back to the museum as the temperatures dropped in the afternoon. Claudio, however, had been pacing up and down while the rest of us ate, and at the very end of the meal he talked to me about a change in plans that would mean going straight from the meal (which was just ending to the accompaniment of a youngish chap playing an accordion – and quite skilfully too) to a different valley to look for one bird species we'd not see anywhere else.

While none of us had even heard of the bird Claudio had in mind before we left the UK, we certainly wouldn't see it if we didn't go and look for it... So it was that we made our way to the Chaca Valley to look for the **Tamarugo Conebill**, a rather unspectacular little bird with a wonderfully-evocative name. Breeding mainly in just two locations in Chile and migrating to overwinter in nearby Peru, this Vulnerable species is found in remnant Tamarugo forest. Breeding coincides with the seasonal blooming of tamarugo flowers, which provide food for caterpillars of the butterfly *Leptotes trigrammus* and, in turn, this bird.

These are the facts, but that does leave out one other vital thing to know: Tamarugo Conebills are shrinking violets compared with tapaculos, which as we all know by now make your average shrinking violet seem positively showy. As we walked along the valley bottom, along a road which shimmered in the heat and overlooked what looked like a small orchard but was in fact Tamarugo, we could hear the high calls of what Claudio assured us was our target species – but despite intensive scanning we simply could not see the bird.

Butterflies (particularly skippers) flitted along the road with us, I photographed what I thought was a spectacular spotted hoverfly but looking at the images later revealed the long antennae and thick waist of what must in fact be a stunning bee, and we had good views of a small red darter-type dragonfly (possibly *Sympetrum gilvum*). Frustratingly, though, the conebill eluded us... oh well, it was worth a try...

Getting back to the San Miguel de Azapa Archaeological Museum from this particular valley took about an hour, but we arrived with a good two hours before dusk meaning we had time to look round the exhibits and look for birds. The exhibits are definitely worth looking at (even if the birds outside are pulling you towards the door). Recently renovated the displays tell the archaeological history of this part of Chile, details its valleys, and the wrapped mummies in particular are memorable.

The group in effect split up here, agreeing a time to meet up at the museum's entrance when the birding would recommence, allowing each of us to decide just how quickly we moved past the display cases. I have to admit that still feeling the 'miss' at the Tamarugo site I was really keen that those of the group who'd enjoyed a lie-in would at least still get to see the birds that we'd enjoyed that morning so I went back outside – in hindsight - rather more quickly than I needed to. I wouldn't have had it any other way of course...

The grounds of the museum were not especially interesting it turned out (there is an olive orchard at one end which might have repaid a longer look, but seemed very quiet when I stood at its edge) so it was back to the entrance road. Happily most of the birds we'd seen earlier were still there which was a relief. Everyone was able to catch up with the thick-knees (accompanied by a chick that was so well camouflaged that initially we had all missed it) and the owls (which apparently had spent the whole day watching the comings and goings beyond their entrance hole). We also picked up the elaenia (and another Vermilion Flycatcher), Slender-billed Finch, and even found a second pair of Burrowing Owls peering from the roof of an abandoned building. The hummingbirds, though, were nowhere to be seen: perhaps they are more active in the morning and, needing to refuel quickly after a long night, have to look for food over a wider area than they do late in the day?

It was a good end to yet another wonderful (and long) day, though, and as the sun started to dip and the shadows lengthen, and with the constant cooing of Pacific Doves in our ears, we made our way back to the bus and (via the splendid all-metal Church of San Marcos which was designed by Gustave Eiffel) another huge meal before collapsing into bed.

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19th Oct/Day 11:

It was perhaps with a slight sense of relief that Day 11 dawned at the more reasonable time of 'breakfast', because today was earmarked for travelling to the final section of our trip: Bahia Inglesa (English Bay), a village and beach located near the port of Caldera in the Atacama Region.

To get to Bahia by air is rather more convoluted than the 'as the crow flies' distance of around 700miles/1100km might suggest. We would in fact have to fly down to Santiago, then back up to Bahia. Much of the day therefore would be spent in airport terminals, arriving in Copiapo Airport mid-afternoon. I'm glad to say that (as we all know of course) nothing unusual, unfortunate, or unplanned happened (Chile's airports are a model organisation), and while it seemed a long day 'on the day' we were soon walking down the aircraft steps and into yet another very different region. The plane had, it seemed, landed in a vast sand pit: the coastal section of the mighty Atacama Desert...

At the airport we met up again with the excellent 'Mr Tapaculo' (Dario) and the equally excellent Mercedes-Benz sprinter. Dario had driven up the night before (which planted a small seed, as it turned out) and was in typically good form. Within minutes the bus was packed up and we were heading to the quirky resort of Bahia Inglesa and the very unusual Hotel Rocas de Bahia, (which appears to have been built into a cliff and has such a dizzyingly-steep central flight of steps that Edmund Hillary might have thought them suitable for Everest base camp training).

Quite a change from the Andes, Bahia looked for the all the world like a small Welsh seaside village, only with Kelp Gulls and Peruvian Boobies. The weather was pretty much like many seaside towns in the UK too – overcast, chilly, and grey. Still, we had an hour or two before it was dark, and we were in a totally different biome, so we unpacked quickly, and with sweaters and jackets on descended the stairs and headed out. It has to be admitted that things didn't at first look particularly promising, We were by now totally spoiled, and 'the usual' gulls and birds like American Oystercatcher while welcomed as old friends weren't enough to get the adrenalin flowing. Besides Bahia is a popular place, and as in most places around the world popular equates to littering. Still, we did find some new maritime plants and buoyed up decided to press on.

Rounding the corner brought us to a flatter part of the beach (which looked something like a rock garden), with a small harbour behind it. Surprisingly (given the small area we were looking in) we then found three different species of ground-tyrant in rapid succession! Flicking over a low rocky outcrop along the edge of the bay was our first **Dark-faced Ground-tyrant** (on its way south to breeding grounds in Patagonia, according to Claudio). It hopped towards the 'rock garden' and suddenly popped up again looking slightly smaller and altogether plainer, having morphed into our first **Spot-billed Ground-tyrant** (we saw both together, so anyone wondering whether the cold had got to us – it hadn't!). Almost as suddenly a Rufous-naped Ground-tyrant (a species we'd seen earlier in Putre) flew in, jumped around the rocks for a few moments, and then disappeared behind the harbour. Quite remarkable really.

By now it was almost dark and half the group turned back to the hotel (which was only a ten minute walk away) while a few of us went on to check the harbour. While there was nothing extraordinary to see, a group of Ruddy Turnstones (our first since Vina del Mar) combing a mountainous pile of encrusted buoys was interesting to see, as was a Kelp Gull determinedly smashing a large crab by repeatedly dropping it from a height onto the beach (the rocks would have been more effective, but you couldn't fault the effort it was making). In the gathering gloom we found the only **Grey/Dark-bellied Plover** of the trip, but it was with some relief we wandered back and (after collating the day's sightings as usual) on to a very nice restaurant and several extremely delicious Pisco Sours...

20th Oct/Day 12:

The last few days of our Chile trip had been quite 'bird dominated', but over the final leg of our trip it would be the plants that would take centre stage. Of course there were still mammals and birds to find, but the Atacama (perhaps surprisingly given that great areas are virtually sterile and has never seen rainfall) is botanically rich if you know how and where to look.

Over the next two days we would be concentrating our efforts along the coast, firstly going south to the relatively tiny Llanos de Challe National Park and the next day north to Pan de Azucar National Park (which at 437.54 km² is far larger). Why the coast? Just like other parts of the desert rain rarely falls on the Atacama's coastline, but it is often blanketed by a dense mist/fog known locally as *camanchaca* which rolls as far as 1km inland. The fog nourishes plant communities called *lomas*, isolated islands of vegetation that can contain a wide variety of species, and while there are no trees here there are some stunningly beautiful (mostly) low-growing plants. While initial impressions may be off a rocky, sandy land devoid of much but a covering of *Heliotropium* shrubs (which is misleading anyway as many of these are Chilean endemics), look closer and there really is a great deal to see...

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Driving across the rocky desert under skies that appeared to have been lifted from a December's day in the UK and dumped wholesale over Chile it was difficult for a while to imagine that we'd see anything, but as we swept up and over a low hilly area with a valley leading to the sea Claudio noticed an endemic cactus he'd been looking out for. He suggested a quick scramble around the rocks, and almost immediately we were looking at dense clumps of the remarkable *Copiapoa dealbata* – the first of three *Copiapoa* species that day (with more to come tomorrow).

Despite fog so thick we could barely see more than 50 yards, restlessness had set in and the group fanned out across the rocks to discover more plants, including the endemic tree-like cactus *Eulychnia graviflora*, the purslane *Cistanthe longiscapa*, and the lovely amaryllis *Rhodophiala bagnoldii*. There were of course birds too. A pair of Grey-hooded Sierra-finches hopped around the bushes, but, more surprisingly, after listening to its calls echoing up from the valley bottom for fifteen frustrating minutes we all had rather excellent views of one of Chile's supposedly more elusive bird species, White-throated Tapaculo. It bounced around the rocks so openly I will never again think of it as 'hard to see' (which may – should I ever get back to Chile - be somewhat injudicious, but what a relief to catch up with a bird that up until now just Peter and Claudio had seen, and that way back in Olmué).

Our next stop was a little way down the road, from a layby overlooking (of all things, given that we'd just been looking at some very desiccated cacti) a flourishing wetland and lagoon at Carrizal Bajo on the northern border of the National Park. Even from the road we could see Black-necked Swans, Chiloe Wigeon, Laughing Gallinule (aka Common Moorhen), and a few shorebirds including Hudsonian Whimbrel and Greater Yellowlegs. A Barn Swallow (one of just a handful we saw all trip) flew past us, and an Austral Negrito flicked along the edge of the reeds towards some more open areas. Rufous-collared Sparrows were once again everywhere we looked... Even better, especially for those of the group who had seen enough Southern Lapwings and coots of various species to last a lifetime, the fog was finally beginning to lift and the sun was coming through. As we drove down the road through the park the whole day changed, and Llanos de Challe was revealed to be a rocky, flat, wide expanse of shrubs down to a blue sea one way, and an altogether more hilly and creviced wide expanse of shrubs towards the mountains on the other. It was undeveloped and (despite the description above) beautiful.

Very quickly we at last found one of our sought-after mammals and our second wild camelid, the lovely and elegant **Guanaco**. Noticeably larger and heavier than their Vicuna relatives which we'd seen so well in the Andes, their dark faces immediately identified them. Llanos de Challe has the largest population of Guanaco in the Atacama Region, and our first sighting was of a reasonably-sized group which was split in half by the road we were driving down. This meant that of course that one part of the group was keen to join the other, giving us observers in the bus some excellent views of 'Guanacos in motion'. Guanaco survive in one of the driest places on Earth almost without drinking, taking in dew and fog droplets with the plants they eat. On a historical note it's thought that pre-European colonisation in the 16th Century there were more than thirty million Guanaco on the South American continent – even with recent conservation efforts there are now around just one sixtieth that number... At least we'd caught up with them, though, and very beautiful they were. And having stopped the bus to look at them it seemed like a good time to have a look around those 'shrubs' to see what the flora here was really like. And within minutes it was clear that it was stunningly good.

While we were not going to be witness to a 'desert bloom' this particular year (a mass flowering in response to a heavy rainfall), growing out of the desert sand was a variety of yellow, orange, pink and white plants – including just yards from the bus the tall composite *Encelia canescens*, and the beautiful endemic *Alstroemeria kingii*, a gorgeous flower growing just inches out of the gravelly substrate. On a perhaps more prosaic note we also found the – depending on how you feel about these things of course – rather striking dung beetle *Gyriosomus gebieni* which is affectionately known (for reasons best known to the locals) as the little cow beetle or the 'cow of the desert'. Apparently common during the flowering season, and presumably dining on Guanaco dung as no cattle could survive the arid conditions here, as memory serves this was the only species of beetle that we identified on the whole trip...

While the plants, the beetles, the blue sea and cloudless sky, and the genuine beauty of the park were absorbing, we had by now been rather a long time away from a rest stop. It was time to find a place to eat and – er, rest. Fortunately we soon came across a 'made for weary travellers' picnic site with canopied picnic tables and the necessary facilities. Set amongst a pile of rocks right on the coast it was a perfect place to enjoy our penultimate packed lunch, which we shared with surely one of the boldest pairs of Rufous-banded Miners anywhere in South America (cue some ridiculously close photographs as the Miners which, when they weren't preening in full view, hopped along the low walls around the site and at one point almost disappeared into the back of the bus).

And what might top off such a fabulous lunch spot? Only discovering another species of *Alstroemeria*, *A. werdemannii*, poking out of the sand just a few feet away, which judging by Claudio's reaction was a very special plant indeed.

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There was still, however, another even more spectacular *Alstroemeriaceae* that we hadn't yet seen, one that almost symbolises the Atacama – *Leontochir ovallei*, the *Garra de Leon* or Lion's Claw. Endemic to the Atacama it only grows in the wild on specific sides of just a few valleys in the desert south of Copiapo, and is probably now Critically Endangered. Some years the bright red 'claw' glows like fire from the yellow desert – and sometimes it doesn't...

Despite finding more Guanaco, new *Copiapoa* (*C. humilis* and *C. echinoides* – the latter of especial note) and some interesting plants while exploring a dry valley (including *Senna cumingii* and the knapweed *Centauria chilensis*), the Lion's Claw was nowhere to be seen. It was a frustrating miss (even more so looking from back here in the UK) but it is a very rare plant, and if it's not flowering then there's no way to find it sadly.

With a two hour drive back to Bahia we regrettably turned the bus around and headed home, via a quick stop next to the lagoon at Carrizal Bajo where we briefly saw our first Common Diuca-finches for a while (these were the thick-billed *crassirostris* form - which for those of you who read Latin will recognise as a tautological description but it works) and got close views of Chiloe Wigeon (handsome birds when they're seen so well). Our final interesting record was just our second sighting of Southern Caracara: one swooped low over the road close to Bahia Inglesa and then seemingly vanished as it landed on the top of a radio mast. An intriguing end to yet another incredible day in Chile.

21st Oct/Day 13:

Ah, our final full day in the field. Tomorrow we would be leaving Bahia and heading back for Santiago, and I assume therefore today would be for nearly all of us probably our last full day ever in Chile. Jonathan and Jean were of course planning to extend their trip with a swing round southern sections of Chile, but for the rest of us (sadly) this was it – it needed to be a good one!

Today we would be driving north to the renowned Pan de Azucar National Park (Pan de Azucar translates as 'Sugarloaf'). Famed for its superb views and flora the Park is divided into two ecosystems - the coastal desert of Taltal and the steppe desert of the Sierra Vicuña Mackenna. Over 200 species of vascular plant have been recorded here (including some 20 cacti, 17 species of *Asteraceae*, and 14 species of *Nolanaceae*). Six species are endemic just to the area protected by the park. Not bad for one of the least rained on areas of the planet. The absence of rain is again of course compensated for by the same dense coastal mist/fog (*camanchaca*) we'd shivered under yesterday morning (the importance of which was neatly demonstrated to us by Claudio as we left the Park in the afternoon – but more of that later).

The drive north took us along the Pan American Highway, which in this part of the Atacama virtually follows the coastline allowing us to see (perhaps for the final time) good numbers of pelicans, boobies, and gulls. A planned stop about halfway to the Park to photograph seabirds just off a quay had to be abandoned because of roadworks blocking the way, but those same works did halt us long enough to really appreciate just how thick-billed the Diuca-finches here are compared with those we'd seen near Olmue: presumably an adaptation to different food resources, they are surely a split in the making?

While we'd left Bahia (literally) under a cloud, as we turned into the park (past a number of soldiers who evidently train in the area but were friendly enough on this occasion) the skies were blue, the temperature climbing, and spirits high. Llanos de Challe had been lovely in a fairly non-remarkable way, but (in my humble opinion anyway) Pan de Azucar was altogether a more striking location: undulating and wild, with towering cliffs, wide beaches, and sweeping views – especially across to the Isla Pan de Azucar just offshore which is known for its breeding Humboldt Penguins, and which the BBC helped make internationally famous by using infra-red to film its resident Vampire Bats feeding on the blood of Sea Lions at night.

Every stop in the Park is going to be of interest, and our first was on a sandy plain where the endemic *Copiapoa cinerascens* grew in abundance. Our next saw us pulled up by a wide bay where we found our first new bird of the day amongst commoner gulls and shorebirds – a pair of **Snowy Plover** on the distant tidal edge. Our third stop, at the Ranger's station, brought us our second, a very approachable **Greyish Miner** which was coming to a tap used to water a display of indigenous plants that one of our group (ahem, guilty as charged) opened slightly so that it dripped. Not the most spectacular of birds, but certainly spectacular views.

Our plan after leaving the Ranger's Station included a) finding more plants, and b) reaching a lookout further north for lunch. As it turned out a) won out, as Claudio guided us to a fantastic spot where the road ran close to a plateau just a short uphill scramble to our right. Here is apparently the best place in the Park (and hence in the world as it's an endemic species) to see *Copiapoa cinerea columna-alba*, a somewhat bizarre-looking cactus that splendidly all line up tilting in the same direction to face the sun and catch mist droplets. I would be willing to bet that even a non-

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botanist would have to love these oddballs (I certainly did), and I would also hazard a guess that these will have been the most photographed plants of the whole trip.

Coming down from the plateau we realised that we'd pulled up by a well-marked but narrow runnel caused (presumably) by rainwater or meltwater. Dried mud next to it carried the imprint of a **Southern Grey Fox** (an omen of things to come) but it was the runnel that was of most interest. The harder we looked, the more species of plants we found growing along its edges: so many that (and I apologise for this) I was hopelessly confused. *Nolana* of various species figured highly, as well as *Dimendra ericoides*. While perhaps not of as much interest as endemic plants, we also found several individuals of a *Dasyhelea* net-winged midge species drinking nectar by stabbing its proboscis into the nectary to acquire energy (perhaps an evolutionary response to living in a region where mammals – and their blood – are few and far between). These midges evidently benefit the plants too as the photographs I took show pollen grains stuck to their 'feet'. These will be transferred as the midges move between flowers: an interesting symbiotic adaptation to a situation where other pollinators and food sources seemed to be very scarce indeed.

Talking of food sources, our next stop involved lunch! We drove to a fenced stop about a mile short of a look-out which promised to give superb views from the top of a cliff across to Isla Pan de Azucar and began a hike of about 40 minutes, carrying food with us and of course looking out for wildlife and plants as we went. *Eulychnia* cacti were especially prominent (one decaying individual had rotted enough to show the woody 'skeleton' that supports the fleshy mass of the plant) and of particular interest was a large, flowering *Euphorbia lactiflua* right by the path which attracted much attention from our botanists. Birds were more notable by their absence than anything else, but we did see Variable Hawk, and a Rufous-naped Ground Tyrant flew along a canyon giving good views to us for the last time.

The real surprise here, though, was a still wary but 'visitor habituated' **Southern Grey Fox** which clearly had cottoned on to the fact that it wasn't hunters hiking up to the lookout but tourists with packed lunches. In much the same way that usually cautious species like Black Kites in India or Red Squirrels in Scotland have come to associate humans with hand-outs, this lovely animal staked us out as we walked up and came remarkably close when we began eating. Little of what we had with us was suitable to give a wild animal (sugar and salt are not usually part of the diet of a wild fox) but the odd slice of turkey went down well...

While the fox was a real bonus, unfortunately the camanchaca had rolled back in while we walked to the look-out and the views we'd hoped for were hidden in the mist. Still, this was to be our last packed lunch of the trip (and our final full day in the field) and it needed to be celebrated. I had carried up a (large) bottle of Chilean Red wine, and so we toasted the trip, a great group, and some unforgettable memories. Chile, truly a magical destination.

With the fog thickening all the time we decided to head back to the bus and on to Bahia. Claudio suggested we take a route out of the Park which would (as I alluded earlier) vividly demonstrate just how important the fog is to coastal biodiversity. We drove down a straightish road that led out to the Pan-American Highway, and within a zone of no more than 100m we went from dense mist into bright sunshine. Besides a few wisps and licks the change was as good as instant. Behind us was a fantastic variety of plants, ahead of us nothing but sand with barely a blade of vegetation. The contrast was strikingly clear and a wonderful demonstration of the critical importance of water to life.

I imagine all of us had our own thoughts about driving out of Pan de Azucar National Park and effectively bringing to a close our Chile trip. I'd felt privileged just to be in Chile and will never forget trying to learn (and re-learn) so many birds and plants in what now seemed like a very short time. In fact, wasn't there a way just to get one more 'hit'...?

Fortunately Jonathan and Jean had read about the Granito Orbicular National Monument which was – conveniently, though I'd like to pretend that Claudio and I had known about it all the time and planned accordingly – just off our route back to Bahia. As we turned off the highway down a bumpy road to the coast I suspect few of knew what to expect... To quote Wikipedia "**Orbicular granite** (also known as **orbicular rock** or **orbiculite**) is an uncommon plutonic rock type which is usually granitic in composition. These rocks have a unique appearance due to *orbicules* - concentrically layered, spheroidal structures, probably formed through nucleation around a grain in a cooling magma chamber. Almost one third of known orbicular rock occurrences are from Finland. The occurrences are usually very small." I wish I'd thought to look that up before we'd set out that day, but perhaps *not* knowing made the subsequent discovery all the more interesting.

Chile trip report, 9th to 24th October 2013

Now in most places in the world (especially the US) 'national monuments' tend to be well signed, sectioned off, and out of the reach of curious visitors. In Chile (and this is not a criticism in any way) all that pointed the way was a rusting sign by a makeshift car park, and a path down to the water. I suspect from the car-park most of us would have had a hard time separating the 'monument' from the rest of the boulders and rocks on the shoreline, but once you'd realised what to look for 'orbicular granite' is both remarkable and strikingly beautiful. The processes involved in forming orbicules may be difficult to understand, but they're impact is wonderful. Spotty rocks! Who knew?

No fences, no signs, no guards to move you on from a globally rare piece of natural artwork – just the tactile pleasure of feeling the rocks themselves, plus the spray from the ocean, the cries of Kelp gulls, and a bright blue sky. At that moment I have to say that all felt right with the world...

22nd Oct/Day 14:

As all of us will of course remember our 'actual' last day involved us getting back to Santiago for flights home the following morning. Our original schedule involved catching a plane from Copiapo, giving us the morning and early afternoon around Bahia before checking out of the hotel (which I'd grown increasingly fond of with every hour spent there). With the fog very thick and the temperature dipping to 'unpleasant', though, we were clearly going to be at something of a loose end.

However, as a group we'd decided that as the inestimable 'Mr Tapaculo' would be driving our bus back to Santiago, why not pile in with him and get back that way? Yes, it was over 800km, and, yes, we probably wouldn't have much time available to get to see much wildlife or plant life, but it might be fun, we could drift in and out of sleep, and the scenery would be wonderful.

I won't write too much about this last drive – not because it wasn't fun or enjoyable (I certainly don't regret the decision we all took) but because as Trip Reports go I think this is long enough. Besides which apart from good views at a rest stop of a Black-billed Shrike-tyrant being stalked by a cat (a species several of us had seen in Putre but which Jonathan – and this had really niggled my conscience for over a week – had missed) and a brief stop by the side of the road where we saw a few new plants (most memorably an *Alstroemeria* and a stunning blue form of *Leucocoryne vittata* but it was really a day to contemplate what we'd seen over the last few weeks and relax. I hope you will agree anyway.

Well, this has been something of a *magnum opus*, but I've thoroughly enjoyed compiling it. It is of course coloured by my own thoughts (and undoubtedly biased towards birds) and apologies if it doesn't fully replicate your own experience. Hopefully though it will at least serve to remind us all of what a great trip we had!

Charlie Moores, Wildlife Travel

CHILE 2013



Top: Surire. First row, l to r: Moustached Orchid *Bipinnula fimbriata*, at Los Molles; Andean Condor soaring over Farrelones. Second row, l to r: the endemic Moustached Turca at La Campana; the delicate *Alstroemeria pelegrina* at Los Molles

Chile trip report, 9th to 24th October 2013

ENGLISH NAME	LATIN NAME	9 th	10 th	11 th	12 th	13 th	14 th	15 th	16 th	17 th	18 th	19 th	20 th	21 st	22 nd	23 rd	24 th
BIRDS																	
Family Rheidae (Rheas)																	
Puna (Lesser) Rhea	<i>Rhea (pennata) tarapacensis</i>								+								
Family Tinamidae (Tinamous)																	
Puna Tinamou	<i>Tinamotis pentlandii</i>							+	+								
Family Spheniscidae (Penguins)																	
Humboldt Penguin	<i>Spheniscus humboldti</i>		+	+						+							
Family Podicipedidae (Grebes)																	
Pied-billed Grebe	<i>Podilymbus podiceps</i>			+													
White-tufted Grebe	<i>Rollandia rolland</i>				+	+											
Great Grebe	<i>Podiceps major</i>		+	+	+	+											
Silvery Grebe	<i>Podiceps occipitalis</i>					+				+							
Family Diomedidae (Albatrosses)																	
Salvin's Albatross	<i>Thalassarche salvini</i>				+												
Family Procellariidae (Shearwaters & Petrels)																	
Southern Giant Petrel	<i>Macronectes giganteus</i>		+	+													
White-chinned Petrel	<i>Procellaria aequinoctialis</i>		+														
Pink-footed Shearwater	<i>Puffinus creatopus</i>				+												
Sooty Shearwater	<i>Puffinus griseus</i>				+												
Family Hydrobatidae (Storm Petrels)																	
Elliott's Storm-Petrel	<i>Oceanites gracilis</i>										+						
Family Pelecanoididae (Diving Petrels)																	
Peruvian Diving Petrel	<i>Pelecanoides garnotii</i>				+						+						
Family Pelecanidae (Pelicans)																	
Peruvian Pelican	<i>Pelecanus thagus</i>		+	+	+		+				+	+	+	+	+		
Family Sulidae (Gannets)																	
Peruvian Booby	<i>Sula variegata</i>		+		+		+				+	+	+	+	+		
Masked Booby	<i>Sula dactylatra</i>										+						
Family Phalacrocoracidae (Cormorants & Shags)																	
Neotropic Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax brasilianus</i>		+	+	+	+	+		+		+	+	+	+	+	+	
Guanay Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax bougainvillii</i>		+		+						+						
Red-legged Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax gaimardi</i>		+		+						+	+		+			
Family Ardeidae (Herons & Egrets)																	
Black-crowned Night Heron	<i>Nycticorax nycticorax</i>		+	+		+	+				+		+		+		
Yellow-crowned Night Heron	<i>Nyctanassa violacea</i>										+						
Cattle Egret	<i>Bubulcus ibis</i>		+	+	+	+	+								+	+	
Great Egret	<i>Ardea alba</i>				+	+	+										
Little Blue Heron	<i>Egretta caerulea</i>						+										
Snowy Egret	<i>Egretta thula</i>			+	+		+										
Family Threskiornithidae (Ibises)																	
Black-faced Ibis	<i>Theristicus melanopis</i>					+											
Puna Ibis	<i>Plegadis ridgwayi</i>						+	+	+								
Family Phoenicopteridae (Flamingoes)																	
Chilean Flamingo	<i>Phoenicopterus chilensis</i>								+	+							
Andean Flamingo	<i>Phoenicopterus andinus</i>								+	+							
Puna (=James's) Flamingo	<i>Phoenicopterus jamesi</i>								+	+							
Family Anatidae (Ducks, Geese & Swans)																	
Coscoroba Swan	<i>Coscoroba coscoroba</i>				+												
Black-necked Swan	<i>Cygnus melanocorypha</i>				+	+							+				
Andean Goose	<i>Chloephaga melanoptera</i>							+	+	+							
Torrent Duck	<i>Merganetta armata</i>								+								
Crested Duck	<i>Lophonetta specularioides</i>							+	+	+							
Chiloe Wigeon	<i>Anas sibilatrix</i>			+	+	+							+				

Chile trip report, 9th to 24th October 2013

			9 th	10 th	11 th	12 th	13 th	14 th	15 th	16 th	17 th	18 th	19 th	20 th	21 st	22 nd	23 rd	24 th
	ENGLISH NAME	LATIN NAME																
	Yellow-billed (=Speckled) Teal	<i>Anas flavirostris</i>			+	+	+		+	+	+							
	Yellow-billed Pintail	<i>Anas georgica</i>			+	+	+				+				+			
	White-cheeked Pintail	<i>Anas bahamensis</i>						+										
	Puna Teal	<i>Anas puna</i>						+			+							
	Cinnamon Teal	<i>Anas cyanoptera</i>			+	+		+										
	Red Shoveler	<i>Anas platalea</i>			+	+	+											
	Andean Duck	<i>Oxyura ferruginea</i>									+							
	Lake Duck	<i>Oxyura vittata</i>			+	+	+											
Family Cathartidae (New World Vultures)																		
	Black Vulture	<i>Coragyps atratus</i>		+	+	+												
	Turkey Vulture	<i>Cathartes aura</i>		+	+	+	+	+			+	+	+		+	+		
	Andean Condor	<i>Vultur gryphus</i>						+			+							
Family Accipitridae (Hawks & Eagles)																		
	White-tailed Kite	<i>Elanus leucurus</i>															+	
	Black-chested Buzzard-Eagle	<i>Geranoaetus melanoleucus</i>		+														
	Variable Hawk	<i>Buteo polyosoma</i>		+	+		+	+	+	+	+				+	+	+	
Family Falconidae (Falcons & Caracaras)																		
	Mountain Caracara	<i>Phalcoeboenus megalopterus</i>								+							+	
	Southern Crested Caracara	<i>Caracara plancus</i>												+				
	Chimango Caracara	<i>Milvago chimango</i>		+	+	+	+										+	+
	American Kestrel	<i>Falco sparverius</i>		+							+	+	+					
	Apolomado Falcon	<i>Falco femoralis</i>						+	+									
Family Odontophoridae (New World Quails)																		
	California Quail	<i>Callipepla californica</i>			+	+	+											
Family Rallidae (Rails, Gallinules & Coots)																		
	Plumbeous Rail	<i>Pardirallus sanguinolentus</i>			+		+											
	Common Gallinule (=Laughing Moorhen)	<i>Gallinula galeata</i>						+						+				
	Spot-flanked Gallinule	<i>Gallinula melanops</i>			+	+												
	White-winged Coot	<i>Fulica leucoptera</i>		+	+	+								+				
	Slate-coloured Coot	<i>Fulica ardesiaca</i>						+		+	+							
	Red-gartered Coot	<i>Fulica armillata</i>		+	+	+								+				
	Red-fronted Coot	<i>Fulica rufifrons</i>		+	+	+								+				
	Giant Coot	<i>Fulica gigantea</i>									+							
Family Haematopodidae (Oystercatchers)																		
	Blackish Oystercatcer	<i>Haematopus ater</i>		+		+				+		+	+		+	+		
	American Oystercatcher	<i>Haematopus palliatus</i>		+	+	+		+				+		+				
Family Recurvirostridae (Avocets & Stilts)																		
	White-backed Stilt	<i>Himantopus mexicanus</i>		+	+	+	+	+									+	
	Andean Avocet	<i>Recurvirostra andina</i>								+								
Family Burhinidae (Thick-knees)																		
	Peruvian Thick-knee	<i>Burhinus superciliosus</i>										+						
Family Pluvialidae (Golden Plovers)																		
	Black-bellied (=Grey) Plover	<i>Pluvialis squatarola</i>											+					
Family Charadriidae (Plovers & Lapwings)																		
	Southern Lapwing	<i>Vanellus chilensis</i>		+	+	+	+							+		+	+	
	Andean Lapwing	<i>Vanellus resplendens</i>								+								
	Snowy Plover	<i>Charadrius nivosus</i>													+			
	Puna Plover	<i>Charadrius alticola</i>								+								
	Killdeer	<i>Charadrius vociferus</i>						+										
	Diademed Sandpiper-Plover	<i>Phegornis mitchellii</i>							+									
Family Scolopacidae (Sandpipers)																		
	South American Snipe	<i>Gallinago paraguaiiae</i>			+													
	Hudsonian Whimbrel	<i>Numenius hudsonicus</i>		+		+		+				+	+	+	+			
	Greater Yellowlegs	<i>Tringa melanoleuca</i>				+		+						+		+		

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			9 th	10 th	11 th	12 th	13 th	14 th	15 th	16 th	17 th	18 th	19 th	20 th	21 st	22 nd	23 rd	24 th
ENGLISH NAME	LATIN NAME																	
Lesser Yellowlegs	<i>Tringa flavipes</i>				+			+										
Spotted Sandpiper	<i>Actitis macularia</i>							+				+						
Ruddy Turnstone	<i>Arenaria interpres</i>			+									+					
Surfbird	<i>Aphriza virgata</i>			+														
Sanderling	<i>Calidris alba</i>																+	
Baird's Sandpiper	<i>Calidris bairdii</i>			+	+			+		+	+							
Wilson's Phalarope	<i>Phalaropus tricolor</i>							+										
Red (=Grey) Phalarope	<i>Phalaropus fulicaria</i>				+	+												
Family Thinocoridae (Seedsnipes)																		
Rufous-bellied Seedsnipe	<i>Attagis gayi</i>								+									
Grey-breasted Seedsnipe	<i>Thinocorus orbignyianus</i>								+	+	+							
Family Laridae (Gulls)																		
Band-tailed Gull	<i>Larus belcheri</i>							+					+					
Kelp Gull	<i>Larus dominicanus</i>			+	+	+	+	+				+	+	+	+	+		
Grey Gull	<i>Leucophaeus modestus</i>			+		+		+				+		+	+	+		
Andean Gull	<i>Leucophaeus serranus</i>							+	+	+	+	+						
Brown-hooded Gull	<i>Chroicocephalus maculipennis</i>			+	+		+											
Family Sternidae (Terns)																		
Inca Tern	<i>Larosterna inca</i>			+	+	+						+						
Elegant Tern	<i>Thalasseus elegans</i>											+						
South American Tern	<i>Sterna hirundinacea</i>			+		+											+	
Snowy-crowned Tern	<i>Sterna trudeaui</i>				+													
Family Rynchopidae (Skimmers)																		
Black Skimmer	<i>Rynchops niger</i>			+														
Family Columbidae (Pigeons & Doves)																		
Rock Dove/Feral Pigeon	<i>Columba livia</i>			+	+	+	+	+			+	+	+	+	+	+		
Spot-winged Pigeon	<i>Patagioenas maculosa</i>								+									
Chilean Pigeon	<i>Patagioenas araucana</i>				+	+												
Eared Dove	<i>Zenaida auriculata</i>			+	+	+	+			+	+							
Pacific/West Peruvian Dove	<i>Zenaida meloda</i>							+				+	+	+	+	+		
Picui Ground Dove	<i>Columbina picui</i>			+	+	+												
Croaking Ground Dove	<i>Columbina cruziana</i>							+										
Bare-faced Ground Dove	<i>Metriopelia ceciliae</i>								+									
Black-winged Ground Dove	<i>Metriopelia melanoptera</i>						+		+									
Family Psittacidae (Parrots)																		
Red-masked Parakeet (introduced)	<i>Psittacara erythrogenys</i>											+						
Family Strigidae (Owls)																		
Austral Pygmy Owl	<i>Glaucidium nanum</i>			+	+													
Burrowing Owl	<i>Athene cunicularia</i>											+						
Family Trochilidae (Hummingbirds)																		
Sparkling Violet-ear	<i>Colibri coruscans</i>								+									
Andean Hillstar	<i>Oreotrochilus estella</i>								+	+								
Giant Hummingbird	<i>Patagona gigas</i>				+	+			+									
Green-backed Firecrown	<i>Sephanoides sephanoides</i>			+	+	+												
Oasis Hummingbird	<i>Rhodopis vesper</i>											+	+		+			
Peruvian Sheartail	<i>Thaumastura cora</i>											+						
Chilean Woodstar	<i>Eulidia yarrellii</i>											+						
Family Picidae (Woodpeckers)																		
Chilean Flicker	<i>Colaptes pitius</i>					+												
Andean Flicker	<i>Colaptes rupicola</i>								+	+	+							
Family Furnariidae (Ovenbirds)																		
Grayish Miner	<i>Geositta maritima</i>														+			
Puna Miner	<i>Geositta punensis</i>											+						
Rufous-banded Miner	<i>Geositta rufipennis</i>					+	+				+		+					

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ENGLISH NAME	LATIN NAME	9 th	10 th	11 th	12 th	13 th	14 th	15 th	16 th	17 th	18 th	19 th	20 th	21 st	22 nd	23 rd	24 th
Plain-breasted Earthcreeper	<i>Upucerthia jelskii</i>									+							
White-throated Earthcreeper	<i>Upucerthia albigula</i>							+									
Chilean Seaside Cinclodes	<i>Cinclodes nigrofumosus</i>		+		+												
Buff-winged Cinclodes	<i>Cinclodes fuscus</i>		+			+											
Creamy-winged Cinclodes	<i>Cinclodes albiventer</i>							+	+	+							
White-winged Cinclodes	<i>Cinclodes atacamensis</i>							+		+							
Thorn-tailed Rayadito	<i>Aphrastura spinicauda</i>			+	+												
Plain-mantled Tit-Spinetail	<i>Leptasthenura aegithaloides</i>			+													
Wren-like Rushbird	<i>Phleocryptes melanops</i>			+		+											
Dusky-tailed Canastero	<i>Asthenes humicola</i>			+	+												
Canyon Canastero	<i>Asthenes pudibunda</i>							+	+								
Cordilleran Canastero	<i>Asthenes modesta</i>					+			+	+							
Family Rhinocryptidae (Tapaculos)																	
Moustached Turca	<i>Pterotochos megapodius</i>			+	+	+											
White-throated Tapaculo	<i>Scelorchilus albicollis</i>				+								+		+		
Dusky Tapaculo	<i>Scytalopus fuscus</i>			+		+											
Family Phytotomidae (Plantcutters)																	
Rufous-tailed Plantcutter	<i>Phytotoma rara</i>			+	+	+											
Family Tyrannidae (Tyrant Flycatchers)																	
White-crested Elaenia	<i>Elenia albiceps</i>		+	+	+						+						
Yellow-billed Tit-Tyrant	<i>Anairetes flavirostris</i>							+									
Tufted Tit-Tyrant	<i>Anairetes parulus</i>			+	+	+											
Many-coloured Rush-Tyrant	<i>Tachuris rubrigastra</i>			+													
Vermillion Flycatcher	<i>Pyrocephalus rubinus</i>						+				+						
Austral Negrito	<i>Lessonia rufa</i>				+								+				
Andean Negrito	<i>Lessonia oreas</i>								+	+							
Spectacled Tyrant	<i>Hymenops perspicillatus</i>			+													
Black-billed Shrike-Tyrant	<i>Agriornis montana</i>							+								+	
White-tailed Shrike-Tyrant	<i>Agriornis andicola</i>								+								
Great Shrike-Tyrant	<i>Agriornis livida</i>			+													
Spot-billed Ground Tyrant	<i>Muscisaxicola maculirostris</i>											+		+			
White-fronted Ground Tyrant	<i>Muscisaxicola albifrons</i>					+		+		+							
Ochre-naped Ground Tyrant	<i>Muscisaxicola flavinucha</i>					+											
Puna Ground Tyrant	<i>Muscisaxicola juninensis</i>							+	+								
Rufous-naped Ground Tyrant	<i>Muscisaxicola rufivertex</i>							+				+			+		
Dark-faced Ground Tyrant	<i>Muscisaxicola maclovianus</i>												+	+			
Fire-eyed Diucon	<i>Xolmis pyrope</i>		+	+	+												
Family Hirundidae (Swallows)																	
Chilean Swallow	<i>Tachycineta meyeni</i>		+	+	+	+	+			+						+	
Blue-and-White Swallow	<i>Pygochelidon cyanoleuca</i>		+	+	+	+	+	+			+		+				
Andean Swallow	<i>Stelgidopteryx andecola</i>						+		+								
Bank Swallow (=Sand Martin)	<i>Riparia riparia</i>						+										
Barn Swallow	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>						+			+			+	+			
Family Troglodytidae (Wrens)																	
Southern House Wren	<i>Troglodytes musculus</i>			+	+	+	+	+			+						
Family Mimidae (Mockingbirds & Thrashers)																	
Chilean Mockingbird	<i>Mimus thenca</i>		+	+	+	+										+	
Family Turdidae (Thrushes)																	
Chiguanco Thrush	<i>Turdus chiguanco</i>						+	+									
Austral Thrush	<i>Turdus falcklandii</i>		+	+	+	+											
Family Passeridae (Sparrows)																	
House Sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>		+	+	+	+					+	+	+	+	+		

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ENGLISH NAME	LATIN NAME	9 th	10 th	11 th	12 th	13 th	14 th	15 th	16 th	17 th	18 th	19 th	20 th	21 st	22 nd	23 rd	24 th
Family Fringillidae (Finches)																	
Hooded Siskin	<i>Carduelis magellanica</i>							+									
Black-chinned Siskin	<i>Carduelis barbata</i>		+	+	+												
Black Siskin	<i>Carduelis atrata</i>							+	+	+							
Family Thraupidae (Tanagers & allies)																	
Cinereous Conebill	<i>Conirostrum cinereum</i>										+						
Tamarugo Conebill	<i>Conirostrum tamarugense</i>										H						
Black-hooded Sierra Finch	<i>Phrygilus atriceps</i>							+	+	+							
Grey-hooded Sierra Finch	<i>Phrygilus gayi</i>		+	+		+							+		+		
Mourning Sierra Finch	<i>Phrygilus fruticeti</i>						+		+								
Plumbeous Sierra Finch	<i>Phrygilus unicolor</i>						+	+	+								
White-throated Sierra Finch	<i>Phrygilus erythronotus</i>						+										
Band-tailed Sierra Finch	<i>Phrygilus alaudinus</i>					+											
Ash-breasted Sierra Finch	<i>Phrygilus plebejus</i>						+	+									
White-winged Diuca Finch	<i>Diuca speculifera</i>							+	+	+							
Common Diuca Finch	<i>Diuca diuca</i>		+	+	+	+							+	+	+		
Slender-billed Finch	<i>Xenospingus concolor</i>						+				+						
Bright-rumped Yellow Finch	<i>Sicalis uropygialis</i>								+	+							
Greater Yellow Finch	<i>Sicalis auriventris</i>					+											
Greenish Yellow Finch	<i>Sicalis olivascens</i>						+	+									
Grassland Yellow Finch	<i>Sicalis luteola</i>			+	+	+											
Blue-black Grassquit	<i>Volatinia jacarina</i>										+						
Chestnut-throated Seedeater	<i>Sporophila telasco</i>						+				+						
Band-tailed Seedeater	<i>Catamenia analis</i>							+									
Family Icteridae (New World Blackbirds & Orioles)																	
Yellow-winged Blackbird	<i>Agelaius thilius</i>		+	+		+											
Peruvian Meadowlark	<i>Sturnella bellicose</i>						+										
Long-tailed Meadowlark	<i>Sturnella loyca</i>		+	+	+	+										+	
Shiny Cowbird	<i>Molothrus bonariensis</i>			+			+										
Austral Blackbird	<i>Curaeus curaeus</i>		+	+	+	+										+	
Family Emberizidae (New World Sparrows)																	
Rufous-collared Sparrow	<i>Zonotrichia capensis</i>		+	+	+	+	+			+	+		+	+	+	+	