

**Ornifolks Trip to Northwest Argentina, October 25 – November 14,  
2002**

**Buenos Aires, Entre Rios, Cordoba, Tucumán, Salta, and Jujuy  
Provinces**

**Leaders: Hernán Casañas and Juan Mazar Barnett**

**Trip Report by Cathy Pasterczyk with input from Hernán Casañas**

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Participants

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James Yurchenco and Amy Lauterbach of Palo Alto, CA (JY and AL)  
Gordon and Maxine Mclean of Ottawa, Ontario, Canada (GM and MM)  
Cathy Pasterczyk of Albuquerque, NM (CP)

# Trip Route



## Itinerary

Day 0, Thursday 24 October HC and EM picked up group from Ezeiza Airport (EZE) for transfer to Hotel Ushuaia. Night in Buenos Aires (Bs As).

Day 1, Friday 25 October Reserva Ecológica Costanera Sur via the south entrance in the AM, lunch at La Cantina de Mi Tío, Reserva Natural Otamendi, PM. Night in Bs As.

Day 2, Saturday 26 October Reserva Natural Otamendi, AM. Stops on dirt roads near Ceibas. PM drive on road toward Puerto Unzué, just across the Rio Uruguay from Uruguay. Night in Gualeguaychú.

Day 3, Sunday 27 October Ñandubayzal camping area, AM. Night in Gualeguaychú.

Day 4, Monday 28 October Long drive with Rhea stop, Area de Relleno Sanitario de San Francisco, PM. Night in San Francisco.

Day 5, Tuesday 29 October The rain prevented a visit to Mar Chiquita. Area de Relleno Sanitario San Francisco, AM with Carlos. Posada Qunte near Carlos Paz, PM. Icho Cruz, PM.

Day 6, Wednesday 30 October Buffer Zone for El Condorito National Park, AM. Sierran Chaco area at El 44 at 1020 meters. Stopped at HC's house. Pampa de Achala. Night in La Cumbre.

Day 7, Thursday 31 October San Jose de las Salinas. Night in Deán Fuentes.

Day 8, Friday 1 November Deán Fuentes to Valle de Tafi via Granados and Rio las Sosa. Night in Tafi Del Valle at 2000 meters.

Day 9, Saturday 2 November Night at Quilmes.

Day 10, Sunday 3 November Quilmes to Cachi. Night in Cachi. Cachi is 2,280 meters.

Day 11, Monday 4 November Cachi to San Lorenzo via Cuesta del Obispo. Night in San Lorenzo, just north of Salta.

Day 12, Tuesday 5 November Birding around San Lorenzo, AM. Drive to San Martin via Cornisa road, PM at Calilegua National Park. Night in San Martin.

Day 13, Wednesday 6 November Calilegua National Park. Night in San Martin.

Day 14, Thursday 7 November Calilegua National Park Night in San Martin.

Day 15, Friday 8 November Calilegua National Park AM, Humahuaca PM. Crossed the Tropic of Capricorn en route.

Day 16, Saturday 9 November Humahuaca to Yavi. Broken tie rod mount prevented today's trip to Laguna de los Pozuelos. EM and HC had van fixed in La Quiaca while JMB and participants birded in Yavi. Night in Yavi.

Day 17, Sunday 10 November Yavi, Yavi Chico, 30 km in road to St. Victoria, AM. Picnic lunch in Yavi. Road to Santa Catalina, PM. Night in Yavi.

Day 18, Monday 11 November Yavi to Yala via Laguna do los Pozuelos and a gomeria in Abra Pampa for a spare tire. Late PM birding at Yala Provincial Reserve. Night in Yala, just north of Jujuy.

Day 19, Tuesday 12 November Yala Provincial Reserve , AM. Drive to J.V. Gonzalez via NP El Rey area. Night in J.V. Gonzalez.

Day 20, Wednesday 13 November Birding the Chaco Seco in J. V. Gonzalez area. Night in J.V. Gonzalez. Most of group met Miguel, the guide for the Misiones/Iguazu Falls trip extension.

Day 21, Thursday 14 November Drive to San Lorenzo , just north of Salta. Flight to Bs As, PM. Night in Bs As.

Day 22, Friday 15 November Late night flight home for arrival on 16 November.

## Trip Synopsis

Rheas, Tinamous, Owls, Serimas, and all the target Endemics!

This first Ornifolks trip to NW Argentina yielded 448 birds species, including five globally threatened species and eight Argentine endemics, as well as 12 species of mammals. We saw both restricted-range species of Endemic Bird Area (EBA) 058, Sierras Centrales of Argentina; all nine from EBA 057, Argentine and south Bolivian yungas; and 7 of the 21 in EBA 056, High Andes of Bolivia and Argentina. In addition, we saw the birds of Secondary Areas s035, Salinas Monjita, and s036, Straight-billed Reedhaunter.

Logging over 6,000 kilometers in the very comfortable van, and sampling most of northern Argentina's ecoregions including pampa, wet chaco, dry chaco, yungas, pre-puna, and puna, we drove from Buenos Aires (Bs As) to Yavi, on the border of Bolivia, and then back to Salta for a flight back to Bs As. Most of the group also took a post-trip extension to Misiones and Igacu Falls.

This is a great trip. HC and JMB really know the vocalizations and the birds. Both are involved in ongoing research in vocalizations and will share their work with you. Roads are mostly good (but you can not help some washboard), food is good to excellent, and the hotels vary from adequate to luxurious. Several of the hotels had internet access. Internet cafes, where present, are cheap. Most of the terrain is open and the birds are relatively easy to see. Everyone we met was very hospitable. Although Argentina's had its share of economic turmoil and upheaval, this created no problem for our trip.

Note: A word for future trips. Common names for birds do not seem to have "settled" in Argentina and there is continuing discussion over species versus sub-species distinctions. Clements and Monroe and Sibley differ in their naming, not to mention JMB.

## Trip Diary

**Day 0, Thursday 24 October** Most international flights arrive mid-morning and HC and EM picked up the group for transfer to our very well-

located hotel. There we met JMB who oriented us to the possibilities of the area including restaurants, the Aves Argentina office, map vendors, and the nearby Reserva Ecológica Costanera Sur. HC gave each participant a copy of Annotated Checklist of the Birds of Argentina by JMB and Mark Pearman and most of us asked JMB to sign our copies. (Late in the trip we ran across Mark Pearman so JY double-dipped on the autographs.) Most participants spent some time getting organized and some time in the Reserva.

**Day 1, Friday 25 October Reserva Ecológica** Any breeding bird atlas of Argentina would have gotten a great start this morning: Black-necked Swans with cygnets, Great Grebes on the nest, White-tufted Grebes with chicks, Spot-flanked Gallinule carrying nesting material, nesting Freckle-breasted Thornbird and, the almost ubiquitous national bird, the Rufous Hornero. Two Spotted Rails were unexpected treats. We drove north for lunch at La Cantina do mi Tio – a meat lover’s buffet. Afternoon birding at Reserva Natural Otamendi (our original destination, Ribera Norte Reserve, was passable due to flooding) yielded about 106 species for the day. Argentine birders appear to be a close-knit bunch - friends of HC and JMB marked a locale for the Straight-billed Reed-haunter. We returned to Bs As for the night.

**Day 2, Saturday 26 October** We visited a slightly higher elevation in Reserva Natural Otamendi in the morning. Then we headed NNE through the floodplain of the Rio Paraná. Several stops on dirt roads near Ceibas yielded numerous pampas birds. An evening drive on a road toward Puerto Unzué, just across the Rio Uruguay from Uruguay, yielded one of my top five trip birds, displaying Nacunda Nighthawks. We also found some globally threatened Black-and-White Monjita. It rained heavily at night in Gualeguaychú.

**Day 3, Sunday 27 October** We tromped the Ñandubayzal camping area in the morning for the Gray Monjita, Blue-billed Black-Tyrant, White-rimmed Warbler, and Golden-crowned Warbler. Our afternoon drive brought us to a tape-worthy flock of at least twenty globally-threatened Saffron-cowled Blackbirds and a male Bearded Tachuri. A bit out of habitat, two trip White Woodpeckers flew by. We spent another pleasant night at Gualeguaychú. TT introduced us to his tip for successful birding – “Feed the dog.” We followed this advice for the rest of the trip.



HC Taping Some of his Favorite Birds, SCBL

**Day 4, Monday 28 October** A long drive (with a nice stop for five Greater Rheas) brought us to the Area de Relleno Sanitario de San Francisco in the afternoon. (Doesn't that sound nicer than land fill?) Got a White-winged Black-Tyrant but missed the key bird - Dinelli's Doradito. Night in San Francisco.



Greater Rhea, Male

**Day 5, Tuesday 29 October** We returned to Area de Relleno Sanitario San Francisco where the landfill manager, Carlos, an enthusiastic birder, helped us get the Doradito. Rain prevented a visit to Mar Chiquita so the Eskimo Curlew will have to wait until another trip. We birded Posada Qunte near Carlos Paz in the afternoon for Tawny-headed Swallow and stayed at Icho Cruz.

**Day 6, Wednesday 30 October.** An early drive to the buffer Zone for El Condorito National Park yielded the first Andean Condors and Red-tailed Comets of the trip. We found Larklike Brushrunners on the grounds of the

resort El 44 in the Sierran Chaco at 1020 meters. HC called in a Spot-winged Falconet using tapes (I never knew you could do that with Falconets!) We stopped at HC's house to find Blue-Crowned Parakeets. Fire swept HC's ranch in August 2002 and it is just beginning to recover. Whether it was feeding the dogs or HC and JMB knowledge of the area we'll never know but we quickly found the Black-bodied Woodpecker at Pampa de Achala. Olive-crowned Crescent-chest and the endemic Córdoba Cinclodes were also hits. After a fine dinner of local fare and Argentine dance demonstrations, we spent the night in La Cumbre.



Regrowth at HC's Fire-Ravaged Ranch

**Day 7, Thursday 31 October** After a careful drive onto a salt pan, we found a nest of the very local, endemic Salinas Monjitas. Later, backroad driving yielded several co-operative Chaco Owls and a most excellent Jaguarundi.



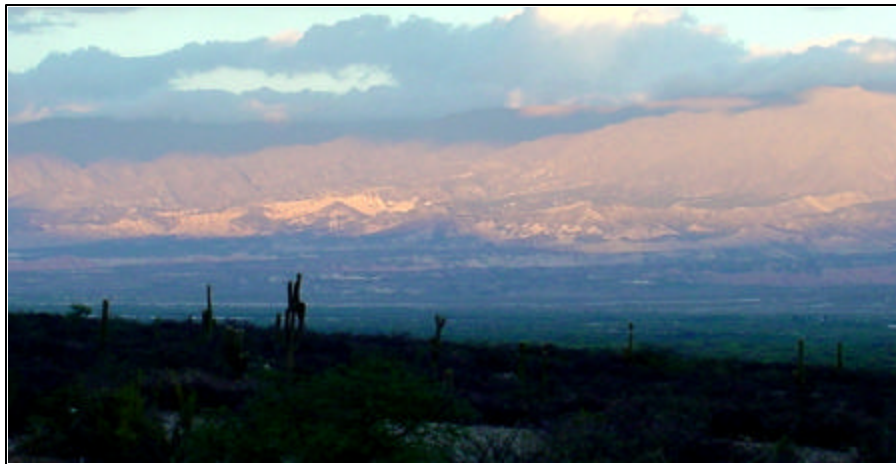
Female Salinas Monjita and her Nest



**Day 8, Friday 1 November** We gained elevation during this day's long drive to Tafi del Valle, netting the Rufous-throated Dipper, a globally-threatened species, and the endemic Yellow-striped Brush-Finch en-route.

**Day 9, Saturday 2 November** We crossed over the pass at El Inferuicho, 3145 meters, for some high elevation birds such as Gray-hooded, Band-tailed, and Ash-breasted Sierra-Finch and Tucuman Mountain-Finch, a globally-threatened species. Black-crested Buzzard Eagles and Variable Hawks sparred in mid-air. The Ruines de Quilmes, site of an archeological ruin, were quite luxurious and my favorite lodging of the trip. The area very much reminded me of Arizona's Sonoran Desert. There we saw four Argentine endemics: White-throated Cacholote, Bare-eyed Ground Dove (Moreno's Ground dove), Buff-breasted Earthcreeper, and Sandy Gallito (didn't I know her in high school?)

The address of the fabulous place is: Ruinas de Quilmes, Amaicha del Valle, Provincia de Tucuman, (0892) 21075



View from the pre-puna Quilmes Area

Another Guest  
Enjoys the Pool at  
Quilmes



**Day 10, Sunday 3 November** The road from Quilmes to Cachi was very rough but very beautiful, reminding me of Capitol Reef National Park with its tilted sandstone strata. Steinbach's Canastero, an endemic, was our target for the day and we had an all too brief look at Elegant-crested Tinamou. We spent the night in Cachi, at 2,280 meters.

**Day 11, Monday 4 November** We traveled from Cachi to San Lorenzo via Cuesta del Obispo and found a trip favorite, the Rufous-bellied Saltator. We spent the night at HC's favorite hotel in San Lorenzo, just north of Salta.

**Day 12, Tuesday 5 November** Imagine having a Red-legged Seriema for a yard bird and a Slender-tailed Woodstar staked out. That is what San Lorenzo is like. CP found her 2,000<sup>th</sup> world bird here, a White-barred Piculet. We drove to San Martin via Cornisa road to establish a Calilegua "base camp." A late night at Calilegua National Park brought us Spectacled Owl. This was our first night in San Martin and, yes, the hotel did laundry.

**Day 13-14, Wednesday 6 and Thursday 7 November** Calilegua National Park by day and night and spent (late) nights in San Martin. We explored all elevations of this park for three days. Calilegua has lots of owl possibilities; we found four and heard one other. Worked at bit for the Hoy's Screech Owl and Yungas Pygmy-owl. After hearing and knowing that we were within 15 feet of several birds, we finally actually saw a White-throated Antpitta. EM helped us track down a Toco Toucan.

**Day 15, Friday 8 November** After a final morning of birding Calilegua, we headed north to Humahuaca. En route, we crossed the Tropic of Capricorn, the farthest southern latitude at which the sun can appear directly overhead.

**Day 16, Saturday 9 November** A broken tie rod mount postponed this day's planned trip to Laguna de los Pozuelos. EM and HC had van fixed in La Quiaca while JMB and participants birded in Yavi. In Yavi, much nicer than La Quiaca, we occupied a very tidy little hostel. CP found a Geoffrey's Cat during a mid-day walk.



JY and EM Diagnose the Problem

**Day 17, Sunday 10 November** We spent today in the highlands around Yavi. Northern Argentina reminds me of northern New Mexico. Remote, beautiful, dry, adobes, and solar panels. Andean Flamingo in a wet cow pasture and Puna Tinamou were highlights.



Una casa en medio de la nada

**Day 18, Monday 11 November** We took a long day to try to make up the lost time from the broken tie rod and flat tire. This group knows every gomeria in Abra Pampa inside and out. We spent all too brief a time at Laguna de los Pozuelos for Giant Coot, Horned Coot, and hundreds of

Chilean Flamingo. A late afternoon and early evening birding at Yala Provincial Reserve yielded the top bird of the trip, garnering seven votes – a beautiful, singing, quivering, close, male Lyre-tailed Nightjar.



Flamingos and Coots at Laguna de los Pozuelos

**Day 19, Tuesday 12 November** We drove to the higher reaches of Yala Provincial Reserve for the Red-Faced Guan in the morning. With the long drive to J.V. Gonzalez via NP El Rey area, we added only four trip birds today.

**Day 20, Wednesday 13 November** After birding the dry chaco in J. V. Gonzalez area for some specialists including Chaco Chachalaca, Stripe-backed Antbird, and Cinerous Tyrant, the group rendezvoused with Miguel, the guide for the Misiones/Iguacu Falls trip extension.

**Day 21, Thursday 14 November** This last true day of the trip yielded no new birds but it was nice to see many birds again in a leisurely manner moment. HC and CP got a quick look at a Red Brouket from the van. We picked up Delva, Emilio's wife, at the bus station in Salta and drove to San Lorenzo, just north of Salta, for a relaxing return to a beautiful hotel in the Yungas. After an evening flight to Bs As, CP spent the night in Bs As.

**Day 22, Friday 15 November** Explored a bit of Bs As before a late night flight home for arrival on 16 November.

## Top Twelve Favorite Trip Birds

1. Lyre-tailed Nightjar
2. Red-tailed Comet
3. Chaco Owl
4. Spectacled Owl
5. Red-legged Seriema
6. Rufous-throated Dipper
7. Rufous-bellied Saltator
8. Saffron-cowled Blackbird
9. Olive-crowned Crescent Chest
10. Yungas Pygmy Owl
11. Rufous-collared Sparrow aka Decoy Bird aka Zonotrich (but on the top twelve list because they are reliably everywhere)
12. Bearded Tacuri

## References

Juan Mazar Barnett and Mark Pearman, Lista Comentada de las Aves Argentinas/Annotated checklist of the Birds of Argentina, (Barcelona: Lynx Editions, 2001)



Martín R. de la Peña and Maurice Rumboll, Birds of Southern South America and Antarctica, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1998)

Alison J. Stattersfield, Michael J. Crosby, Adrian J. Long and David C. Wege, Endemic Bird Areas of the World, (Cambridge: BirdLife International, 1998)

## Credit

All photos except the last two on page 14 are by CP.

## Mammals

Nutria, *Myocastor coypus*

Cavy (Guinea Pig), *Cavia sp.*

Jaguarundi, *Herpailurus yaguaroundi* (excellent spotting by GM)

European Hare, *Lepus europaeus* (introduced)

Tuco Tuco, *Ctenomys sps.*

Gray Fox, *Lycalopex gymnocercus*

South American Red Squirrel

Guanaco, *Lama guanicoe*

Agouti, *Dasyprocta sp.* (at Calilegua)

Vicuña, *Lama vicugna* (in the puna)

Geoffroy's Cat, *Oncifelis geoffroyi* (CP only in a gully in Yavi)

Bats sps.

Red Brocket, *Mazama americana* (CP and HC)



Distant Guanaco



Vicuña



Geoffrey's Cat



Red Brockett

Other interesting critters

Turtle (completely armored when picked up)

Tarantula Wasp

Lizards, colorful (red, yellow and green)

Toads

Lizard, mostly green with green head