



The glorious Chaco endemic Chaco Owl joined us at the list table at Enciso (Paul Smith).

PARAGUAY

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LEADERS: PAUL SMITH AND HUGO DEL CASTILLO

With 407 birds, 27 mammals and 13 species of reptiles recorded, this year's Paraguay trip, Birdquest's second, smashed all the previous records. Persistently overlooked by visitors, the "Forgotten Heart of South America", is a place where only adventurous birders dare to tread, and always leave very glad that they did. The country squeezes four threatened ecosystems into its relatively manageable national territory and rewards the intrepid with a varied list of spectacular avian goodies, including some of the biggest ticks on the continent. This trip got off to a hot and dusty flyer in the humid and dry Chaco; meandered through the rarely-visited cerrado grassland; survived a new bird frenzy in the fast-disappearing Atlantic Forest; and signed off with a bang in the Mesopotamian flooded grasslands of southern Paraguay. Despite battling high winds or rain on an almost daily basis, the big birds just kept on rolling in, with Black-legged Seriema, Chaco Owl, Chaco Nothura and the soon to be split Olive-crowned (Chaco) Crescentchest amongst the highlights in the Chaco; Helmeted Woodpecker, Bare-throated Bellbird, Saffron Toucanet and Temminck's Seedeater lighting up the Atlantic Forest for us; White-winged Nightjar, Collared Crescentchest, Cock-tailed Tyrant and Marsh Seedeater making sure the cerrado lived up to its burgeoning birding reputation; and Sickle-winged

Nightjar, Saffron-cowled Blackbird, Bearded Tachuri and Ochre-breasted Pipit from the Mesopotamian grasslands ensuring that a memorable trip ended as successfully as it had begun. Those with a soft spot for mammals had their fancies tickled with three species of cat, three species of armadillo and memorable close encounters with five species of bat, whilst the discovery of the first nest of White-rumped Monjita ensured that we did our bit for science along the way!



Waterbirds abound in the Humid Chaco, and both Maguari Stork (left) and Jabiru (right) were abundant (Paul Smith).

Our trip began with an airport pick-up, whilst those that arrived a day early spent their time productively with Hugo, getting to get to know some of the commoner birds around the airport. Eared and Picui Ground-Doves, Rufous Hornero, Blue-tufted Starthroat, Great Kiskadee, Cattle Tyrant, Fork-tailed Flycatcher, Tropical Kingbird, Greyish Saltator, Rufous-bellied Thrush, Chalk-browed Mockingbird, Saffron Finch, Sayaca Tanager, Rufous-collared Sparrow and Shiny Cowbird were all species that we would soon get to know all to well. Soaring around the airport buildings (far more frequently than the handful of daily aeroplanes) were flocks of Grey-breasted Martin, which were sent into a panic by the sudden appearance of a sinister Peregrine Falcon out on the prowl. We watched his unsuccessful attempt to pick one off, plus have a half-hearted go at the Feral Pigeons, before jumping into our 4x4 vehicles and preparing to head off for the Chaco. A short drive and a bird's eye view of the city of Asunción on the horizon from the unnecessarily high Puente Remanso over the Paraguay River later and we were officially in the Chaco, despite not yet having left relative civilization.

The first 350 or so kilometres of the Chaco region is an ecologically distinctive formation known as Humid Chaco. Dominated by a single species of palm *Copernicia alba*, it is a temporarily (not seasonally!) flooded environment that is alternatively extremely wet or extremely dry. To the north this ecosystem becomes more permanently wet and eventually metamorphoses into the Pantanal, to the west it becomes more permanently dry and turns into the Dry Chaco. The extreme changeability of the local conditions is something that the palm has managed to adapt to, hence its overwhelming success in vegetative terms! Birds however are far more mobile than the average plant, and so communities are extremely changeable. You don't know what you're going to get until you get there.

Given the heavy rainfall that had resulted in air rescues for inhabitants in the Dry Chaco just a few months earlier, we were rather surprised to find the opposite true in the Humid Chaco. Where we might have expected there to be lots of water, we found it rather dry. That said there were still plenty of roadside ponds around where huge flocks of Great, Western Cattle and Snowy Egret, Snail Kite, Limpkin, Cocoi, Striated and Black-crowned Night Heron, Wattled Jacana, Wood and Maguari Stork delighted us with their sheer numbers, whilst Whistling Heron and Roseate Spoonbills added droplets of pink colour into the mix. Jabiru were also present in small numbers, as were Plumbeous Ibis. Savanna and Roadside Hawks were abundant on roadside posts, Southern Caracara, Black and Turkey Vulture picked at road kill and Lesser Yellow-headed Vulture harried over the marshes, but normally common raptors such as Great Black and Black-collared Hawks were conspicuous in their absence. We would need to wait for the return journey to add them to the list. One roadside marsh blessed us with a plethora of marsh blackbirds, Baywing, Chopi, Unicoloured and Chestnut-capped all milling together and providing us with an opportunity to compare them, and a confiding Greater Thornbird was a popular visitor. Unfortunately because of a slight delay on the arriving flight we arrived late at our doradito marsh, and with steadily increasing winds and the midday sun beating down on us, we couldn't coax any of them out of their hiding places. A Spotted Rail squawked his annoyance from the boggy depths, an unidentified *Laterallus* crane echoed the sentiment, but our only reward for this stop was scoped views of some magnificent Scarlet-headed Blackbirds, as usual associated with "marsh

banana" leaves. Lunch was at the nationally famous Pirahú diner, where we all enjoyed the "best empanadas in Paraguay" before checking out the nearby bat roost. Peering into the cracks below a bridge we were able to see hundreds of diminutive Diminutive Serotines (hence the name!). The species is known only from two locations in the Chaco, and this roost is a significant aggregation. With a gigantic flock of Bare-faced Ibis on the horizon, we continued on towards the Dry Chaco and following a brief stop at Buffalo Bill's for White Monjita and Chotoy Spinetail, arrived at the Loma Plata Inn. The day was rounded off with a hearty barbecue meal.

Our first day in the Dry Chaco was an exploration of the salt lakes and marshes in the area around the Mennonite colonies, known collectively as the Cuenca Upper Yacaré Sur. Ironically we found the Dry Chaco in this area to be far wetter than the Humid Chaco, and so were able to begin ticking off the waterbirds with gay abandon as we scanned every cattle pond and marsh for new birds. Ringed and Brazilian Teals were present in numbers, the recently split Common Gallinule was easy to find and some 'hungover' winter visitor White-winged Coots were also present. They weren't the only birds that were taking advantage of the unseasonably wet conditions though. Some juvenile Chilean Flamingo were apparently planning on passing the summer at Laguna Capitán, White-tufted Grebe were still on the scene and Coscoroba Swans had even dared to breed. We began ticking off migrant waders at Laguna Capitán with Lesser Yellowlegs, Solitary and Pectoral Sandpipers around, but the humongous cloud of whistling ducks at Isla Po'í surprised even the leaders. Hundreds of individuals of all three species, White-faced, Fulvous and Black-bellied, circled above us filling the air with their piping calls. A pair of Collared Peccary and two Grey Brocket deer in quick succession threatened to give us a mammal overdose, but the biggest surprise of the day however was of the non-feathered type, when a three-metre long Boa Constrictor allowed us to get acquainted with the scaly side of life.



Chaco endemic Crested Gallito and near threatened Greater Rhea were amongst our Chaco highlights (Conny Palm).

An afternoon at Laguna Ganso and Campo León offered up Black Skimmer and Large-billed Tern (neither would be in this area during a typical dry year!), Greater Yellowlegs, Stilt Sandpiper, Black-necked Stilt, Collared and American Golden- Plover, White-cheeked Pintail and hundreds of Neotropic Cormorants. Away from the water Blue-crowned and Monk Parakeet were both common and kingfisher like Spot-backed Puffbird posed for photographs. Two small Chaco woodpeckers, White-fronted and Checkered, showed well, and there were good looks at Lark-like Brushrunner, Little Thornbird, Narrow-billed Woodcreeper, Great and Barred Antshrike, Sick's Swift, Plain Tyrannulet, Rufous Casiornis, Greater Wagtail-tyrant, Black-backed Water-tyrant, Masked Gnatcatcher, Red-crested Cardinal, Golden-billed Saltator and White-browed Blackbird. Amongst our Chaco endemics we were happy enough to share some time with Brushland Tinamou on a deserted road, Chaco Nothura showed his hand, Crested Hornero proved to be just as cooperative as his more common relatives, Creamy-backed Woodpecker went loco for the playback and Many-coloured Chaco-finch stole the show by singing for his captive audience. Many of us commented on the extraordinary abundance of Crowned Slaty-flycatcher, with barely a single bush without one as a sentinel.

The following day we headed north to more arid climes, but before leaving the Central Chaco we had our last look at the waterbirds on the permanent lagoons just outside Loma Plata. Purple Gallinule was a welcome addition, along with Rufescent Tiger-heron, some Greater Rhea and Southern Screamers. From here we moved on to Fortín Toledo, an important site in the Chaco War that Bolivia and Paraguay fought to a futile no score draw in the 1930s. Today a small reserve and home to a captive breeding project for the endangered Chaco Peccary, we were hoping to add a few more Chaco birds to our list. Our first sightings however did not have feathers. A sprightly Chacoan Mara proved to be the first of many of these small mammals that would cross our path, and a sleepy Indigo Snake raised its head defiantly as we took that one step too close.

Though not venomous, this is an aggressive species and we were wise to let this two-metre long individual go about his business in peace. Despite ever stronger gusts of winds, high temperatures and slow birding, we managed to convince two LBJs to put in an appearance, with Stripe-crowned Spinetail and Short-billed Canastero seemingly feeding off the furore that they generated for each other following the initial playback. Several Chaco Chachalacas and Suiriri Flycatchers were spotted and a splash of colour was provided by a nice male Blue-and-yellow Tanager. Our most notable mammal was an excellent view of a Jaguarundi running along the road.



The charming Chaco endemic Crested Hornero and the bolshie Crowned Slaty-flycatcher are both pleasingly abundant throughout the Dry Chaco (Conny Palm).

Lunch was at Restaurante Texas (ex-Restaurante Venecia) in Mariscal Estigarribia. Though the air-conditioning wasn't up to much it was blessed relief from the howling gales that were blowing up dust storms outside. After refuelling (ourselves as much as the vehicles) we were ready to head to the extreme north of the Dry Chaco, a dense low thorn forest, and Parque Nacional Teniente Enciso. Along the way a pair of Aplomado Falcons did the deed before our very eyes, American Kestrels adorned every telegraph post, Blue-fronted Amazons and Nanday Parakeets showed off their wing flashes in flight and we were all stopped dead in our tracks by a pair of Black-legged Seriemas parading around on the roadside for us. With one flat tyre, a Pearly-vented Tody-tyrant and two failed attempts at a capture of Greater Hairy Armadillo behind us, we arrived at Enciso National Park after dark. We began the list before dinner and no sooner did we reach Chaco Owl, when one appeared at our shoulders. Perched at about 2m and allowing us to approach almost close enough to touch, we were able to go to bed with a smile on our faces.

We were up early at Enciso to catch the beginning of the activity. First up was a pair of Brown Cacholotes attending their nest in front of the accommodation block and a Glittering-bellied Emerald dipping at cactus flowers nearby. On our walk along the forest trail we added Variable Antshrike, Brown-crested and Southern Scrub- Flycatchers, Rufous-browed Peppershrike, Red-eyed Vireo, Black-capped Warbling-finch, White-barred Piculet and White Woodpecker. A Scimitar-billed Woodcreeper grabbed everybody's attention, and shortly after another large woodcreeper with a weird bill paid us a visit, a Red-billed Scythebill. By the time we headed for the runway at 9am, the high winds were back. Our first crack at the Crested Gallito was the most notable casualty of the weather, but Great Rufous Woodcreeper and Vermillion Flycatcher went some way to repairing the damage. Our afternoon trip to Médanos del Chaco was made under the harshest of conditions we could have wished for. High winds, and temperatures of 44°C meant that activity was at a minimum. The Quebracho Crested-tinamous didn't emerge from cover, though we briefly heard one sing, but thankfully we were able to find one of our other targets with ease, the Black-crested Finch. Despite the hurricane force gusts, these hardy little guys were out pecking in the road as usual, revealing their white-edged tail feathers as they flush. With Black-backed Grosbeaks and an Orange-backed Troupial also showing, we prepared to head back for our night drive. Colonies of Plains Viscachas line the roadside here, and we were able to find several individuals hard at work. Highlight of the night though was a wonderful Puma that posed briefly in full view of one vehicle, though unfortunately only some of the occupants were able to see it. Little and Scissor-tailed Nightjars were our first caprimulgids, but activity was again lax. With the only owl to our name being a nocturnal Burrowing Owl, we were ready for one of Aldo's special barbecues and a good night's sleep.

Today was to be largely a travel day as we began our trek back towards the eastern region of the country, but we got off to the best of possible starts with an extraordinarily compliant Crested Gallito. After suffering in its pursuit yesterday it was something of a relief that this individual paraded around in the open for several minutes less than 100m from the accommodation block! A Southern Three-banded Armadillo visited us at the breakfast table, but pretty soon we were on the road. Harris, White-tailed and Zone-tailed Hawk were

seen along the way, as well as a healthy serving of Pampas Foxes. It wasn't long before the winds were back and it cost us a better chance with American Crowned-eagle, and even the trustworthy Black-bodied Woodpeckers were dissuaded from appearing back at Toledo. Dan spotted a flock of calling Upland Sandpipers at dusk however, Roger bagged his Large Elaenia, White-banded Mockingbirds exhibited their striking wing patterns and a bold Crane Hawk allowed prolonged views. Highlight of the day was a pair of Olive-crowned Crescentchest which we managed to dig out of a dense tangle at Toledo. The pair of clown-plumaged beauties was eventually seen well by everybody, and many of us are awaiting the official split to Chaco Crescentchest for this form in order to claim an armchair lifer. At the opposite end of the colour spectrum, a bag full of Screaming Cowbirds demonstrated why "screaming cowbird" is such an inappropriate name.



Breathtaking in display, male Strange-tailed Tyrants stole the show at Arroyos y Esteros (Dan Guthrie)

Our final day in the Chaco started with two big targets and the intention to clean up on the remainder of our Chaco birds that had so far eluded us. The Chaco Earthcreeper was our main aim, and it was ticked off easily following a squelchy tramp across a dried up salt lagoon in the Cuenca Upper Yacaré Sur. Stripe-backed Antbird was the next one, and after some bushwhacking we were regaled by a singing male at close range. Solitary Black Cacique: tick. Least and Pied-billed Grebes were seen on ponds, Sooty-fronted Spinetail obliged, a male Spectacled Tyrant filled a hole, the ubiquitous Giant Wood-rail was seen in numbers, Dan pulled off a coup by finding a snoozing Nacunda Nighthawk and a migrating flock of Plumbeous Kite was a nice treat. A juvenile Great Black Hawk and a handful of Black-collared Hawks finally got these usually common raptors onto the list, and hirundine flocks gave us Brown-chested Martin and White-rumped and Barn Swallows. We headed back to Asunción hoping for better weather in the eastern region, but content that we had got the vast majority of what we had been looking for in the Chaco, despite the handicaps.

Arroyos y Esteros was our morning stop en route to the cerrado of Laguna Blanca. And what a good stop it was. Displaying male Strange-tailed Tyrants looked fantastic in the morning sun, Lesser Grassfinches almost had to be shooed away they came so close, Long-tailed Reedfinches were nest-building and a nonchalant male Dark-throated Seedeater preened calmly despite our proximity. We had knockout looks at Yellow-rumped Marshbird, a two-tone encounter with White-headed Marsh-tyrant and were left jaws agape by a Long-winged Harrier. With temperatures once again pushing the mercury to its limits, a blow-out tyre on one of the vehicles showed why it pays to hire top quality drivers. Dani (who is professionally trained in off-road driving) handled the situation confidently and with the minimum of fuss, despite burning his back on the scorching tarmac in the tyre-changing process. Fortunately our trustworthy band of birding trojans needed a

lot more to keep them down than an exploded tyre. Without any complaint we were adding a nesting Campo Flicker and Yellow-chevrons Parakeet to the list. With the efficiency of a Formula One team, the tyre change was over in the blink of an eye and we were off again. After a lunch break at a Brazilian rodizio restaurant in Santa Rosa del Aguaray (during which the ever-ready Roger found a Rufous-thighed Hawk), we strove onwards to the Laguna Blanca cerrado.



Who could fail to be impressed by this gorgeous male White-winged Nightjar at Laguna Blanca (Conny Palm).

IBA Laguna Blanca is a favourite with birding groups and it wasn't hard to see why. As guests at the Para La Tierra Biological Station we were greeted on arrival by a presentation of three species of bat that they had caught the previous evening as part of their year-round bat inventory - Seba's Short-tailed Bat, White-lined Broad-nosed Bat and evil-looking Fringed Fruit-eating Bat. A fascinating presentation of fascinating animals, we barely had time to take in the information and drop off our luggage before we were out in the field again. By the end of the afternoon we had added Streamer-tailed, Sharp-tailed and Cock-tailed Tyrants, Plumbeous Seedeater, Red-winged Tinamou, Curl-crested Jay and had scope views of a pair of Maned Wolves. The fun was only just beginning though and as night fell we waited patiently in anticipation of the day's big target, the endangered White-winged Nightjar. Serenaded by the sound of airborne Giant Snipe, we headed out across the grassland to come face to face with a wonderful male "*candicans*". All of us in agreement that we were in the presence of a very special bird, the consensus seemed to be that a letter of rebuke to the artist in the field guide was in order. Perhaps the world's most enchanting nightbird had worked its magic on us. With the talk still on the nightjar we still had time for a Barn Owl, a Tropical Screech-owl and a stupendously camouflaged Common Potoo before we hit the sack.

There is of course no rest for the birding wicked and at the crack of dawn we were out in the dewy cerrado in search of more entertainment. This came in the form of near-threatened White-banded Tanager, near-missed White-rumped Tanager and near-abundant Black-throated Saltator. After taking what seemed like an age to see our first saltator, every subsequent tree seemed to hold additional specimens. Perhaps the most bizarre moment of the entire tour came when we realized that a White-rumped Monjita had built its nest in the roof of a neighbouring farmer's tractor! Incredible when you take into account that the nest of the species is undescribed! Clearly ornithologists have been looking in the wrong places!! Janet and Kevin glimpsed a Red-legged Seriema in a hurry, White-eared Puffbird was brash, Flavescent Warbler knew what we were looking for and Bearded Tachuri had us all playing air guitar. Short-crested Flycatcher, Masked Tityra, Ruddy Ground-dove, Pale-breasted Spinetail, Grassland Sparrow, Wedge-tailed Grass-finch and White-eyed Parakeet caused less adrenalin to pump, but they all count.

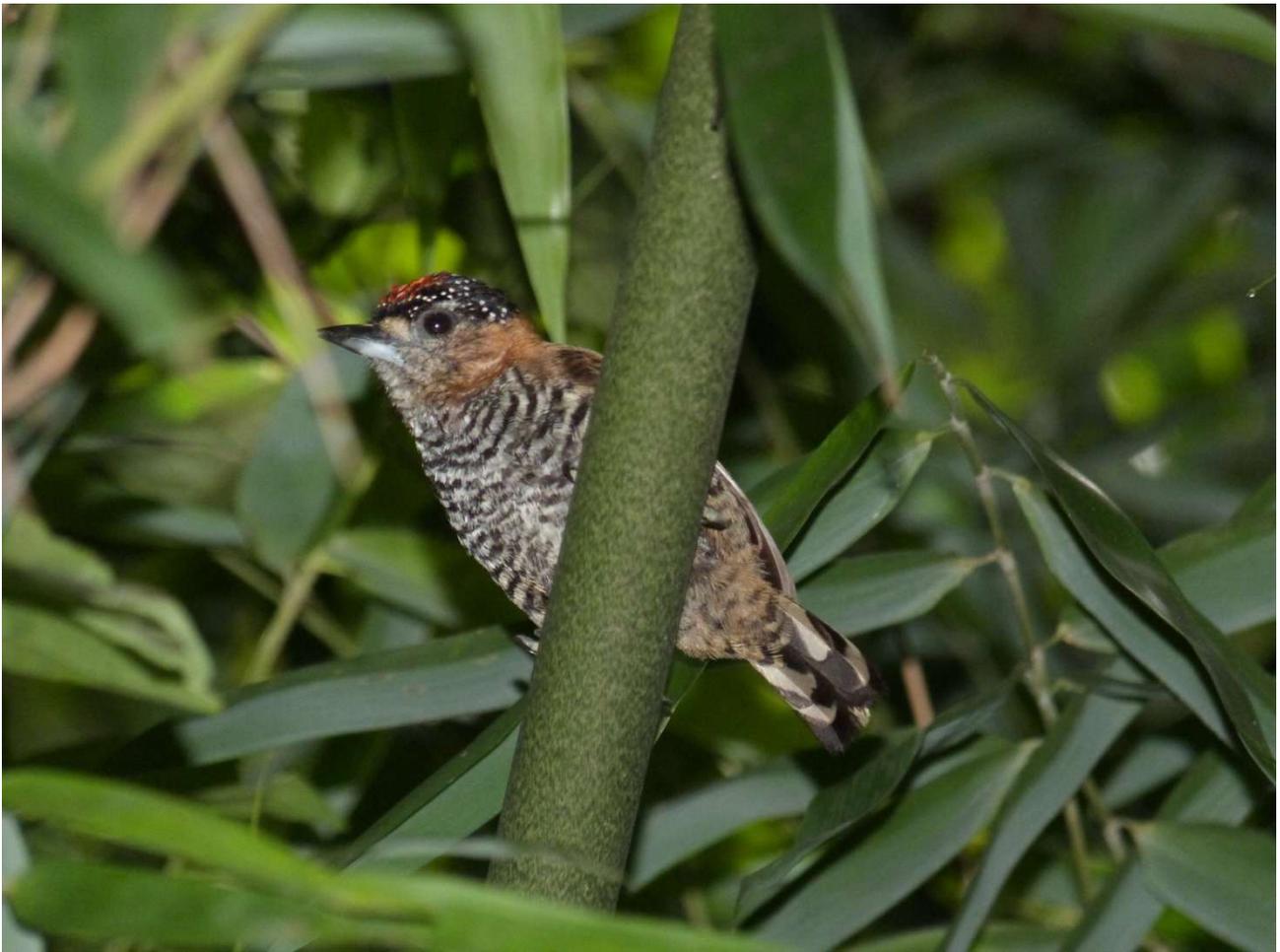
The Mbaracayú Biosphere Reserve was chosen as one of the 100 most important locations for conservation on earth, and over the next three days we began to find out why. Unfortunately our visit was hampered by inclement weather. The rain began as we made our approach to the reserve, and from this point on we played host to daily thunderstorms until the end of our trip. Fortunately Birdquesters are a hardy bunch and don't let a drop of rain get them down. The forests at Mbaracayú are absolutely replete with great birds to the point where naming targets becomes a futile exercise. On our first day here we walked the forest trail at Jejui-Mi and took a short excursion to Lagunita. Bat Falcon, Grey-fronted Dove, Scaly-headed Parrot, Maroon-bellied Parakeet, Ferruginous Pygmy-owl, Gilded Hummingbird, Buff-fronted Foliage-gleaner and Euler's Flycatcher were all duly noted. At Lagunita Tawny-crowned Pygmy-tyrant, Yellow-bellied Elaenia, Blue Dacnis, Sharpbill, White-throated Spadebill and Burnished-buff Tanagers were all pleasant additions, while Atlantic Forest endemics including a singing male Bare-throated Bellbird, a cocky Swallow-tailed Manakin, a fly-by Rufous-capped Motmot and an unconcerned Buff-bellied Puffbird. Highlight for many thought was a mixed flock of seedeaters, amongst which as an endangered male Marsh Seedeater. The excursion helped us stumble across a pair of calling Chestnut-crowned Crakes, but surprise surprise, we couldn't catch a look even though they were singing just a few feet away.



Black-capped Screech-owl lit up our night drive at Mbaracayú, while a sodden fledgling Boat-billed Flycatcher tugged at our heart strings (Paul Smith)

The next day threatened to be a complete wash out. Remarkably however we finished the day with stellar looks at Saffron Toucanet, the endangered Helmeted Woodpecker and less threatened but equally interesting species such as Planalto Woodcreeper, Eared Pygmy-tyrant and Grey Elaenia. In fact during the downpours the trees close to the accommodation were providing more than enough material to keep us interested. Chestnut-vented Conebill, Violaceous Euphonia, Swallow Tanager, Black-breasted Mango, nesting Crested Becard, and even Robust Woodpecker graced us with their presence. Streaked Flycatcher and Variable Oriole (which had put their nest under the eaves of the house) were ever-present, but everybody with children felt empathy for the panic-stricken Boat-billed Flycatchers whose sodden fledgling had fallen from the nest during the rains. Magpie Tanager, Riverbank Warbler and an ambulation through the bamboo that got us a seriously rare Temminck's Seedeater rounded off the wet morning. An afternoon in the cerrado at Aguara Ñu had one undoubted highlight. It wasn't the Swainson's Flycatcher or the Laughing Falcon, but an incredibly bold singing Collared Crescentchest that refused to back down until everybody had taken as many photographs as they could fit onto their memory cards. Crab-eating Fox and a Puma that most of us again managed to miss were mammal highlights.

The rain continued to thrash down as we departed Mbaracayú, slip-sliding our way towards Ciudad del Este. A Dark-billed Cuckoo flew across the road, but the downpour barely abated until we had reached the Salto del Monday waterfalls. This meant the very disappointing cancellation of our Vinaceous Amazon twitch to the Limoy Reserve, the 50km of red soil road just too dangerous to attempt in such torrential rain. With the sun finally emerging later that afternoon, we were able to enjoy the falls and the hundreds of Great Dusky Swifts cascaded around us. As a bonus a mad Little Nightjar sang before dark from a bush opposite the entrance. Bananaquits, Short-tailed Hawk and Blue-and-white Swallows got in through the back door in the hotel car park the next morning and we were all set for San Rafael.



A spectacularly co-operative Atlantic Forest endemic, the Ochre-collared Piculet at San Rafael (Paul Smith).

The Hostettler guesthouse has reached near legendary proportions because of the great birding, friendly welcome and home-cooked food on offer. Christine wasn't at home this time, but we were expertly looked after by Carolina and Celia and the standards were just as high. The bird list at San Rafael is astronomical and with the addition of an Osprey that we found during this trip we managed to push it up to 429 species. Forest walks on the first two days yielded a number of species that were not recorded at Mbaracayú, beginning with a nervous male White-shouldered Fire-eye, a soggy Slaty-breasted Wood-rail, a glorious mixed flock of Plumbeous and Swallow-tailed Kites, skulky Grey-bellied and Rufous-capped Spinetails, a statuesque Rufous Gnateater, rarely silent Sirystes and a soaring pair of Rufous-thighed Kite. Other new birds included Pale-vented Pigeon, Grey-fronted Dove, White-spotted Woodpecker, a fly-over pair of Red-capped Parrot, a fearless pair of Surucua Trogon, Ochre-breasted and White-eyed Foliage-gleaners and Chestnut-crowned Becard. Once again we were lucky enough to have the company of the world's most curious Tufted Antshrike, and Dusky-tailed Antbird also approached closely in bamboo tangles, which provided a gnarly refuge for other species like Ochre-faced Tody-flycatcher, Drab-breasted Pygmy-tyrant, Yellow Tyrannulet, Chestnut-headed Tanager and the near threatened Blackish-blue Seedeater. The lake yielded Amazon, Ringed and Green Kingfisher, Anhinga, Southern Rough-winged Swallow, drinking Grey-rumped and Sick's Swift and the aforementioned Osprey. Night birding was unusually slow, presumably because of the unsettled weather conditions. Common Pauraque and Short-tailed Nighthawk were seen every night, whilst we rudely woke a roosting White-tailed Kite from his slumbers in the Tung trees. The only trace of Silky-tailed Nightjar was a distant calling bird, otherwise the forest was eerily silent after dark apart from the quiet rumbles of thunder.



Bad light didn't stop us getting great views of this superb male Spot-billed Toucanet at San Rafael (Conny Palm)

The morning of our third day at San Rafael began with a Rusty-margined Guan strolling along the road. In the forest we had Olivaceous Woodcreeper, a Southern Antpiper that eventually let us see him properly, cute Grey-hooded Flycatchers, Wing-barred Piprites and Greenish Schiffornis. The real surprise though was the discovery of a male Ruddy Quail-dove sitting on two eggs. Added to the nests of White-tipped Dove, Great Kiskadee and Large Elaenia that we had already seen around the house, it was clear that breeding was in full swing. A trip to the Kanguery grasslands during the afternoon of the second day was as productive as expected. En route we had our first quick looks at Spix's Spinetail, and on arrival a pair of Grassland Yellow-finch, Pearly-bellied Seedeaters, Tawny-headed Swallow and a wonderful male Bearded Tachuri. Chimango Caracara posed for photographs, but the top bird of the day was the vulnerable Saffron-cowled Blackbird. After scoping some from a distance, we were later joined by large flocks coming to roost in the marsh lands to the sound of Ash-throated Crakes giving an evening chorus. After dark Common Potoo were on the wing and the winnowing sounds of South American Snipe filled the air, but our other target, Giant Snipe, unfortunately failed to appear. One odd nocturnal sighting was of a roosting Black-crowned Trogon on our return to Nueva Gambach!

Our last day at Estancia Nueva Gambach proved that no matter how long you stay at this place there are always new birds to find. At one stage we had Spot-backed Antshrike, Rufous-winged Antwren and Streak-capped Antwren all in the same tree, Chestnut-vented Euphonia was on form, several colourful Spot-billed Toucanet were scoped, roving flocks of Black-goggled and Red-crowned Ant-tanagers harangued us and a co-operative pair of Creamy-bellied Gnatcatchers were an unexpected delight. A male Blond-crested Woodpecker peered at us at length from his nest hole and we enjoyed the vocal abilities of the White-browed Warblers for the last time, a wonderful crescendo that has been described as "the characteristic sound of the Atlantic Forest".

We awoke the following morning to the mother of all rainstorms, but there was still time for one last tick. As we tucked into our hearty breakfast the clanging tuneless sound of an Eastern Slaty-thrush was like music to our ears. Those of us who braved the rain eventually managed brief views of the bird, which against the cloudy sky, looked..., well..., slaty. Departing San Rafael on the skiddy roads a Chestnut-eared Aracari which looked like it could have done with an umbrella was seen flying across in front of one car. Though we would end the day in the Mesopotamian grasslands of Isla Yacyreta we had a short stop at Isla Alta to pipe a great Pinnated Bittern stalking through a rice field and photograph an unafraid Yellow-headed Caracara on the roadside. Hungry from our efforts we then tasted the local cheesy delicacy chipa in the town of Coronal

Bogado, known as the "Capital de la Chipa" which would tide us over until our fish lunch in the town of Ayolas. Following a bit of typical bureaucracy involving permit niceties and metaphorical back-scratching, we were out prowling the grasslands of the Isla Yacyreta reserve in search of Ochre-breasted Pipit. Spotted Nothura and Red-winged Tinamou fired out from the grass beneath our feet, a pair of South American Snipe followed suit, Grassland Sparrows has us chasing shadows, Pampas Cavies ran for their lives and time was ticking away until suddenly the welcome sound of a displaying pipit filled the air. A bit of playback was all it took to have this wonderful and threatened grassland specialty running around our feet and providing just reward for the effort invested. No sooner was the bird observed to everybody's satisfaction than we had to hurry on to our next target. With light fading we had a date with the Sickle-winged Nightjar. The anticipation was building as a White-bellied Seedeater was spotted singing atop a nearby bush, a Yellow-billed Cardinal flew by and Scarlet-headed Blackbird were scoped in the marsh. As the sun disappeared over the horizon the characteristic buzzy sound of this bizarre little nightjar could be heard. Within minutes all of us had had a memorable close encounter with the species as two birds flew in within a few meters of us. We watched them chase each other around for a while, appreciating the weird wing shape of the males, before deciding it was time to head to the Hotel Tacuati for a good rest. A Capybara crossed the road in front of one vehicle, whilst the other two vehicles were greeted by another Sickle-wing and a Little Nightjar blocking their path. The day had begun with a thunderstorm so severe that 100 homes had been damaged, power lines had been flattened and people had lost their lives. The destruction was evident as we drove along the roads with a petrol station destroyed, trees and walls flattened, road signs mangled and telegraph poles lying face down in the mud. Remarkably and against all odds, we were able to still say that we had had a damn good day!



Sickle-winged Nightjar and Ochre-breasted Pipit were top birds in the Isla Yacyreta grasslands (Conny Palm)

The riparian forests of the Paraná and Paraguay Rivers have much in common with those of the Pantanal, and our morning birding the forest here was to add a considerable number of new species to our list that are either absent or uncommon in the Atlantic Forest. We began with a pair of White-winged Tanagers, a Golden-winged Cacique attending a nest that hung over the forest trail so that we could see the egg inside, a sneaky Saffron-billed Sparrow, a pair of Green-backed Becard, a White-crested Elaenia and countless Orange-headed Tanagers. A male Ultramarine Grosbeak showed well in the forest, a Little Woodpecker dallied around his nest hole and Janet performed a miracle by locating the twittering Blue-winged Parrotlets in a gigantic tree. Just as entertaining as the bird life on show was an acrobatic troop of Black Howler Monkeys, while several of us saw Azara's Agoutis as we walked.

With the death of one of our vehicles close at hand, and the arrival of a new one heralding a return of the dreaded rain, we were ready to put the wrap on what had been a high octane, but highly successful and record-breaking tour.



A fabulous male Ruddy Quail-dove on one of the few known nests of this species at San Rafael (Paul Smith)

SYSTEMATIC LIST OF SPECIES RECORDED DURING THE TOUR

Species which were heard but not seen are indicated by the symbol (H).

Species which were only recorded by the leader are indicated by the symbol (LO).

Species which were not personally recorded by the leader are indicated by the symbol (NL).

Species marked with the symbol (◇) are either endemic to the country to the local region or considered 'special' birds for some other reason (e.g. it is seen on one or two Birdquest tours; it is difficult to see across most or all of its range; the local form is endemic or restricted range and may in future be treated as a full species).

Conservation threat categories and information are taken from *Threatened Birds of the World*, BirdLife International's magnificent book on the sad status of the rarest 10% of the world's avifauna, and updates on the BirdLife website: <http://www.birdlife.org/datazone/home>

(E) = Endangered, (V) = Vulnerable, (NT) = Near Threatened, (DD) = Data Deficient

Greater Rhea *Rhea americana* (NT) Flocks of "Ñandú" posed for photos at several sites in the Chaco.

Brown Tinamou *Crypturellus obsoletus* (H) The ear-splitting call of this bird was heard on numerous occasions.

Undulated Tinamou *Crypturellus undulatus* (H) Heard but not seen, this secretive tinamou evaded our detection.

Small-billed Tinamou *Crypturellus parvirostris* (H) Soft notes were enough to get it onto our heard list.

Tataupa Tinamou *Crypturellus tataupa* Seen only by a few of us on the road north from Fortín Toledo to Enciso.

Red-winged Tinamou *Rhynchotus rufescens* The stonking red wings caught everybody's eye as they flushed.

Brushland Tinamou (◇) *Nothoprocta cinerascens* This Chaco endemic was seen frequently on roads.

Spotted Nothura *Nothura maculosa* After taking a while to see our first one, we were suddenly over-run by them.

Chaco Nothura (◇) *Nothura chacoensis* Paraguay's only endemic, we encountered a couple of individuals.

Quebracho Crested-Tinamou (◇) *Eudromia formosa* (H) High winds and swirling dust put paid to our hopes.

Southern Screamer *Chauna torquata* The Guaraní say it tastes like soap, but it didn't prove too slippery for us.

Fulvous Whistling-Duck *Dendrocygna bicolor* Crazy large flocks of whistling-ducks at Isla Po'í.
White-faced Whistling-Duck *Dendrocygna viduata* As usual the most commonly encountered of the *Dendrocygnas*.
Black-bellied Whistling-Duck *Dendrocygna autumnalis* Just four in the *Dendrocygna* cloud at Isla Po'í.
Coscoroba Swan *Coscoroba coscoroba* What a pleasing sight to see the Coscorobas breeding again.
Ringed Teal *Callonetta leucophrys* Marion and Jim's first, and easiest, tick, was this handsome little duck.
Brazilian Teal *Amazonetta brasiliensis* Our commonest duck throughout the country.
White-cheeked Pintail *Anas bahamensis* 10 birds on the salt lakes at Laguna Capitán in 40°C heat.
Masked Duck *Nomonyx dominicus* (LO) One glimpsed briefly from the vehicle on the Trans Chaco highway.
Rusty-margined Guan *Penelope superciliaris* Janet got the group onto a jaywalking bird on a road at San Rafael.
Chaco Chachalaca *Ortalis canicollis* This tongue-twister Chaco endemic was abundant throughout the Chaco.
Bare-faced Curassow *Crax fasciolata* (H) The quiet gulping call of this elusive forest denizen was heard at Yacyreta.



Black Tegú and Four-toed Whip-tailed Lizard were amongst our most remarkable reptiles (Paul Smith and Aldo Fretes)

Least Grebe *Tachybaptus dominicus* Several on temporary ponds in the Central Chaco.
Pied-billed Grebe *Podilymbus podiceps* Chunky bills helped distinguish this greyish grebe from the smaller Least.
White-tufted Grebe *Rollandia rolland* A nice to surprise to see a group of 10 birds at Laguna Lucero.
Chilean Flamingo *Phoenicopterus chilensis* (NT) Just two juveniles, the rest of the winter flocks having departed.
Neotropic Cormorant *Phalacrocorax brasilianus* Wherever there was a drop of water.
Anhinga *Anhinga anhinga* A compliant bird hanging around the lagoon at Estancia Nueva Gambach.
Rufescent Tiger Heron *Tigrisoma lineatum* A handsome heron providing handsome views at San Rafael.
Pinnated Bittern *Botaurus pinnatus* The rain held off just long enough for us to scope a beauty in a ricefield.
Stripe-backed Bittern *Ixobrychus involucris* (H) One heard by Hugo at the doradito bridge in the Low Chaco.
Black-crowned Night Heron *Nycticorax nycticorax* Night Herons by day at Buffalo Bills.
Striated Heron *Butorides striatus* A common small heron, seen frequently throughout the trip.
Western Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis* Cows may be a sight for sore eyes, but these invasive Egrets aren't complaining!
Cocoi Heron *Ardea cocoi* The South American version of the Great Blue or Grey Heron.
Great Egret *Ardea alba* Great Egrets in great numbers.
Whistling Heron *Syrigma sibilatrix* The subtly beautiful Whistling Heron is particularly common.
Snowy Egret *Egretta thula* Small and graceful, there were lots of these little white herons in the huge flocks.
White-faced Ibis *Plegadis chihi* (LO) Wet roadside marshes housed flocks of these birds on the way to Arroyos.
Bare-faced Ibis *Phimosus infuscatus* A flock of 200 seen distantly at Pirahú, but better views at Laguna Capitán.
Plumbeous Ibis *Theristicus caerulescens* The first of Chuck's "Plumbeous lifers" was this prehistoric-looking ibis.
Buff-necked Ibis *Theristicus caudatus* Another large ibis with a sunset orange neck.
Roseate Spoonbill *Platalea ajaja* Who could fail to be impressed by the deep pink bodies of these gorgeous birds?
Maguari Stork *Ciconia maguari* Wonderfully abundant; a real pleasure to watch striding through the Humid Chaco.
Jabiru *Jabiru mycteria* Our largest stork, the hulking Jabiru has a humongous boat-shaped bill.
Wood Stork *Mycteria americana* Recorded in greater numbers than ever before on a single trip.
Lesser Yellow-headed Vulture *Cathartes burrovianus* This harrier-like vulture kept Roger busy.
Turkey Vulture *Cathartes aura* These red-headed scavengers were recorded almost daily through the trip.



Southern Caracaras are abundant throughout much of the country and so we saw lots! (Paul Smith)

Black Vulture *Coragyps atratus* As were their black-headed cousins.

King Vulture *Sarcoramphus papa* (NL) Conny was on the ball to find a pair of these at Mbaracayú.

Osprey *Pandion haliaetus* A first record for San Rafael as one bird patrolled the lake at Estancia Nueva Gambach.

White-tailed Kite *Elanus leucurus* We woke our first one from a deep slumber during our owl hunts at San Rafael.

Swallow-tailed Kite *Elanoides forficatus* Is there a more graceful raptor in the world?

Snail Kite *Rostrhamus sociabilis* The winkle-picker bills of this snail-eating kite were a familiar sight.

Rufous-thighed Kite *Harpagus diodon* A few birds soaring over the forest at San Rafael.

Plumbeous Kite *Ictinia plumbea* Somebody remind Chuck that he's already seen one!

Long-winged Harrier *Circus buffoni* Another gobsmackingly good raptor that gave gobsmackingly good views.

Rufous-thighed Hawk *Accipiter erythronemius* A couple of birds seen briefly in flight.

Crane Hawk *Geranospiza caerulescens* A bird at Toledo paraded around in front of us for several minutes.

Great Black Hawk *Buteogallus urubitinga* Where did they all go? This normally common raptor was seen only once.

Savanna Hawk *Heterospizias meridionalis* A common bird that can take your breath away.

Black-collared Hawk *Busarellus nigricollis* The white head of this fish hawk is unmistakable.

Harris's Hawk *Parabuteo unicinctus* Confined to the more arid areas of the Chaco, we saw several individuals.

Roadside Hawk *Rupornis magnirostris* Seen at roadsides, pondsides, streamsides, riversides, forestsides!

Short-tailed Hawk *Buteo brachyurus* A couple of singles seen.



A pair of charismatic waterbirds that are common in the Chaco, Limpkin and Giant Wood-Rail (Conny Palm).

- White-tailed Hawk** *Buteo albicaudatus* One had a real hard time trying to get a grip on a windy palm at Yacyreta.
- Zone-tailed Hawk** *Buteo albonotatus* A brief fly past of this vulture mimic close to the one horse town of La Patria.
- Laughing Falcon** *Herpetotheres cachinnans* This big head wasn't laughing as a bolshie mockingbird mobbed him.
- Collared Forest-falcon** *Micrastur semitorquatus* (H) Heard at Estancia Nueva Gambach.
- Southern Caracara** *Caracara plancus* More than you could shake a stick at.
- Yellow-headed Caracara** *Milvago chimachima* Several birds seen at low density throughout the country.
- Chimango Caracara** *Milvago chimango* "Don't waste bullets on Chimangos" so the Argentinean's say.
- American Kestrel** *Falco sparverius* A ubiquitous little falcon that rewarded those who took the time to look at him.



The remarkable flooding in the Central Chaco meant that even a Black Skimmer made its way into one of the world's driest regions!
(Conny Palm)

Aplomado Falcon *Falco femoralis* Several pairs of this "hobby-like" bird hunter were seen in the Chaco.

Bat Falcon *Falco ruficularis* One at a very dry Lagunita.

Peregrine Falcon *Falco peregrinus* A bird hunting martins at Asunción airport was our top tick for the airport car park!

Limpkin *Aramus guarauna* You wouldn't think there were enough snails around to feed them all would you?

Giant Wood-Rail *Aramides ypecaha* The ubiquitous Giant Wood-Rail didn't let us down! Stonker!

Grey-necked Wood-Rail *Aramides cajanea* (H) Heard by Hugo at Yacyreta

Slaty-breasted Wood-Rail *Aramides saracura* It was worth getting wet for our close encounter with this elusive rail.

[Crake *Laterallus* sp. (H) A heard briefly: Rufous-sided (*L. melanophaius*) or Red-and-white Crake (*L. leucopyrrhus*)?]

Ash-throated Crake *Porzana albicollis* (H) Heard in a few localities, including an evening chorus at Kanguery.

Chestnut-crowned Crake *Anurolimnas viridis* (H) No more than a few feet from us in dense vegetation.

Spotted Rail *Pardirallus maculatus* (H) The doradito bridge that promised so much, delivered only voices.

Blackish Rail *Pardirallus nigricans* (H) This long-nose was also heard at the marsh in Estancia Nueva Gambach.

Common Gallinule *Gallinula galeata* This recent split is just as common as it was when it was still a Moorhen!

Purple Gallinule *Porphyrio martinica* An adult at a large waterhole just outside Loma Plata.

White-winged Coot *Fulica leucoptera* Another winter migrant enjoying the Indian Spring in the Chaco.

Red-legged Seriema *Cariama cristata* (NL) Kevin and Janet saw an individual making Usain Bolt look like a snail.



A pair of botfly infested chicks of a *Leptotila* dove at San Rafael (Paul Smith).

Black-legged Seriema (◇) *Chunga burmeisteri* The lucky gate will stick long in the memory thanks to this bird.

Southern Lapwing *Vanellus chilensis* It would be pretty hard to miss wouldn't it!?

American Golden-Plover *Pluvialis dominica* Several prancing about at Laguna Ganso were added to all our lists.

Collared Plover *Charadrius collaris* And darting about at the same place were these little guys.

Black-necked Stilt *Himantopus mexicanus* Leggy waders that adorned many a roadside pond in the Central Chaco.

South American Snipe *Gallinago paraguaiæ* Two flushed repeatedly under protest at Isla Yacyreta.

Giant Snipe (◇) *Gallinago undulata* (H) Several were heard at dusk at Laguna Blanca.

Upland Sandpiper *Bartramia longicauda* (NL) Dan was lucky enough to observe a migrating flock of 17 at Toledo.

Greater Yellowlegs *Tringa melanoleuca* They are easy to spot when they are surrounded by Lesser Yellowlegs!

Lesser Yellowlegs *Tringa flavipes* A common migrant wader in the Central Chaco.

Solitary Sandpiper *Tringa solitaria* Rarely encountered alone despite the name, we saw lots of them in the Chaco.

Pectoral Sandpiper *Calidris melanotos* Plenty of pecks on show during this trip, though everybody kept their shirt on.

Stilt Sandpiper *Calidris himantopus* Three at Laguna Lucero.

Wilson's Phalarope *Phalaropus tricolor* Spinning mindlessly in circles a flock of 20 at Laguna Ganso.

Wattled Jacana *Jacana jacana* A pleasingly abundant species on roadside ponds, some pairs with cute chicks.

Yellow-billed Tern *Sternula superciliaris* One on the Rio Paraná.

Large-billed Tern *Phaetusa simplex* Several, including some wanderers in an unseasonably wet Dry Chaco.

Black Skimmer *Rynchops niger* Another holiday-maker at Laguna Ganso.

Ruddy Ground-dove *Columbina talpacoti* In eastern Paraguay the red soils provide surprisingly good camouflage.

Picui Ground-dove *Columbina picui* How many millions of these did we see?

Blue Ground-dove *Claravis pretiosa* A cooperative pair posed for photos on the forest trail at Mbaracayú.

Rock Pigeon *Columba livia* Bird of the trip? Maybe not!

Picazuro Pigeon *Patagioenas picazuro* Remember! White wing bands. Seen almost everywhere.

Pale-vented Pigeon *Patagioenas cayennensis* And no white wing bands. Several at San Rafael.

Eared Dove *Zenaida auriculata* Competing with Picui Ground-dove for the highest trip count of any species.

White-tipped Dove *Leptotila verreauxi* Common throughout the trip and a nest at Estancia Nueva Gambach.

Grey-fronted Dove *Leptotila rufaxilla* A pair at San Rafael!

Ruddy Quail-dove *Geotrygon montana* Leader's find of the trip was a nest of this elusive forest dove at San Rafael.

Blue-crowned Parakeet *Aratinga acuticaudata* Raucous shrieks marked the arrival of a flock of this Chaco parakeet.

White-eyed Parakeet *Aratinga leucophthalma* But in the humid forest raucous shrieks marked the arrival of this sp.

Nanday Parakeet *Nandayus nenday* Small flocks seen daily in the Chaco.

Maroon-bellied Parakeet *Pyrhura frontalis* A common parakeet, but getting decent views is somewhat difficult.



This Nacunda Nighthawk almost escaped detection in the Central Chaco (Dan Guthrie).



This male Blond-crested Woodpecker watched us suspiciously from his nest hole for several minutes at San Rafael (Paul Smith).

- Blue-winged Parrotlet** *Forpus xanthopterygius* How on earth did Janet spot that tiny little thing in that big tall tree?
- Yellow-chevroned Parakeet** *Brotogeris chiriri* A common, budgie-shaped parakeet, even in the centre of Asunción.
- Monk Parakeet** *Myiopsitta monachus* In the Chaco every telegraph pole has a large stick nest hanging from it.
- Red-capped Parrot** *Pionopsitta pileata* Fly-overs only of this Atlantic Forest endemic, instantly recognizable on call.
- Scaly-headed Parrot** *Pionus maximiliani* Most of us were familiar with the distinctive call of this common parrot.
- Blue-fronted Amazon** *Amazona aestiva* The abundance of this stunner in the Chaco raised a few eyebrows.
- Squirrel Cuckoo** *Piaya cayana* A wonderful bird that would be much sought after if it weren't so easy to see.
- Dark-billed Cuckoo** *Coccyzus melacoryphus* An obliging bird in the Central Chaco.
- Greater Ani** *Crotophaga major* Turkey like gobbles announced the presence of this creeping cuckoo.
- Smooth-billed Ani** *Crotophaga ani* More than enough seen to sate the appetite of any aniphile.
- Guira Cuckoo** *Guira guira* Like rats in New York City, you are never more than a few meters from Guira Cuckoos.
- Striped Cuckoo** *Tapera naevia* Several heard, one seen at Arroyos y Esteros.
- Barn Owl** *Tyto alba* A ghostly white spectre haunting the eucalypts at Laguna Blanca.
- Tropical Screech Owl** *Megascops choliba* We didn't see one until night owl Roger spotted one at L. Blanca.
- Black-capped Screech-owl** *Megascops atricapillus* One very obliging bird posed for the paparazzi at Mbaracayú.
- Great Horned Owl** *Bubo virginianus* (NL) Dan had a glimpse of one.
- Chaco Owl** (◇) *Strix chacoensis* "Heard only so far, but don't mark it on your list yet in case it appears this evening!!".
- Ferruginous Pygmy-owl** *Glaucidium brasilianum* Half heard turned out to be Dan, but we did see a real one.
- Burrowing Owl** *Athene cunicularia* We saw enough of these to fill a landfill site, never mind a burrow.
- Common Potoo** *Nyctibius griseus* Alistair's comment "where does the stick end and the bird begin" sums it up.
- Short-tailed Nighthawk** *Lurocalis semitorquatus* The call trick is good isn't it?!
- Nacunda Nighthawk** *Podager nacunda* Hawkeye Dan put us all to shame when he spotted this cryptic croucher.
- Common Pauraque** *Nyctidromus albicollis* Four or five a night at Estancia Nueva Gambach and a few elsewhere.
- Rufous Nightjar** *Caprimulgus rufus* (H) Despite lots of vocal activity we never did manage to see one on this trip.
- Silky-tailed Nightjar** *Caprimulgus sericocaudatus* (H) One bird called briefly around midnight on the 1st night at SR.

White-winged Nightjar (◇) *Caprimulgus candicans* (EN) Is anybody likely to ever forget this encounter with a male?
Little Nightjar *Caprimulgus parvulus* We just kept on bumping into him almost everywhere we went.
Scissor-tailed Nightjar *Hydropsalis torquata* Surprisingly thin on the ground this year.
Sickle-winged Nightjar (◇) *Eleothreptus anomalus* (NT) We had at least five birds sitting close for naked eye views.
Great Dusky Swift *Cypseloides senex* The Monday Falls on a Sunday, with 500 swifts swirling for our entertainment.
Grey-rumped Swift *Chaetura cinereiventris* A few drinkers at the lake in San Rafael.
Sick's Swift *Chaetura meridionalis* Six Sick's Swifts on the 23rd, and lots more other days.
Planalto Hermit *Phaethornis pretrei* One out of place bird at San Rafael.
Scale-throated Hermit *Phaethornis eurynome* Several birds at the same location were seen briefly by some.
Black-throated Mango *Anthracothorax nigricollis* One female hanging around the house at Mbaracayú.
Blue-tufted Starthroat *Helimaster furcifer* By far the commonest hummer in the Chaco.
Glittering-bellied Emerald *Chlorostilbon lucidus* The dumpy Emerald looks like his gemstone namesake.
Plovercrest *Stephanoxis lalandi* Despite its scratchy calls being heard often only one was glimpsed at San Rafael.
Gilded Hummingbird *Hylocharis chrysura* Rather dull compared to other hummers, but a tick is a tick.



Two common Furnariids of the Humid Chaco are Greater Thornbird and Yellow-chinned Spinetail (Conny Palm).

Surucua Trogon *Trogon surrucura* Typically tame, this species posed for everybody on several occasions.
Black-throated Trogon *Trogon rufus* A male that was spotlighted at night on the road back from Kanguery.
Ringed Kingfisher *Megaceryle torquata* A giant fisherman, and a common sitter on telephone wires on roadsides.
Amazon Kingfisher *Chloroceryle amazona* Machine gun calls preceded a torpedo-like flight on several occasions.
Green Kingfisher *Chloroceryle americana* The Amazon Kingfisher's version of Mini Me, we saw just one.
Rufous-capped Motmot *Barythengus ruficapillus* One darting across a road at Mbaracayú.
Buff-bellied Puffbird *Notharchus swainsoni* The forest trail at Lagunita blessed us with a compliant individual.
White-eared Puffbird *Nystalus chacuru* We managed to scope this cracker at Kanguery.
Spot-backed Puffbird *Nystalus maculatus* Kingfisher-like Chaco Puffbird that everybody appreciated.
Toco Toucan *Ramphastos toco* (LO) This one gets chalked down as leader only twice with distant flight views.
Red-breasted Toucan *Ramphastos dicolorus* (H) The bigger the toucan, the harder it is to see is apparently the rule.
Spot-billed Toucan *Selenidera maculirostris* Wonderful views of a croaking male and then a tranquil.
Saffron Toucanet (◇) *Pteroglossus bailloni* (NT) A pair of "banana araçaris" showing well at Mbaracayú.
Chestnut-eared Aracari *Pteroglossus castanotis* A wet bird flapping soggly across a road seen by Paul and Kevin.
White-barred Piculet *Picumnus cirratus* Everybody was charmed by the pair at Enciso.
Ochre-collared Piculet *Picumnus temminckii* Just as they were by the pair of this one at San Rafael.
White Woodpecker *Melanerpes candidus* These guys let you know they're coming long before they come into view.
Yellow-fronted Woodpecker *Melanerpes flavifrons* (H) What a shame that this beauty's only appearance was vocal.
White-fronted Woodpecker *Melanerpes cactorum* The "cactus woodpecker" was a common sight in the Chaco.
White-spotted Woodpecker *Veniliornis spilogaster* The most seen unticked bird in the history of Birdquest.



Two giant insects that were in with a shout for bird of the day!! *Dysdaemonia fosteri* (Saturniidae) at Mbaracayú and *Acrocinum longimanum* (Cerambycidae) at San Rafael (Paul Smith)

- Checkered Woodpecker** *Veniliornis mixtus* Another common little Chaco woodpecker seen on numerous occasions.
- Little Woodpecker** *Veniliornis passerinus* Three birds at Isla Yacyreta, including one at a nest.
- Green-barred Woodpecker** *Colaptes melanochloros* One that Roger dug out during his lunchless lunch breaks.
- Campo Flicker** *Colaptes campestris* One at Arroyos y Esteros sitting on a termite mound above her nest.
- Pale-crested Woodpecker** *Celeus lugubris* (LO) Brief view at Yacyreta.
- Blond-crested Woodpecker** *Celeus flavescens* A head poking out of a hole in a tree was a male at his nest.
- Helmeted Woodpecker** (◇) *Dryocopus galeatus* (VU) Two on one day and one the day before.
- Robust Woodpecker** *Campephilus robustus* Hammering on the fruitful (not fruit full!) tree at Mbaracayú.
- Cream-backed Woodpecker** *Campephilus leucopogon* A Chaco endemic "Bobby Dazzler" that we all enjoyed.
- Rufous Hornero** *Furnarius rufus* Ok let me think, where didn't we see this one?
- Crested Hornero** *Furnarius cristatus* Just as ubiquitous as his rufous cousin in the dry Chaco.
- Chotoy Spinetail** *Schoeniophylax phryganophilus* With a scientific name as long as his ridiculously long tail.
- Rufous-capped Spinetail** *Synallaxis ruficapilla* Abundant in the San Rafael forests, we had to work for a good view.
- Grey-bellied Spinetail** *Synallaxis cinerascens* Elusive but worth the effort.
- Sooty-fronted Spinetail** *Synallaxis frontalis* One Chaco bird put us through the usual game of cat and mouse.
- Pale-breasted Spinetail** *Synallaxis albescens* Same old story at Laguna Blanca, but we get there in the end.
- Spix's Spinetail** *Synallaxis spixi* And the prize for most reluctant spinetail goes to
- Stripe-crowned Spinetail** *Cranioleuca pyrrhophia* Great views at Toledo of a playback sucker.
- Olive Spinetail** *Cranioleuca obsoleta* (H) Sadly his Atlantic Forest cousin was less gullible and was heard only.
- Yellow-chinned Spinetail** *Certhiaxis cinnamomeus* Lots of these in marshlands throughout the country.
- Short-billed Canastero** *Asthenes baeri* A pair accompanying our Stripe-crowned Spinetail on the same branch.
- Little Thornbird** *Phacellodomus sibilatrix* The smallest of the thornbirds, we saw lots attending their hanging nests.
- Greater Thornbird** *Phacellodomus* Prolonged views of one bird on the first day got us off to a good start.
- Lark-like Brushrunner** *Coryphistera alaudina* A common and charismatic Chaco bird that everybody loves.
- Brown Cacholote** *Pseudoseisura lophotes* The mega-nest outside the rooms at Enciso is still there.
- Chaco Earthcreeper** *Tarphonomus certhioides* We squelched our way to this tick, still singing as we walked away.
- Buff-browed Foliage-gleaner** *Syndactyla rufosuperciliata* (H) Distinctive prattling chatter from this forest furnariid.
- Ochre-breasted Foliage-gleaner** *Philydor lichtensteini* Seen well by some of us at San Rafael.
- Buff-fronted Foliage-gleaner** *Philydor rufum* Those that chased a singing bird at Lagunita got the views they sought.
- White-eyed Foliage-gleaner** *Automolus leucophthalmus* Whizzing back and forth across a San Rafael trail.
- Sharp-tailed Streamcreeper** *Lochmias nematura* (H) Heard on the Lagunita forest trail.
- Thrush-like Woodcreeper** *Dendrocincla turdina* (H) This normally reliable woodcreeper refused to respond.
- Olivaceous Woodcreeper** *Sittasomus griseicapillus* Lots of these in the Paraná forests.
- Scimitar-billed Woodcreeper** *Drymornis bridgesii* Large woodcreeper with a tonne of personality in his scimitar bill.
- White-throated Woodcreeper** *Xiphocolaptes albicollis* (H) Called one morning, but the bird itself remained elusive.
- Great Rufous Woodcreeper** *Xiphocolaptes major* Jim had stellar views of the first one near the house at Enciso.
- Planalto Woodcreeper** *Dendrocolaptes platyrostris* A large forest woodcreeper that knows how to cooperate.



Conspicuous and noisy, the in your face Brown Cacholote (Aldo Fretes).

- Narrow-billed Woodcreeper** *Lepidocolaptes angustirostris* The commonest woodcreeper in the Chaco.
- Red-billed Scythebill** *Campylorhamphus trochilirostris* Mad bill. Great bird. Seen at Enciso.
- Spot-backed Antshrike** *Hypodaleus guttatus* Fine views of this fine bird at San Rafael after days of hearing them.
- Tufted Antshrike** *Mackenziaena severa* Nice views of a male, more fleeting views of a female, at San Rafael.
- Great Antshrike** *Taraba major* Two seen in the Chaco but many more lurking in the undergrowth.
- Barred Antshrike** *Thamnophilus doliatus* A great male singing at Campo León in his prison uniform plumage.
- Variable Antshrike** *Thamnophilus caerulescens* Two seen at Enciso, several heard almost everywhere else.
- Plain Antwren** *Dysithamnus mentalis* After seeing this bird well, its "bouncing bird" call was a familiar companion.
- Stripe-backed Antbird** *Myrmorchilus strigilatus* Intrepid bushwhackers Kevin, Roger and Janet tracked it down.
- Rufous-winged Antwren** *Herpsilochmus rufimarginatus* Where do they get their energy from?
- Dusky-tailed Antbird** *Drymophila malura* The bamboo "bouncing ball" caller. Elusive but common at San Rafael.
- Streak-capped Antwren** *Terenura maculata* A good old fashioned canopy neck breaker.
- White-shouldered Fire-eye** *Pyriglena leucoptera* An agitated male at San Rafael and many more heard besides.
- Short-tailed Antthrush** *Chamaeza campanisona* (H) We chased this one for a while at San Rafael without success.
- Variegated Antpitta** *Grallaria varia* (H) Distant calling birds heard daily at San Rafael.
- Speckle-breasted Antpitta** *Hylopezus nattereri* (H) Close enough to almost reach out and touch it at San Rafael!
- Rufous Gnateater** *Conopophaga lineata* One posed unashamedly on a track at San Rafael.
- Crested Gallito** (◊) *Rhinocrypta lanceolata* This Chaco speciality gave us views that were well worth waiting for.
- Collared Crescentchest** (◊) *Melanopareia torquata* One of the most memorable moments of the tour.
- Olive-crowned Crescentchest** (◊) *Melanopareia maximiliani* The "chaco crescentchest" took a bit more work.
- Rough-legged Tyrannulet** *Phyllomyias burmeisteri* Singing from the exact same spot as on the last BQ tour.
- Grey Elaenia** *Myiopagis caniceps* A pair in the well-watched tree outside the Mbaracayú accommodation.
- Greenish Elaenia** *Myiopagis viridicata* One at San Rafael and a calling bird at Yacyreta.
- Yellow-bellied Elaenia** *Elaenia flavogaster* Several of these seen all coincidentally having the same bad hair day.



Two flycatchers with voice more impressive than plumage, Sepia-capped Flycatcher and Southern Beardless-Tyrannulet (Paul Smith).

- Large Elaenia** *Elaenia spectabilis* A nesting bird at the house in San Rafael gave us a great view of her tail.
- White-crested Elaenia** *Elaenia albiceps* One showing of his crest in a *Cecropia* at Yacyreta.
- Small-billed Elaenia** *Elaenia parvirostris* An unobtrusive individual in the Central Chaco.
- Southern Beardless-Tyrannulet** *Camptostoma obsoletum* Our first pair put on a real show of bravado at Toledo.
- Suiriri Flycatcher** *Suiriri suiriri* Suiriri is the Guaraní word for a flycatcher.
- Yellow Tyrannulet** *Capsiempis flaveola* A larger than life trio took issue with our playback at San Rafael.
- Southern Scrub-flycatcher** *Sublegatus modestus* Two stub-billed birds at Enciso.
- Plain Tyrannulet** *Inezia inornata* You couldn't walk ten yards in the Chaco without one singing at you.
- Sharp-tailed Tyrant** (♠) *Culicivora caudacuta* (VU) The caudacutest little grassland flycatchers you will ever see.
- Bearded Tachuri** (♠) *Polystictus pectoralis* (NT) The friendly male at Kanguery was a show-stopper.
- Southern Antpipit** *Corythopis delalandi* We had to spin on a sixpence to keep up with the flybys of this bird.
- Tawny-crowned Pygmy-tyrant** *Euscarthmus meloryphus* The scratchy calls of this LBJ alerted us to his presence.
- Greater Wagtail-tyrant** *Stigmatura budytoides* A charismatic yellow long tail who doesn't like trespassers.
- Grey-hooded Flycatcher** *Mionectes rufiventris* We all agree that the field guide illustrations don't do it justice.
- Sepia-capped Flycatcher** *Leptopogon amaurocephalus* A subtly marked forest flycatcher seen at San Rafael.
- Eared Pygmy-tyrant** *Myiornis auricularis* Ticking away like a tiny fluffy clock, a pea-sized flycatcher.
- Drab-breasted Pygmy-tyrant** *Hemitriccus diops* We never did find out what that bold group of three was up to.
- Pearly-vented Tody-tyrant** *Hemitriccus margaritaceiventer* Ubiquitous, though it may not always have seemed so.
- Ochre-faced Tody-flycatcher** *Poecilotriccus plumbeiceps* Those flatulent noises coming from bamboo tangles.
- Yellow-olive Flycatcher** *Tolmomyias sulphurescens* Usually common, but thin on the ground during this tour.
- White-throated Spadebill** *Platyrinchus mystaceus* Janet and Kevin hoped to see one, and eventually did.
- Bran-coloured Flycatcher** *Myiophobus fasciatus* (H) Sounds like a laughing horse!
- Euler's Flycatcher** *Lathrotriccus euleri* Some pronounce it "Oiler's Flycatcher", but ours responded to "Yoolers".
- Fuscous Flycatcher** *Cnemotriccus fuscatus* (LO) One feeding on fruit near the guard station at Aguara Ñu.
- Vermillion Flycatcher** *Pyrocephalus rubinus* This ruby-red blob of feathered brilliance was common in the Chaco.
- Spectacled Tyrant** *Hymenops perspicillatus* A pristine male posed for photos in the Chaco.
- Grey Monjita** *Xolmis cinereus* One on the Trans Chaco road heading back to Asunción.
- White-rumped Monjita** *Xolmis velatus* We found the undescribed nest of this bird in a tractor at Laguna Blanca!!
- White Monjita** *Xolmis irupero* Sat like giant snowflakes on the top of low Chaco bushes visible kilometres away
- Streamer-tailed Tyrant** *Gubernetes yetapa* What a bird! Several at the marshes en route to Laguna Blanca.
- Black-backed Water-tyrant** *Fluvicola albiventer* Common in the central Chaco in oddly flooded surroundings.
- White-headed Marsh-tyrant** *Fluvicola leucocephala* Black body, white head, unmistakable.
- Cock-tailed Tyrant** (♠) *Alectrurus tricolor* (VU) A fast disappearing grassland flycatcher.
- Strange-tailed Tyrant** (♠) *Alectrurus risora* (VU) Words cannot express what it means to see a displaying male.
- Long-tailed Tyrant** *Colonia colonus* A not quite so long-tailed female was the only one seen at San Rafael.
- Cattle Tyrant** *Machetornis rixosa* Frequent in open areas in eastern Paraguay.
- Piratic Flycatcher** *Legatus leucophaeus* A singing pair in bad light on our first day in San Rafael.



The hiccupy calls of the Streaked Flycatcher were a familiar sound throughout the trip (Conny Palm).

- Social Flycatcher** *Myiozetetes similis* One anti-social flycatcher on his own at the stream in San Rafael.
- Great Kiskadee** *Pitangus sulphuratus* Everywhere.
- Streaked Flycatcher** *Myiodynastes maculatus* Everywhere there was forest.
- Boat-billed Flycatcher** *Megarynchus pitangua* We shared the parental concern for the drenched fledgling.
- Variegated Flycatcher** *Empidonomus varius* Some of these around in the humid forests, but not a lifer for anybody.
- Crowned Slaty-flycatcher** *Empidonomus aurantioatrocristatus* Super abundant in the Chaco.
- Tropical Kingbird** *Tyrannus melancholicus* Super abundant everywhere.
- Fork-tailed Flycatcher** *Tyrannus savana* Abundant everywhere, though not quite qualifying as super abundant.
- Sirystes** *Sirystes sibilator* Do these things ever shut up? Heard constantly in the humid forests.
- Rufous Casiornis** *Casiornis rufus* One bird seen well by everybody on a Central Chaco road.
- Swainson's Flycatcher** *Myiarchus swainsoni* A cooperative pair seen at San Rafael.
- Short-crested Flycatcher** *Myiarchus ferox* The dullest of the Paraguayan *Myiarchus* seen at Laguna Blanca.
- Brown-crested Flycatcher** *Myiarchus tyrannulus* The brightest *Myiarchus* (but not much brighter than the dullest!).
- Sharpbill** *Oxyruncus cristatus* Not a falling bomb, a calling Sharpbill. Look up, he is right above us!
- Bare-throated Bellbird** (♠) *Procnias nudicollis* (VU) Paraguay's national bird was a favourite with Alistair.
- White-bearded Manakin** *Manacus manacus* (H) Wing noises heard on a few occasions at Mbaracayú but none seen.
- Swallow-tailed Manakin** *Chiroxiphia caudata* Ooohs and aaahs greeted our sightings of this electric blue beastie.
- Black-crowned Tityra** *Tityra inquisitor* Tityras up! This species was ever present in the canopy in the humid forest.
- Black-tailed Tityra** *Tityra cayana* As was this one!
- Masked Tityra** *Tityra semifasciata* Recently colonizing Paraguay, it's not an uncommon species at all.
- Greenish Schiffornis** *Schiffornis virescens* Dull olive skulkers in dense forest don't usually make for the best views.
- Green-backed Becard** *Pachyramphus viridis* After initially responding rapidly to playback, it quickly lost interest.
- Chestnut-crowned Becard** *Pachyramphus castaneus* One at San Rafael.
- White-winged Becard** *Pachyramphus polychopterus* A pair at San Rafael got it on our seen list.
- Crested Becard** *Pachyramphus validus* A pair with a nest at Mbaracayú.
- Wing-barred Piprites** *Piprites chloris* One seen well by all, and tuneless whistles offending our ear drums.
- Rufous-browed Peppershrike** *Cyclarhis gujanensis* The classic "heard more often than seen" species.
- Red-eyed Vireo** *Vireo olivaceus* Not uncommon, and seen in the Central Chaco.

Purplish Jay *Cyanocorax cyanomelas* Mbaracayú and Laguna Blanca were the main haunts of this dull corvid.
Curl-crested Jay (◇) *Cyanocorax cristatellus* Curl-crested cerrado corvids. Cracking!
Plush-crested Jay *Cyanocorax chrysops* Hammer-headed jays that were seen commonly throughout our trip.
Blue-and-white Swallow *Pygochelidon cyanoleuca* Black vents identify this little swallow, over the hotel at CDE.
Tawny-headed Swallow *Alopocheidon fucata* This attractive little grassland swallow courted us at Kanguery.
Southern Rough-winged Swallow *Stelgidopteryx ruficollis* One sitting on a wheel in the lake at San Rafael.
Brown-chested Martin *Progne tapera* The second most commonly seen swallow throughout the country.
Grey-chested Martin *Progne chalybea* After this one!
White-winged Swallow *Tachycineta albiventer* A couple on the Paraná river.
White-rumped Swallow *Tachycineta leucorrhoa* Odd groups of a few individuals seen throughout the country.
Barn Swallow *Hirundo rustica* A familiar face in the Low Chaco and along the Paraná river near Ayolas.
House Wren *Troglodytes aedon* Show me a house in Paraguay and I'll show you a house wren.
Sedge Wren *Cistothorus platensis* Weirdly localised in Paraguay, we saw three at Kanguery.
Thrush-like Wren *Campylorhynchus turdinus* (H) Surprisingly heard only once during this tour at Laguna Blanca.



Two handsome saltators, the cerrado Black-throated (left) and chaco Golden-billed (right) (Conny Palm).

Creamy-bellied Gnatcatcher *Polioptila lactea* (NT) A lovely pair of this near threatened Atlantic Forest endemic.
Masked Gnatcatcher *Polioptila dumicola* Rather less difficult to see, a constant companion in the Chaco.
Eastern Slaty-thrush *Turdus subalaris* Horrendous weather served as a backdrop for the horrendous clanging voice.
Pale-breasted Thrush *Turdus leucomelas* Plenty of these around in most of our localities in the eastern region.
Rufous-bellied Thrush *Turdus rufiventris* Common throughout.
Creamy-bellied Thrush *Turdus amaurochalinus* Ditto.
Chalk-browed Mockingbird *Mimus saturninus* A common Paraguayan mocker, low numbers at scattered locations.
White-banded Mockingbird *Mimus triurus* Strictly speaking a winter migrant, but several still hanging around.
Yellowish Pipit *Anthus lutescens* Some flushed from a baldy field en route to Kanguery.
Ochre-breasted Pipit (◇) *Anthus nattereri* (VU) Worth the effort wasn't it!? Lengthy top class encounter.
Red-crested Cardinal *Paroaria coronata* Pleasingly abundant in the Chaco, a real splash of colour.
Yellow-billed Cardinal *Paroaria capitata* Thin on the ground. Conny spotted one in the Chaco.
Magpie Tanager *Cissopis leverianus* Pairs of this boldly-marked and unmistakable bird were seen at Mbaracayú.
White-banded Tanager (◇) *Neothraupis fasciata* (NT) Lots of "shrike-like" tanagers cooperated with the group.
Hooded Tanager *Nemosia pileata* A pair at Isla Yacyreta performed for the crowd.
Orange-headed Tanager *Thlypopsis sordida* Common in the Yacyreta forest.
Chestnut-headed Tanager *Pyrrhocomma ruficeps* Several encounters with this secretive forest tanager in San Rafael.
White-rumped Tanager (◇) *Cypsnagra hirundinacea* Duets just for us, great looks at Laguna Blanca.
Black-goggled Tanager *Trichothraupis melanops* Chacking flocks of this bird were common at San Rafael.
Ruby-crowned Tanager *Tachyphonus coronatus* Several nice sightings including one showing off his ruby crown!
White-lined Tanager *Tachyphonus rufus* Some saw the male, some saw the female, everybody got the tick.
Sayaca Tanager *Thraupis sayaca* Blue flashes of joy that lit up most days on this trip.
Blue-and-yellow Tanager *Thraupis bonariensis* A Chaco male was a delight. A pair in San Rafael was a surprise.
Burnished-buff Tanager *Tangara cayana* A cloudy sky stopped us from seeing how badly burnished it can get.
Swallow Tanager *Tersina viridis* A number of these turquoise gems sallying around the accom. at Mbaracayú.

Blue Dacnis *Dacnis cayana* But just one of these turquoise gems at Lagunita.

Guira Tanager *Hemithraupis guira* This canopy tanager was seen often at San Rafael.



And two handsome seedeaters, a pair of near threatened Dark-throated at Arroyos y Esteros and the newly split Pearly-bellied at Kanguery (Paul Smith).

Chestnut-vented Conebill *Conirostrum speciosum* The tree outside the accommodation at Mbaracayú did it again.

Bananaquit *Coereba flaveola* Expanding its range rapidly in Paraguay, we had three at the hotel in Ciudad del Este.

Greyish Saltator *Saltator coerulescens* Most of us had ticked this off at breakfast in the hotel garden in Asunción!

Green-winged Saltator *Saltator similis* (H) Heard only at San Rafael.

Golden-billed Saltator *Saltator aurantirostris* Pleasingly easy to see throughout the Chaco.

Black-throated Saltator (◇) *Saltator atricollis* A bit like buses, we waited a while for the first one at Laguna Blanca.

Many-coloured Chaco-finch (◇) *Saltatricula multicolor* It is unusual for such a pretty bird to be as common as this.

Rufous-collared Sparrow *Zonotrichia capensis* Encountered with regularity at most localities throughout the trip.

Grassland Sparrow *Ammodramus humeralis* Common wherever there was grass.

Black-crested Finch (◇) *Lophospingus pusillus* Good looks at the Mohican on this distinctive little finch.

Long-tailed Reed-finch *Donacospiza albifrons* Three at Arroyos y Esteros including a pair nest building.

Black-capped Warbling-finch *Poospiza melanoleuca* A frequent member of Chaco mixed flocks.

Saffron Finch *Sicalis flaveola* Common throughout.

Grassland Yellow-finch *Sicalis luteola* A pair drinking from a puddle in Kanguery.

Wedge-tailed Grass-finch *Emberizoides herbicola* A hulking great finch of grassy areas.

Lesser Grass-finch *Emberizoides ypiranganus* A pair giving their unmistakable scratchy song came very close.

Great Pampa-finch *Embernagra platensis* Low numbers seen in wet grassy marshes in eastern Paraguay.

Blue-black Grassquit *Volatinia jacarina* We probably saw a lot more of these than we consciously recorded.

Temminck's Seedeater (◇) *Sporophila falcirostris* (VU) A threatened bamboo seedeater. A seriously good find.

Plumbeous Seedeater (◇) *Sporophila plumbea* The cerrado seedeater showed at Laguna Blanca.

Rusty-collared Seedeater *Sporophila collaris* Single males and odd females at Humid Chaco marshes.

Double-collared Seedeater *Sporophila caerulescens* We encountered this species frequently.

White-bellied Seedeater *Sporophila leucoptera* A singing male at Yacyreta.

Pearly-bellied Seedeater *Sporophila pileata* Recently split from Capped Seedeater *Sporophila bouvreuil*.

Tawny-bellied Seedeater *Sporophila hypoxantha* Odd birds at grassland sites.

Dark-throated Seedeater (◇) *Sporophila ruficollis* (NT) Several males in various states of undress.

Marsh Seedeater (◇) *Sporophila palustris* (EN) You know that when it's a lifer for Jim and Marion it's a good bird.

Saffron-billed Sparrow *Arremon flavirostris* The bird at Isla Yacyreta needed a bit of coaxing before it showed.

Pileated Finch *Coryphospingus cucullatus* One of the more commonly encountered species throughout this trip.

Lowland Hepatic-tanager *Piranga flava* (LO) One leader only male fly-by from the vehicle.

Red-crowned Ant-tanager *Habia rubica* Noisy undergrowth flocks at San Rafael afforded only brief glimpses.

Black-backed Grosbeak *Pheucticus aureoventris* A steady stream of these eye-catching birds seen daily in Enciso.

Blackish-blue Seedeater (◇) *Amaurospiza moesta* (NT) A responsive male of this near threatened ex-seedeater.

Ultramarine Grosbeak *Cyanocompsa brissonii* Singing males and the odd female in scattered forested localities.

Tropical Parula *Parula pitaiyumi* We heard a lot more than we saw. Odd birds in the canopy at San Rafael.

Masked Yellowthroat *Geothlypis aequinoctialis* Dan spotted the first in the Chaco. The rest of us caught up later.

Flavescent Warbler *Basileuterus flaveolus* Resplendently flavescent, one at point blank range at Laguna Blanca.

Golden-crowned Warbler *Basileuterus culicivorus* A constant bevy of these followed us in the humid forest.

White-browed Warbler *Basileuterus leucoblepharus* Known as "the sound of the Atlantic Forest".

Riverbank Warbler *Phaeothlypis rivularis* And the voice on this one isn't bad either! Great views at Mbaracayú.

Solitary Black Caci que *Cacicus solitarius* Another "solitary" that you rarely encounter alone.

Red-rumped Caci que *Cacicus haemorrhous* Weird voice! Red rumps were seen with ease at San Rafael.

Golden-winged Caci que *Archiplanus chrysopterus* Two birds, two nests, one egg. All at Isla Yacyreta.

Orange-backed Troupial *Icterus croconotus* (LO) Our only encounter with this cracker was a leader only view.

Variable Oriole *Icterus pyrrhopterus* A split from the Epaulet Oriole *Icterus cayennensis*.

Chopi Blackbird *Gnorimopsar chopi* A common blackbird in both regions.

Scarlet-headed Blackbird *Amblyramphus holosericeus* In the Wet Chaco on the 1st day and Yacyreta on the last.

Unicoloured Blackbird *Agelasticus cyanopus* A chisel-billed blackbird of flooded marshes.

Chestnut-capped Blackbird *Chrysomus ruficapillus* We had plenty of chances to see it well in the Humid Chaco.

Saffron-cowled Blackbird *Xanthopsar flavus* (VU) A lovely but rapidly declining marsh blackbird.

Yellow-rumped Marshbird *Pseudoleistes guirahuro* Equally lovely in his own way, but not so threatened.

Bay-winged Cowbird *Agelaioides badius* Common in the Chaco with flocks seen most days.

Screaming Cowbird *Molothrus rufoaxillaris* Lots in the Chaco (especially at Toledo) and more at Laguna Blanca.

Giant Cowbird *Molothrus oryzivorus* Hunch-backed cousin of the smaller cowbirds on our last full day at San Rafael.

Shiny Cowbird *Molothrus bonariensis* Shiny were all over the place.

White-browed Blackbird *Sturnella superciliaris* Barely an agricultural field was without a set of displaying males.

Purple-throated Euphonia *Euphonia chlorotica* Males constantly call out for somebody named Phoebe!

Violaceous Euphonia *Euphonia violacea* A pair like clockwork in the now famous tree by the Mbaracayú hotel.

Chestnut-bellied Euphonia *Euphonia pectoralis* Atlantic Forest endemic seen unsurprisingly in the Atlantic Forest.

Hooded Siskin *Sporagra magellanica* Small flocks on leaving Asunción and on our return.

House Sparrow *Passer domesticus* Too many!



Black Howler Monkey at Yacyreta and Diminutive Serotine crammed into the roost at Pirahú (Paul Smith).

MAMMALS

Larger Hairy Armadillo *Chaetophractus villosus* Several crossing the road in front of us in the dry Chaco.

Six-banded Armadillo *Euphractus sexcinctus* The largest of the armadillos we observed on this trip.

Southern Three-banded Armadillo *Tolypeutes matacus* (NT) Armadillo for breakfast anybody? Two at Enciso.

Forest Rabbit *Sylvilagus brasiliensis* Aldo spotted one streak in across the road one night.

Azara's Agouti *Dasyprocta azarai* (DD) Common on the forest trail at Isla Yacyreta.

Capybara *Hydrochoerus hydrochaeris* The front car observed one at night when leaving Isla Yacyreta.

Common Yellow-toothed Cavy *Galea musteloides* This is the Chaco guinea-pig seen by most of us.

Pampas Cavy *Cavia aperea* This is the guinea-pig of the eastern region, seen repeatedly by all of us.

Chacoan Mara *Dolichotis salinicola* Who can forget these charismatic rabbit, deery thingies..

Coypu *Myoscastor coipus* One vehicle was able to watch this large beaver-like rodent at leisure at Loma Plata.
Plains Vizcacha *Lagostomus maximus* Stripe-faced, hole-digging chinchillas. We saw 4+ on our night drive.
Puma *Puma concolor* One near Enciso that was seen by a few of us, another rapidly crossing a road at Mbaracayú.
Jaguarundi *Herpailurus yaguarondi* We were seeing this strange cat almost daily during the first week.
Geoffroy's Cat *Oncifelis geoffroyi* (NT) Brief views of two individuals in the Chaco.
Pampas Fox *Lycalopex gymnocercus* A handsome fox seen daily in the Chaco.



Chaco Mara, an unusual Chaco endemic mammal that is common in thorn forest (Aldo Fretes).

Maned Wolf *Chrysocyon brachyurus* (NT) A productive pee-break for Paul at Laguna Blanca!
Crab-eating Fox *Cerdocyon thous* Comfortingly tame at Mbaracayú where several were seen, even by day.
Seba's Short-tailed Bat *Carollia perspicillata* Product of the PLT inventory and presented to us by Ruby and Helen.
White-lined Broad-nosed Bat *Platyrrhinus lineatus* Prettiest of Ruby's bats, with a boldly-striped head.
Fringed Fruit-eating Bat *Artibeus fimbriatus* While this aggressive species was more like a winged gremlin!
Diminutive Serotine *Eptesicus diminutus* (DD) The Pirahú roost is the only known roost in the Chaco.
Riparian Myotis *Myotis riparius* Flying low over the lake at Estancia Nueva Gambach.
Black Myotis *Myotis nigricans* It also has a few of this, a more common bat, thrown in for good measure.
Brown Tufted Capuchin *Cebus libidinosus* Flashes of views of jumping monkeys at San Rafael.
Black Howler Monkey *Alouatta caraya* We were entertained by several show-off troops at Isla Yacyreta.
Collared Peccary *Pecari tajacu* Excellent views of a pair lazily crossing the road in the Central Chaco.
Grey Brocket *Mazama gouazoupira* Seen on a couple of occasions in the Chaco.

REPTILES

Scorpion Mud Turtle *Kinosternon scorpioides* One on a road hoping that his shell would take the vehicle's weight!
Yacare Caiman *Caiman yacare* Two individuals at roadside ponds in the Central Chaco area.
Western Collared Spiny Lizard *Tropidurus etheridgei* One trying hard to look invisible in the Enciso forest.

Eastern Collared Spiny Lizard *Tropidurus torquatus* Several on trees and fenceposts at Isla Yacyreta.
House Gecko *Hemidactylus mabouia* Around the lights at night at Hotel Portal del Sol in Asunción.
Wetzel's Diurnal Gecko *Lygodactylus wetzeli* A tiny day-time gecko on the tree next to the cacholote nest at Enciso.
Green Jungle Runner *Ameiva ameiva* (LO) A leader only lizard at Isla Po'í
Ocellated Whiptail Lizard *Cnemidophorus ocellifer* Janet spotted one of these next to the runway in Enciso.
Four-toed Whiptail Lizard *Teiurus teyou* The big handsome blue and green lizard with the long tail.
Black Tegu *Tupinambis meriana* We were seeing so many of these in the eastern forests that we stopped counting.
Red Tegu *Tupinambis rufescens* But we only saw one of his red-and-white Chaco counterparts.
Boa constrictor *Boa constrictor* A monster individual of the western race *occidentalis* blew us all away.
Indigo Snake *Drymarchon corais* A 2m long individual at Toledo the following day wasn't half bad either.



A 3m Boa Constrictor at Laguna Capitán left us all gobsmacked (Paul Smith).

AMPHIBIANS

Yellow-legged Snouted Tree-frog *Scinax fuscovarius* Alistair had one in his bathroom at Mbaracayú.
Lesser Snouted Tree-frog *Scinax nasicus* One at the lights at Hotel Tacuati seen by Paul and Roger.
Milky Tree-frog *Trachycephalus venulosus* The gigantic tree-frog that was making all the din at Hotel Tacuati.
Rococo Toad *Rhinella schneideri* The giant toad that everybody stops to take a look at. Common throughout the trip.
Ornate Forest Toad *Rhinella ornata* One in the bamboo at Mbaracayú

In addition to the five species seen above, the following 15 species were heard by leaders during the trip:

Lesser Tree-frog *Dendropsophus minutus* (H) Anywhere there was permanent water.
Blacksmith Tree-frog *Hypsiboas faber* (H) Loud tonk-a-tonk song on the way back from Kanguery.
Red-and-green Tree-frog *Hypsiboas punctata* (H) Quiet tek-a-tek heard at Laguna Blanca.

Purple-barred Tree-frog *Hypsiboas raniceps* (H) Kraa kraa commonly heard in the Chaco.
Paradox Frog *Pseudis paradoxus* (H) Heard at Toledo and Isla Yacyreta.
Paraguay Basin Adenomera *Adenomera diptyx* (H) Lots singing en route to Laguna Blanca.
Oven Frog *Leptodactylus bufoniu* (H) Thin whistled wheep, heard often in the Chaco.
Chaco Frog *Leptodactylus chaquensis* (H) In the Chaco, the frogs hopping across the roads were likely this sp.
Elena's Thin-toed Frog *Leptodactylus elenae* (H) Double whistle heard after dark in the Central Chaco.
Fuscous Frog *Leptodactylus fuscus* (H) Thin whistle like *bufonius* in San Rafael, where *bufonius* does not occur.
Ocellated Frog *Leptodactylus latrans* (H) Gulpy sounds in the Laguna Blanca grasslands.
Speckled-bellied Frog *Leptodactylus podicipinus* (H) PUT-PUT-PUT....., heard in wet areas in eastern Paraguay.
Pale-legged Dwarf Frog *Physalaemus albonotatus* (H) The "racing car frogs" in the bamboo pond at Mbaracayú.
Cuvier's Dwarf Frog *Physalaemus cuvieri* (H) Gow-gow-gow. Heard at least in Yacyreta and probably elsewhere.
Yellow-bellied Narrow-mouthed Frog *Elachistocleis bicolor* (H) An rapid, insect-like trill. Heard at Hotel Tacuati.



A toad and half, the frankly enormous Rococo Toad was seen regularly (Paul Smith)