



*"South America's Ivorybill", the Helmeted Woodpecker is a Paraguayan mega! (Paul Smith)*

# PARAGUAY

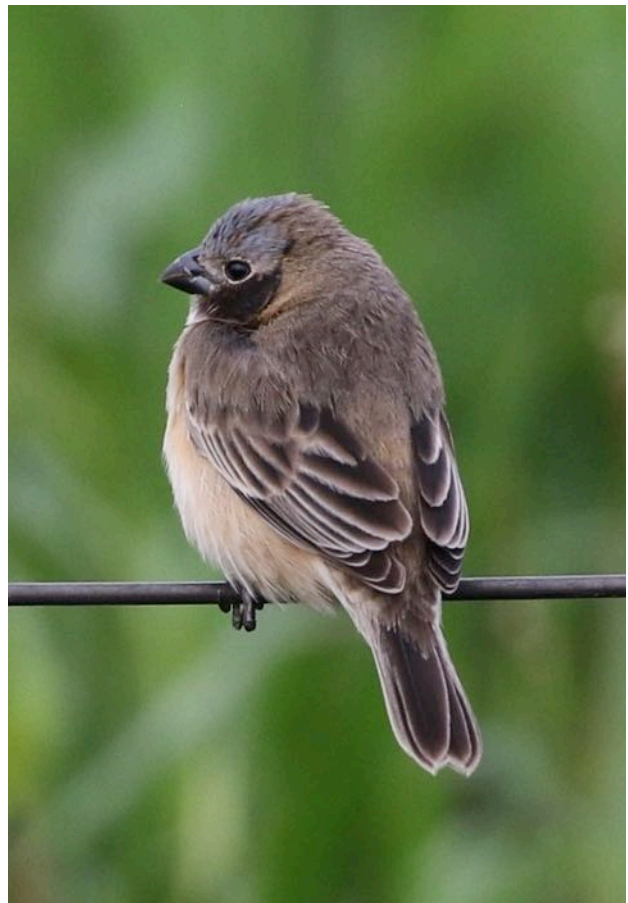
**15 SEPTEMBER – 2 OCTOBER 2017**

**LEADER: PAUL SMITH**

With just short of 400 birds and 17 mammals Paraguay once again proved why it is South America's fastest growing birding destination. The "Forgotten Heart of South America", may still be an "off the beaten track" destination that appeals mainly to adventurous birders, but thanks to some easy walking, stunning natural paradises and friendly, welcoming population, it is increasingly becoming a "must visit" country. And there is no wonder, with a consistent record for getting some of South America's super megas such as Helmeted Woodpecker, White-winged Nightjar, Russet-winged Spadebill and Saffron-cowled Blackbird, it has much to offer the bird-orientated visitor. Paraguay squeezes four threatened ecosystems into its relatively manageable national territory and this, Birdquest's fourth trip, visits all of them. As usual the trip gets off to flyer in the humid and dry Chaco; meanders through the rarely-visited Cerrado savannas; indulges in a new bird frenzy in the megadiverse Atlantic Forest; and signs off with a bang in the Mesopotamian flooded grasslands of southern Paraguay. This year's tour was a little earlier than usual, and we suffered some torrential rainstorms, but with frequent knee-trembling encounters with megas along the way it was one to remember.

Crakes would be something of a theme on this trip, and we started off with a belter in the pouring rain, the much sought after Grey-breasted Crake. Then it was off to the arid, thorny Chaco where we were charmed by endemics such as Black-legged Seriema, Chaco Owl, Quebracho-crested Tinamou and Dinelli's Doradito; Helmeted Woodpecker, Bare-throated Bellbird, Blackish-blue Seedeater and Russet-winged Spadebill were amongst the stars as the birds came thick and fast in the Atlantic Forest; White-winged Nightjar, Collared Crescentchest and Cock-tailed Tyrant made sure the Cerrado lived up to its burgeoning birding reputation; and Saffron-cowled Blackbird, Giant Snipe, Iberá Seedeater, and Strange-tailed Tyrant rounded off our time in the Mesopotamian grasslands in the south of the country. Those with a soft spot for mammals also had their fancies tickled as we had close encounters with Jaguarundi, Brazilian Tapir and Collared Peccary amongst others. And a goodbye meal at one of Asunción's top grill restaurants assured that everybody went home with a smile on their face!

Our trip began in torrential rain with a morning visit to the Bahía de Asunción. Recent reports of calling Grey-breasted Crake had come in, and we decided that it was too good an opportunity to miss. With our ponchos and umbrellas keeping the water off the lenses, and a little patience as we trampled through the marsh, we were eventually rewarded with some killer views of this hard to find species. Though we failed to locate Buff-breasted Sandpiper on the rainy river floodplain, we did augment our list with attractive waterbirds such as Large-billed and Yellow-billed Terns, Cocoi Heron, Collared Plover and Purple Gallinule, as well as city-dwellers Yellow-chevrons Parakeet and Barred Antshrike. After lunch it was off to Arroyos y Esteros, a wetland site 100km or so east of Asunción at an interface of Humid Chaco, Cerrado and Mesopotamian grassland habitats. Flocks of Maguari Stork and Great Egret were feeding in ricefields en route, whilst Snail Kite and Black-collared Hawk surfed the airways. We picked up Yellow-rumped Marshbird, Rusty-collared Seedeater, Long-tailed Reedfinch, a surprise Ringed Teal and the stunning and threatened Strange-tailed Tyrant before the rain drove us back to Asunción. We resolved to come back later in the trip when we could see further than the ends of our noses.



*Saffron-cowled Blackbird (Paul Smith) and Iberá Seedeater (Richard Greenhalgh) are threatened specialties of the Mesopotamian flooded grassland ecoregion*



The following morning whilst picking up ice and fuel for our long journey into the Chaco we were able to get a few of the common species that we would later get to know well, including Eared and Picui Ground-Doves, Rufous Hornero, Great Kiskadee, Saffron Finch, Sayaca Tanager and Shiny Cowbird whilst flocks of Grey-breasted Martin soared around our heads. 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.

Our first stop was at a seemingly ordinary bridge in a seemingly ordinary marsh in the vast wetlands that make up the Humid Chaco. Scarlet-headed Blackbird was the first bird to grace us with its appearance here, whilst Unicoloured Blackbird and Black-capped Donacobius were a vocal presence. Our target was Rufous-sided Crake though, and we picked up this secretive swamp dweller with a minimum of fuss with a bird parading around within a few feet of the observers. We would end the day with a list of over 100 species, including numerous species of waterbirds Great, Western Cattle and Snowy Egret, Whistling Heron, Jabiru, Wood and Maguari Stork, Wattled Jacana, Giant Wood Rail etc etc., whilst Roseate Spoonbills added droplets of pink colour into the mix. Savanna, Great Black and Roadside Hawks were abundant on roadside posts, Southern Caracara, Black and Turkey Vulture picked at roadkill and Lesser Yellow-headed Vulture harried over the marshes. The highlight of the morning though was perhaps one of the most understated birds we would encounter, Paraguay's second record of a tranquil, almost blasé Ticking Doradito. 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.



The imposing Chaco Owl (Paul Smith)

Pirahú can be a surprisingly productive place to bird, despite it being essentially a truckstop in nature! Great Rufous Woodcreeper, Red-crested Cardinal, Chalk-browed and White-banded Mockingbird, Scarlet Flycatcher, Great Antshrike and Green-barred Woodpecker were all on the dessert menu. From here we headed west a little further to fill our petrol tanks and tick off a cooperative pair of Firewood Gatherers who helpfully built their nest at the petrol station. During the afternoon we witnessed the transition from Humid Chaco to Dry Chaco, with the palms being replaced by the thorny, arid vegetation so typical of the region, peppered with Quebracho trees and the rotund midriff of the Palo borracho (bottle tree). Nanday Parakeets and Turquoise-fronted Amazon increased in abundance, whilst the bulky stick nests of the Monk Parakeet seemed to adorn every lamp post. A stop at the "Centre de Recherche" allowed us to scope out some waterbirds, Plumbeous, Buff-necked and Bare-faced Ibis being present, Limpkin in extraordinary numbers, and a number of ducks including Brazilian and Silver Teal, White-cheeked Pintail and White-faced Whistling Duck.

A series of lagoons as we arrived towards the Mennonite Colony of Loma Plata helped us round off a fine day with some significant waders, amongst them Buff-breasted and Upland Sandpipers, as well as the Masked Duck, which at least two of our trip participants had spent many years pursuing without success. There were ridiculous numbers of Common Gallinule on the aptly-named Moorhen Lake (ok we gave it that name ourselves!) and Coypu grazed like giant beavers in the grass. A flock of Greater Rhea later and it was time for dinner.

The following day would be our first exploring the Dry Chaco proper, and we headed east of Loma Plata to Laguna Capitán as soon as breakfast was over with. Pairs of Southern Screamer stalked the wetter areas, but our arrival at the salt lakes was greeted by Coscoroba Swan and large numbers of Ringed Teal. We would pick up numerous species of Nearctic waders here, both Yellowlegs, White-rumped, Solitary and Pectoral Sandpipers and dizzy flocks of Wilson's Phalarope. However it was to be during our forest walk that the Chaco specialities began to show themselves. Greater Wagtail-tyrant, Cinereous Tyrant, Rufous Casiornis, Black-capped Warbling Finch, Masked Gnatcatcher, Short-billed Canastero and Suiriri Flycatcher all showed well. Scimitar-billed Woodcreeper drew oohs and aahs from the observers and a frankly bonkers male Stripe-backed Antbird totally forgot the behavioural rules for its species and perched in the open within a couple of metres of the group to wolf-whistle at us for several minutes.



*The words "skulking denizen" are over-used by bird tour report writers. Here is one! Stripe-backed Antbird at Laguna Capitán (Paul Smith).*

But it wasn't to be the only skulking denizen that refuse to skulk that morning, just a few minutes later a Crested Gallito did something similar, rising up to the top of a low tree and angrily rebuffing the playback in full view of the group. As if that wasn't enough excitement for one morning, the gorgeous Olive-crowned Crescentchest also put on a show for us. This is a bird that may be split in future as Chaco Crescentchest.

During the afternoon we probed a little further east into the Cuenca Upper Yacaré Sur, first hitting Laguna Ganso where a pair of Chaco Earthcreepers are old friends. They didn't disappoint as they came out to greet us. A wonderful male Black-backed Grosbeak wasn't to be outdone either, and a brave Red-billed Scythebill decided to give us point blank views of his extraordinary appendage as he flew in to a fence post in front of us. From here we headed on in search of flocks of Chilean Flamingo, eventually finding them at Campo León. Larklike Brushrunners, Crested Horneros and Brown Cachalotes form part of a cast of Chaco Furnariids with snazzy crests, and they were all seen frequently, and we picked up two Chaco tinamous, Brushland and Chaco Nothura on the roads between the Mennonites farmlands.

The next morning we were heading west to the extreme Dry Chaco and Enciso National Park. Until very recently one of the worst roads on earth, the tarmacking is virtually complete and it is a comparatively leisurely journey now that allows for mammal-watching along the way, with Yellow-toothed Cavy and Chaco Mara visible on roadsides. American Kestrels become extremely abundant as you head north, as do Chaco Chachalaca, gliding across roads with their oily tails fanned. Harris Hawks also begin to increase in number and we were delighted to pick up our first Black-legged Seriema along the way. As if this wasn't enough, incredibly almost on arrival we had a covey of Quebracho Crested-Tinamous pass the accommodation block. We would see this species multiple times over the following days. But having bagged two Chaco megas without even breaking sweat, it was comforting to know that the resident pair of Chaco Owls would put in their appearance as soon as the sun began to go down and make it a hat-trick. Dicho y hecho, much to everybody's delight the male was soon singing from his usual flagpole.

The sound of abundant screeching Monk Parakeets awoke us on our first morning at Enciso as we took a pre-breakfast walk. There was a Crane Hawk by the pond and Harris Hawk and Sick's Swifts soared above our heads. Red Tanager and Cream-backed Woodpecker were nice additions, whilst we again had good views of common Chaco species such as Brown-crested Flycatcher, Rufous-browed Peppershrike, and Green-barred Woodpecker. Back at breakfast we saw a Glittering-bellied Emerald nesting under the eaves of the house and marveled at a Blue-tufted Starthroat dipping at cactus flowers in the perfect morning sunlight. After breakfast we took a while to sit by the pond to see what came in, being rewarded with a pair of King Vultures landing in low bushes just metres away and watching us warily for several minutes. The afternoon trip to Médanos del Chaco was disappointing, with extreme heat killing activity. We did however pick up Black-crested Finch in mixed flocks with Black-capped Warbling-finches, Red Pileated Finch and Many-coloured Chacofinch. With a little effort we also called out a drab Tawny-crowned Pygmy-tyrant, looking miserable in the heat. Our night drive back also got us some new nightbirds, including Burrowing Owl and Scissor-tailed Nightjar, as well as Grey Brocket Deer and charming Plains Viscacha. It had been a long and hot day, and we were all ready for Franci's delicious beefy barbecue when we got back.

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 great views of Orange-backed Troupials and Variable Orioles feeding on aloe flowers. After lunch at the Filadelfia Touring we headed to Fortín Toledo where Black-bodied Woodpecker was our main target. However despite repeated efforts, and even an early morning return the next day, we were to be unsuccessful in our efforts. Despite having almost exhausted the potential for new species amongst the Chaco avifauna we did get some other additions including Black-chested Buzzard-Eagle, White Woodpecker, Southern Beardless-Tyrannulet, Screaming Cowbird and Purplish Jay. Toledo is a famous site from the Chaco War and also the home of the Chaco Peccary breeding project – a species that was known only from subfossil remains until its remarkable rediscovery in Paraguay in the mid-1970s. On the way back to Asunción we were delighted with a compliant Dinelli's Doradito, whilst a brief stop at the Humedal Rio Verde produced great views of Nanday Parakeet, South American Snipe and Greater Thornbird.





*Common but “spiffing”. Plush-crested Jay and a nesting Lineated Woodpecker from San Rafael (Paul Smith).*

We were now ready for eastern Paraguay and the whole new batch of birds that would bring. First we headed south, but much to our dismay the weather had taken a significant turn for the worse. A cold front had sent temperatures plummeting just as we had got accustomed to baking heat. Now it was time for long sleeves and raincoats as the rain belted down and cold winds blasted up under our umbrellas. But this was a hardy group, and a little bit of Polar weather wasn't going to stop us trying. Our first locality in eastern Paraguay was Isla Yacyretá, and this afternoon was scheduled for the grassland part of the reserve. A mixed flock of swallows included late Chilean Swallow. We were also successful in flushing Spotted Nothura, snaring Streamer-tailed Tyrant and admired hardy Long-winged Harriers, but the Ochre-breasted Pipit didn't show – not that we can really blame it given the weather! The dreadful weather also cost us our other big target of the day, the Sickie-winged Nightjar. These birds don't fly during rain or wind, and we had both at once. Unfortunately this was our only shot at both of these birds. Two other nightbirds did brave the weather though, Little Nightjar and Nacunda Nighthawk. We hoped for better conditions the next day.

The following morning was also cold and wet, with a late lingering mist reducing visibility thrown into the mix. However we did pick up some nice birds in the Yacyreta gallery forest, notably a very cooperative Pheasant Cuckoo, a bird that several group members had been pursuing without success for many years. Other birds of interest in the forest here included Burnished Buff and Orange-headed Tanager, Grey-backed Sparrow (split from Saffron-billed), Little Woodpecker, Sooty-fronted and Olive Spinetails, Greenish Elaenia, Euler's, Streaked and Short-crested Flycatcher and Tawny-headed Swallow. With the weather showing no signs of improving we decided to cut our losses and head to San Rafael, arriving in a shroud of dense mist and drizzle that had accompanied us all day. San Rafael is the most biodiverse reserve in Paraguay with over 430 species recorded, and our hosts Hans and Christine Hostettler are famous for their hospitality and home-cooked food. We had three nights here to make the most of it.

Visibility was poor in the forest, but whilst that may have been a problem for the photographers, it also had some advantages. A flock of Rusty-margined Guan had emerged from the forest to feed on the road at the forest edge, whilst we were able to get decent views of Blackish Rail, which also felt more at ease emerging from cover in the murky conditions. A singing Surucua Trogon offered a splash of colour in the garden and a

White-spotted Woodpecker pecked away at a rotten trunk. We picked up some other Atlantic Forest endemics along the way too – including Rufous-capped Spinetail, White-rimmed Warbler and Ruby-crowned Tanager - whilst flocks of Maroon-bellied Parakeet and tiny Grey Elaenia and Rufous-winged Antwren were watched in the canopy. Sibilant Sirystes, Black-tailed Tityra, Magpie, Guira and Black-goggled Tanagers, and Crested Becard all assisted with a very respectable day list, despite the worst of conditions.

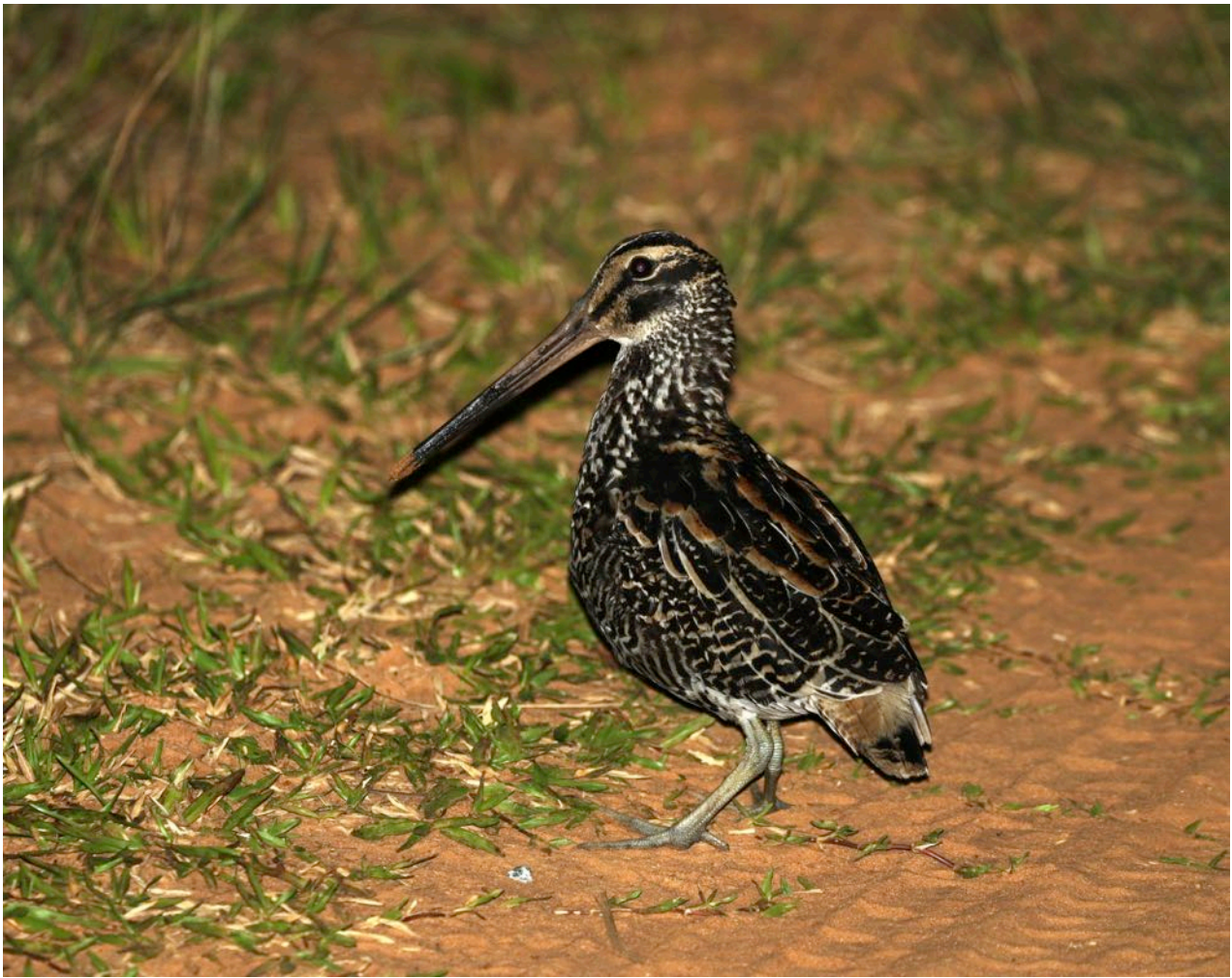


*Arroyos y Esteros is a fantastic place for rare wet grassland birds like the aptly-named Strange-tailed Tyrant and the near threatened Bearded Tachuri (Richard Greenhalgh).*

Conditions had changed the next morning. The drizzle had gone away, but the cloud cover was still there and the heat was back – it made for an extremely humid morning. We walked the Chachi Trail, but with good activity we didn't get very far along it, and had to turn back on ourselves in order to arrive in time for lunch. Nick spotted a calling Grey-headed Kite that soared around us giving A1 views, and it was soon joined by Plumbeous Kite for an attractive double. Grey-rumped Swift were drinking at the lake, whilst stunning Atlantic Forest endemics this morning included Yellow-fronted, Robust and Blond-crested Woodpecker, Spot-backed Antshrike, Streak-capped Antwren, Rufous-crowned Greenlet, Chestnut-bellied Euphonia and Spot-billed Toucanet. Not all Atlantic Forest endemics are brightly-coloured though, and we had some dull (but beautiful in their own way!) ones too, like Chestnut-headed Tanager, Grey-bellied Spinetail, White-shouldered Fire-eye, Eared Pygmy-tyrant and Ochre-breasted Foliage-gleaner. Not everything we saw was an ecoregion endemic, and there was a large supporting cast of other species, of which White-eyed Foliage-gleaner, Long-tailed Tyrant, Red-ruffed Fruitcrow, Sharpbill, Blue-naped Chlorophonia and Blue Dacnis are worthy of mention. Two tough near threatened endemics were also seen well, the charismatic Southern Bristle-tyrant and the bamboophilic Blackish-blue Seedeater. We also had great views of the Atlantic Forest subspecies of Ultramarine Grosbeak (*sterea*) a small, dark form with a less hulking bill that at least genetically has been confirmed as a separate species. After a wonderful lunch and a second cold shower of the day, we hit two shorter trails during the afternoon, continuing to add to our rapidly growing list. A nesting Lineated Woodpecker was a compliant photographic subject, White-throated Spadebill, Greenish Schiffornis and Wing-barred Piprites cooperated and we were closely approached by a curious Dusky-tailed Antbird in bamboo. However the highlight of the afternoon was a group of lekking Blue Manakin, which we sat and watched for an hour, the males ruffling their feathers and hopping over each other in perfect unison for the choosy females. After dark Tropical Screech Owl and Short-tailed Nighthawk put in an appearance.

Our last day in San Rafael would see us visit the Kanguery grasslands in the afternoon, but with several rail fans in the group we decided to spend a couple of hours hunting down Red-and-white Crake in the bromeliad marshes. With a little patience we were all able to get excellent views of this elusive species. Buoyed by the success we went after two more elusive species, the *Mackenziaena* antshrikes, scoring views of both Tufted and Large-tailed. Nick also picked up his much wanted Rufous-thighed Kite and majestic Swallow-tailed Kites were a sight for sore eyes on thermals. Ochre-collared Piculet, Rufous Gnateater, Swallow Tanager and Planalto, Lesser and White-throated Woodcreepers were also added, and we found a nest of Chestnut-crowned Becard. It had already been a successful morning, but our three real targets for the day awaited us in the interior of the reserve at Kanguery.





*Oh Lordy! This Giant Snipe just paraded around in front of us as if we weren't even there! (Richard Greenhalgh).*

Kanguery is a Mesopotamian grassland site with some forest and is home to some special birds. We were quick off the mark with the vulnerable Sharp-tailed Tyrant, Wedge-tailed Grassfinch and Pearly-bellied Seedeater all quickly in the bag. Then it was into the forest after one of South America's toughest ticks, the Russet-winged Spadebill. After some tense searching in the undergrowth, the distinctive *pyeeeeooo* call of the species was heard and a bird showed superbly at a couple of metres distance. However not all of the group managed to see it first time, expecting the bird to be further away and more concealed. Luckily for them we were able to call it in several times more, eventually having walkaway views of this mega. A calling Pavonine Cuckoo frustratingly failed to show, but there was no time to hang around as late afternoon fell, we had a date with Saffron-cowled Blackbirds at their roost. We were delighted to see dozens of them arrive with Yellow-rumped Marshbirds, Smooth-billed Anis and Scarlet-headed Blackbirds, with males posing up to sing before taking cover. Grass Wren and Red-winged Tinamou were also added to the list. As darkness fell we were ready with the spotlight for the emergence of Giant Snipe. The nasal ground calls of the species betrayed their presence as the light faded and the expectation built steadily. Braving the increasing number of mosquitos a bird was spotted as it took flight to roost. With the call playing from the back of the vehicle, we were all left in awe as the same bird took a couple of close flybys before landing in the road almost at our feet. A photographers dream, we had completed our hat-trick of megas and were able to hit the road back to base. Common Potoo and Pauraque completed the cast.

A brief morning walk prior to departure added Drab-breasted Bamboo-tyrant, Scale-throated Hermit and Ochre-faced Tody-flycatcher. From here we had a long trip north via Salto Monday to watch the spectacle of thousands of Great Dusky Swifts coming home to roost. An unsuccessful twitch to Limoy for Vinaceous Amazon brought only huge numbers of White-eyed Parakeet and Chestnut-eared Aracari, as well as an American Barn Owl on the way out. We overnighted at a luxury hotel in Katuete, and the garden there



provided some pleasant surprises the following morning, including first departmental records for Common Tody-flycatcher and Swallow-tailed Hummingbird.



*Our views of Bare-throated Bellbird could only be described as “crippling”! (Paul Smith).*

Our next destination, 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. Arriving after lunch we found the winds returning and the forest a little quiet, but the abundance of Rufous-capped Motmots lead to the trail being nicknamed Motmot Alley. It was definitely a case of quality over quantity though as first a male Bare-throated Bellbird came within touching distance of us, and then a fantastic male Helmeted Woodpecker regaled us in full view and almost at eye level on an exposed rotten trunk. This species was once known as the “South American Ivorybill” on account of its rarity. Riverbank Warbler, Scaled Pigeon and Thrush-like Wren were other new species seen. Rufous Nightjar and Black-capped Screech Owl showed nicely after dark.

The following day was spent mainly at Lagunita, an area of Cerrado surrounded by forest, where our targets were two species of crakes. Despite intensive playback we couldn't get Ocellated to even reply in an area where they are usually cooperative, but we did have brief views of Russet-crowned Crake after a lot of effort. Undulated Tinamou was seen on a forest track, Band-tailed Manakin peeked at us from the vegetation, a Surucua Trogon was seen excavating a nest in an arboreal termite mound and Least and Pied-billed Grebes could be compared on the lagoon as Bat Falcon skirted around overhead. Remarkably we also had a mixed flock of toucans in the same dead tree, numerous Green-billed and Toco sitting side by side. Our last day at Mbaracayú was to take us out into the Cerrado of Aguara Ñu. Though we failed again with Rufous-faced Crake (no response to playback) we did find Black-throated Mango, White-eared Puffbird and Lesser Elaenia as well as Cerrado endemics such as the localized Rufous-winged Antshrike, Plumbeous Seedeater, Collared Crescentchest, Black-throated Saltator and Shrike-like Tanager.

Our final major destination was Laguna Blanca, and this was the one that Nick had been waiting for. Having come with a list of three “must sees” and ticked off two of them already, his number one bird still awaited, the endangered White-winged Nightjar. Beginning to get itchy feet as the weather looked to be taking yet another turn for the worse, the success of his trip hinged on seeing that bird. But before night fell there was more Cerrado birding to be done. White-rumped Monjita, Curl-crested Jay, Scaled Dove, White-tailed Goldenthrout all went into the book. Even the sight of the rare Cock-tailed Tyrant displaying, with the males like little aeroplanes and duetting White-rumped Tanagers building themselves into a frenzy did little to distract from the knowledge that the moment of truth was soon to be upon us. With the humidity building as much as the tension, and rain clouds gathering on the horizon, the sun began to go down. Nick was all too well aware of the fact that this nightjar (like its close relative the Sickle-winged) doesn't fly in unsettled weather, and he was becoming visibly nervous that our hot sunny day might convert suddenly into a cold rainy night. We took our places in the “nightjar field” and waited for the sun to set.



*After a memorable encounter the night before we were lucky enough to enjoy the company of a roosting male White-winged Nightjar by day as well! (Richard Greenhalgh).*

He needn't have worried. Minutes later we saw a female float past us ghost-like, landing on a termite mound. It was followed shortly after by a male, who flew to the mound and began to display from it. We edged closer and soon were sitting right next to the pair, the male taking flight occasionally to display, circling around us and returning to his sitting place less than a metre from where we sat. Nick was in his element, everybody else was open mouthed as we shared a special experience with a special bird, a fitting end to a wonderful trip (even if there was still another day left!). Little did we know that things were about to get even better. The following morning we found a roosting male in daylight, posing for some wonderful shots! A briefly misplaced telescope later and we were heading back towards Asunción.

Those gathering rain clouds finally hit us hard around midday on our last day. With howling gales sending branches flying across the road in front of us, the view from our rear view mirror showed a eucalyptus tree



come crashing down into the road less than a hundred metres behind us. We still had our second stab at Arroyos y Esteros awaiting us, having been totally rained out from this locality on the first day. It was starting to look like our luck was going to be out again. But after 20 minutes or so of sodden birding, the rain finally stopped and the birds came out to play. The newly-described Iberá Seedeater, Lesser Grassfinch, Long-tailed Reedfinch, Ash-throated Crake, White-headed Marsh Tyrant, Purple and Azure Gallinule, Crested Doradito, Bearded Tachuri, even a Spotted Rail. One by one the new birds were racked up. The rain clouds now a distant memory, we had some fresher, wonderful memories to enjoy for posterity. Birding done, it was off to a grill restaurant for the best steak money can buy!

## 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).

The species names and taxonomy used in the report mostly follows **Gill, F & D Donsker (Eds). 2018. IOC World Bird List (v 8.1)**. This list is updated several times annually and is available at <http://www.worldbirdnames.org>. Please note, this was the current version when the report checklist was created. Some alternative names are given in parentheses.

All of our checklists are powered by our partner iGoTerra ([www.igoterra.com](http://www.igoterra.com)) who provide web and mobile applications for bird and wildlife enthusiasts and businesses. Their suite of services cover observations, rankings, lists, photos and trip management tools.

**Greater Rhea** *Rhea americana*: Entertaining flocks of "Ñandú" were a regular sight throughout the Dry Chaco.

**Brown Tinamou** *Crypturellus obsoletus* (H): A rising series of policeman's whistles, heard most mornings at San Rafael.

**Undulated Tinamou** *Crypturellus undulatus*: One seen and many heard in the dense forests of Mbaracayú.

**Small-billed Tinamou** *Crypturellus parvirostris* (H): We heard the distant soft whistles of this little dove-like tinamou at San Rafael and Mbaracayú.

**Tataupa Tinamou** *Crypturellus tataupa* (H): Heard throughout the country, we were unable to find one close enough to call in.

**Red-winged Tinamou** *Rhynchotus rufescens*: Eyecatching red wings bursting into flight from underfoot at Kanguery and Yacyreta.



*The Chaco endemic Quebracho-Crested Tinamou was seen at several localities (Paul Smith).*

**Brushland Tinamou** *Nothoprocta cinerascens*: The Chaco endemic Brushland Tinamou was seen commonly in the Dry Chaco.

**Spotted Nothura** *Nothura maculosa*: A couple of individuals flushed up in the rainy and windy grasslands of Yacyreta.

**Chaco Nothura** *Nothura chacoensis*: The endemic, soon to be non-species, was seen a few times on roads in the Mennonite Colonies.

**Quebracho Crested-Tinamou** *Eudromia formosa*: We had excellent views of this Big 6 mega at Enciso and Fortín Toledo.

**Southern Screamer** *Chauna torquata*: The native Guaraní say the flesh tastes like soap, but it wasn't hard for us to get hold of in Chaco lagoons.

**White-faced Whistling-Duck** *Dendrocygna viduata*: Plenty of these often red-faced (thanks to the dust) ducks in the Chaco.

**Coscoroba Swan** *Coscoroba coscoroba*: Groups of 6 to 8 at Laguna Capitán and on the other Chaco lagoons.

**Muscoy Duck** *Cairina moschata*: Apart from the domestic ones gracing countryside farms, we had fly-bys of a few wild individuals in the Humid Chaco.



**Ringed Teal *Callonetta leucophrys*:** This much sought after and gorgeous little duck is surprisingly abundant in the Paraguayan Chaco, with some present on almost every lake we visited.

**Brazilian Teal *Amazonetta brasiliensis*:** Common throughout the country, the bright turquoise wing flashes earn it the local name “Alita Azul” (blue wing).

**White-cheeked Pintail *Anas bahamensis*:** Dipping upside down in the salty Chaco lagoons in search of invertebrates, small flocks of this handsome duck were a welcome sight.

**Silver Teal *Anas versicolor*:** Not sure what is supposed to be silver about them, but a couple of pairs with nearly grown young were at “Moorhen Lake” near Loma Plata.

**Masked Duck *Nomonyx dominica*:** Peter and Richard had travelled the continent in search of this crepuscular and skulking marsh duck, but they finally caught up with it at “Moorhen Lake”.

**Rusty-margined Guan *Penelope superciliaris*:** A flock pecking on a road on a cold, misty and drizzly afternoon in San Rafael and more in Mbaracayú.

**Chaco Chachalaca *Ortalis canicollis*:** The raucous screams of this abundant gamebird are a feature of the Chaco. We saw dozens.

**Least Grebe *Tachybaptus dominicus*:**

Several on temporary ponds in the Central Chaco and the lake at Lagunita.

**Pied-billed Grebe *Podilymbus podiceps*:**

Chunky bills helped distinguish this greyish grebe from the smaller Least at Lagunita.

**Chilean Flamingo *Phoenicopterus***

***chilensis*:** There is no sight quite like an airborne flock of flamingos, breathtaking in the Central Chaco.

**Maguari Stork *Ciconia maguari*:** Nonchalant stalkers of frogs in the Humid Chaco marshes.

**Jabiru *Jabiru mycteria*:** Pleasingly common in the Humid Chaco.

**Wood Stork *Mycteria americana*:** The most commonly-encountered stork on the trip, large flocks mixing with other storks.

**White-faced Ibis *Plegadis chihi*:** Check the length of the legs! Plenty in the Humid Chaco.

**Bare-faced Ibis *Phimosus infuscatus*:** Large V-shaped flocks of this stumpy-legged ibis in the Humid Chaco and at Arroyos y Esteros.

**Plumbeous Ibis *Theristicus caerulescens*:**

There is something dinosaur-like about the stare of this common Humid Chaco ibis.



*Jabiru and Maguari Stork are a common sight in the Chaco (Paul Smith)*

**Buff-necked Ibis *Theristicus caudatus*:** Honking goose-like calls announced the arrival of these flame-necked stunners.

**Roseate Spoonbill *Platalea ajaja*:** No, not flamingos, but just as pink. Common in the Humid Chaco.

**Rufescent Tiger Heron *Tigrisoma lineatum*:** Bittern-like, this richly-coloured heron was dipping for eels in several weed-choked Chaco lakes.

**Black-crowned Night Heron *Nycticorax nycticorax*:** Nocturnal herons sitting in the beating sun at midday on the Loma Plata lakes.

**Striated Heron *Butorides striatus*:** Usually common, we didn't catch up with one until later in the trip at San Rafael.

**Western Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis*:** Abundant. Who would have thought that they only arrived in South America in the mid 1900s!

**Cocoi Heron *Ardea cocoi*:** A big, beautiful heron, common in the Chaco.

**Great Egret *Ardea alba*:** Great Egrets in great numbers.

**Whistling Heron *Syrigma sibilatrix*:** Surely one of the world's most gorgeous herons! And common to boot. Everywhere.

**Snowy Egret *Egretta thula*:** Excitable foragers with yellow socks. Small numbers on most Chaco lakes.

**Neotropic Cormorant *Phalacrocorax brasilianus*:** If there was a drop of water, there was probably a Neotropic Cormorant on it.

**Lesser Yellow-headed Vulture *Cathartes burrovianus*:** Harrying around wet grasslands, we saw them in the Humid Chaco, Kanguery and Arroyos y Esteros.

**Turkey Vulture *Cathartes aura*:** More TVs than you could shake a stick at.

**Black Vulture *Coragyps atratus*:** And you would need another stick for these.

**King Vulture *Sarcorampus papa*:** A pair almost within touching distance coming down to drink at a lake at Enciso.

**Grey-headed Kite *Leptodon cayanensis*:** Circling around us at the entrance to the Chachi trail in San Rafael, this is a treat of a raptor.

**Swallow-tailed Kite *Elanoides forficatus*:** Perhaps the most perfect flying machine on earth. Several at Estancia Nueva Gambach.

**Rufous-thighed Kite *Harpagus diodon*:** A bird at San Rafael put a big smile on Nick's face.



Male Cock-tailed Tyrants are known locally as "Avioncitos" (little aeroplanes) because of their display flights (Richard Greenhalgh).

**Long-winged Harrier *Circus buffoni*:** Both the black forms and the white forms of this perfectly-marked raptor put in an appearance.

**Plumbeous Kite *Ictinia plumbea*:** Up in the mixed raptor flocks enjoying thermals and chasing dragonflies at San Rafael and Mbaracayú.

**Black-collared Hawk *Busarellus nigricollis*:** A painted fish hawk seen on the way to San Rafael.

**Snail Kite *Rostrhamus sociabilis*:** This winkle-picker was a familiar inhabitant of marshy areas.

**Crane Hawk *Geranospiza caerulescens*:** A bold individual at Toledo giving nice looks.

**Savanna Hawk *Heterospizias meridionalis*:** Dull and brown on the floor, glorious orange in flight, the common Savanna Hawk was seen almost daily.

**Great Black Hawk *Buteogallus urubitinga*:** Lots of these impressive marsh raptors in the Humid Chaco and Paraguay River basin.

**Roadside Hawk *Rupornis magnirostris*:** We saw this bird at roadsides, pondsides, streamsides, riversides, forestsides, trailsides .... In fact if it had a side there was probably one of these birds nearby.

**Harris's Hawk *Parabuteo unicinctus*:** Common in the arid areas of the Chaco.

**White-tailed Hawk *Geranoaetus albicaudatus*:** A pleasure to watch soaring over open fields in the Chaco and at Laguna Blanca.



**Black-chested Buzzard-Eagle *Geranoaetus melanoleucus*:** An impressive eagle we caught up with at Toledo.

**Red-legged Seriema *Cariama cristata* (H):** Heard, but unusually not seen on this trip.

**Black-legged Seriema *Chunga burmeisteri*:** Closest living relatives of the extinct terrorbirds, they showed well for us at Enciso and Toledo.

**Russet-crowned Crane *Anurolimnas viridis*:** This one had us gnashing our teeth as it ran rings around us in the cerrado at Lagunita, until one popped its head up for brief views. I'm not sure how many of the group managed to get their bins on it though!

**Grey-breasted Crane *Laterallus exilis*:** Pouring rain and a rubbish-strewn marsh in the centre of Asunción, with wet knee-high grass meant we started this trip sodden and cold, but this crane showing well as our first bird of the trip was enough to warm our cockles.

**Rufous-sided Crane *Laterallus melanophaius*:** A reliable pair at the Doradito bridge in the Humid Chaco were part of our crane-fuelled start to the trip.



*A pair of King Vultures coming for a drink at Enciso were as surprised to see us as we were happy to see them (Paul Smith).*

**Red-and-white Crane *Laterallus leucopyrrhus*:** Sitting patiently and watching a hole was all it took for us to all get on to this skulker extraordinaire at San Rafael.

**Rufous-faced Crane *Laterallus xenopterus* (H):** It sung twice, but all too briefly for us to have a hope of pulling it out of cover.

**Giant Wood-Rail *Aramides ypecaha*:** People are always impressed by how common this stonker is in the Chaco!

**Slaty-breasted Wood-Rail *Aramides saracura* (H):** Close but no cigar, singing birds at San Rafael.

**Ash-throated Crane *Porzana albicollis*:** Heard in a few localities, but a sodden bird gave us great looks at rainy Arroyos y Esteros.

**Spotted Rail *Pardirallus maculatus*:** A little patience and some strategic path cutting was all it took for multiple 5-star views of this handsome rail.

**Blackish Rail *Pardirallus nigricans*:** Plenty of rail fans in our group, and this was another that rewarded our patience near the football field in San Rafael.

**Purple Gallinule *Porphyrio martinica*:** Glistening in the sun in the Humid Chaco, this bird didn't have a care in the world! Others later at Arroyos y Esteros and Humedal Rio Verde.

**Azure Gallinule *Porphyrio flavirostris*:** It is surprising how many people need this bird, it is one where you have to be in the right place at the right time. Great looks at Arroyos y Esteros.

**Common Gallinule *Gallinula galeata*:** Why do you think Moorhen Lake is called Moorhen Lake? Because its full of Common Gallinules of course!

**Limpkin *Aramus guarauna*:** Paraguay must be the Limpkin capital of the world. Where didn't we see them?

**Southern Lapwing *Vanellus chilensis*:** All over the place.

**American Golden-Plover *Pluvialis dominica*:** Some at Laguna Capitán.

**Collared Plover *Charadrius collaris*:** Charming little sand darters all over the beaches on the Chaco lagoons.

**Wattled Jacana *Jacana jacana*:** Abundant and flashy.

**South American Snipe *Gallinago paraguaiiae*:** Several in the Humid Chaco, including cooperative birds at Humedal Rio Verde.

**Giant Snipe *Gallinago undulata*:** Called in to a distance of 5 metres on an open road. BLOCKBUSTER views.

**Upland Sandpiper *Bartramia longicauda*:** Nick nicked one at Moorhen Lake.

**Greater Yellowlegs *Tringa melanoleuca*:** Less common than the Lessers, but plenty of opportunity to make direct comparisons.

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

**Solitary Sandpiper *Tringa solitaria*:** Pretty numerous on Chaco ponds.

**Spotted Sandpiper *Actitis macularia*:** One hanging around the diving board pond at Laguna Capitán.

**Stilt Sandpiper *Calidris himantopus*:** A small number at Laguna Capitán



*Whistling Heron and Ringed Teal are both birds that any visitor to the Paraguayan Chaco rapidly becomes familiar with (Paul Smith).*

**Baird's Sandpiper *Calidris bairdii*:** One or two at Moorhen Lake.

**White-rumped Sandpiper *Calidris fuscicollis*:** The common Chaco peep.

**Pectoral Sandpiper *Calidris melanotos*:** Pete picked plenty of pecks of unpickled Pec sands in the Chaco.

**Buff-breasted Sandpiper *Calidris subruficollis*:** The near threatened Buff-breast is everybody's favourite sandpiper. A few on wet grass banks at Moorhen Lake.

**Wilson's Phalarope *Phalaropus tricolor*:** Dizzy flocks of spinners on several Chaco lakes.

**Yellow-billed Tern *Sternula superciliaris*:** A few flying up and down the rainy Bahía de Asunción.

**Large-billed Tern *Phaetusa simplex*:** And a few of these there too.

**Feral Pigeon *Columba livia*:** Foraging in bins in Asunción.

**Picazuro Pigeon *Patagioenas picazuro*:** Can you remember a day we didn't see one?.

**Pale-vented Pigeon *Patagioenas cayennensis*:** Several at San Rafael.

**Scaled Pigeon *Patagioenas maculosus*:** Took a bit of effort but we got a decent look in the end.

**Scaled Dove *Columbina squammata*:** An expanding species that we saw at Rio Verde Agroforestal.



**Ruddy Ground-dove *Columbina talpacoti*:** Hard to see against the red soils in eastern Paraguay, but nonetheless common.

**Picui Ground-dove *Columbina picui*:** Millions!

**Eared Dove *Zenaida auriculata*:** Trillions!

**Grey-fronted Dove *Leptotila rufaxilla*:** One at Yacyreta and lots heard at San Rafael.

**White-tipped Dove *Leptotila verreauxi*:** Common across the country.

**Guira Cuckoo *Guira guira*:** You gotta love em! You are never far from a Guira Cuckoo in Paraguay.

**Smooth-billed Ani *Crotophaga ani*:** Who didn't see ani?

**Striped Cuckoo *Tapera naevia*:** Several heard, one seen superbly at Laguna Capitán.

**Pheasant Cuckoo *Dromococcyx phasianellus*:** Nick's bogey bird finally fell with walkaway views of a calm and cooperative individual.

**Pavonine Cuckoo *Dromococcyx pavoninus* (H):** A persistently calling bird refused to show at San Rafael.

**Squirrel Cuckoo *Piaya cayana*:** Lots of fun watching this common cuckoo racing clumsily through the treetops.

**Barn Owl *Tyto alba*:** One on the road to Katuete at night.



*A confiding Pheasant Cuckoo was a life bird for many at Yacyretá. (Richard Greenhalgh).*

**Tropical Screech Owl *Megascops choliba*:** Numerous encounters with this species at our Atlantic Forest sites.

**Black-capped Screech-owl *Megascops atricapillus*:** Good views of this Atlantic Forest endemic at Mbaracayú.

**Chaco Owl *Strix chacoensis*:** Old friends putting on their usual noisy welcome at Enciso.

**Ferruginous Pygmy-owl *Glaucidium brasilianum*:** Seen in the Chaco (if you split it) and in San Rafael and Yacyreta.

**Burrowing Owl *Athene cunicularia*:** They never get old. Ubiquitous.

**Common Potoo *Nyctibius griseus*:** Foraging adults at Kanguery and Mbaracayú.

**Nacunda Nighthawk *Chordeiles nacunda*:** At least this nightjar was flying on that awful wet, windy night at Yacyreta.

**Short-tailed Nighthawk *Lurocalis semitorquatus*:** The call trick is good isn't it?! As usual we had these birds almost eating out of our hands at San Rafael.

**Common Pauraque *Nyctidromus albicollis*:** The common forest nightjar in eastern Paraguay, we flushed dozens from forest roads at night.

**Little Nightjar *Setopagis parvula*:** Less than we usually see, but still plenty around at Aguara Ñu, Yacyretá and Rio Verde Agroforestal.

**White-winged Nightjar *Eleothreptus candicans*:** Is anybody likely to ever forget their encounter with the spectacular displaying male at Laguna Blanca? Nick certainly won't!

**Scissor-tailed Nightjar *Hydropsalis torquata*:** Multiple encounters in the Chaco with extraordinarily long-tailed males.

**Rufous Nightjar *Antrostomus rufus*:** Restless but cooperative singing bird at Mbaracayú gave frequent brief but clear views.



*The pallida subspecies of Ochre-crowned Crescentchest is a potential split (Richard Greenhalgh).*

**Great Dusky Swift *Cypseloides senex*:** What an experience watching thousands of these birds coming in to roost at Monday waterfalls.

**Grey-rumped Swift *Chaetura cinereiventris*:** Small numbers of this bat-like swift near the lake at San Rafael.



**Sick's Swift *Chaetura meridionalis*:** Small flocks at Enciso and Mbaracayú.

**Scale-throated Hermit *Phaethornis eurynome*:** There he is, gone! Super quick show at Monday Falls.

**Black-throated Mango *Anthracothorax nigricollis*:** One male caused us a few headaches at Aguara Ñu.

**Glittering-bellied Emerald *Chlorostilbon lucidus*:** A nest at Enciso, and lots of sightings all over the country.

**Gilded Hummingbird *Hylocharis chrysura*:** Dull, until the sun catches him at just the right angle. This bronze beauty was seen at Mbaracayú and San Rafael.

**White-tailed Goldenthrout *Polytmus guainumbi*:** A bird visiting red flowers in the Cerrado at Agroforestal Rio Verde.

**Versicoloured Emerald *Amazilia versicolor*:** Birds ticking away at San Rafael.

**Swallow-tailed Hummingbird *Eupetomena macroura*:** Another bird in expansion. Pete found this one at the flowering bushes of our hotel in Katuete.

**Blue-tufted Starthroat *Helioaster furcifer*:** By far the commonest hummer in the Chaco.

**Surucua Trogon *Trogon surrucura*:** What a poser! Great views at close range at San Rafael.

**Black-throated Trogon *Trogon rufus*:** We had to wait until Mbaracayú to see his yellow-bellied cousin though.

**Ringed Kingfisher *Megaceryle torquata*:** Pretty common on telephone wires over watery ponds. We saw it at most sites

**Amazon Kingfisher *Chloroceryle amazona*:** Some in the Chaco, some in San Rafael.

**Rufous-capped Motmot *Barypthengus ruficapillus*:** Dozens along "motmot alley" in Mbaracayú.

**Buff-bellied Puffbird *Notharchus swainsoni*:** We finally got great views of this bird at Mbaracayú.

**White-eared Puffbird *Nystalus chacuru*:** Close up experience with this pretty puffbird at Aguara Ñu.

**Chaco Puffbird *Nystalus striatipectus*:** Pleasingly common in the central Chaco.

**Chestnut-eared Aracari *Pteroglossus castanotis*:** Nice views at Limoy and Mbaracayú.

**Toco Toucan *Ramphastos toco*:** Seen in the Humid Chaco and then in the toucan tree at Lagunita.

**Green-billed Toucan *Ramphastos dicolorus*:** In the same tree!

**Spot-billed Toucan *Selenidera maculirostris*:** Excellent looks at both sexes in San Rafael.

**White-barred Piculet *Picumnus cirrhatus*:** The Chaco subspecies *pilcomayensis* is really quite distinctive.

**Ochre-collared Piculet *Picumnus temminckii*:** A sucker for playback.

**White Woodpecker *Melanerpes candidus*:** Noisy groups at Toledo

**Yellow-fronted Woodpecker *Melanerpes flavifrons*:** Known locally as "Rainbow Woodpecker" and for good reason. Walkaway views at San Rafael.

**White-fronted Woodpecker *Melanerpes cactorum*:** The "cactus woodpecker" was a common sight in the Chaco.

**Little Woodpecker *Veniliornis passerinus*:** Very tame at Isla Yacyreta.

**White-spotted Woodpecker *Veniliornis spilogaster*:** Not the most eyecatching woodpecker, but this Atlantic Forest endemic was a welcome addition at San Rafael.

**Checkered Woodpecker *Veniliornis mixtus*:** Another common little Chaco woodpecker seen on numerous occasions.

**Green-barred Woodpecker *Colaptes melanochloros*:** We had both the Chaco and the eastern forms on this trip, they are split by some.

**Campo Flicker *Colpates campestris*:** White and black-throated forms are also split by some. But what species are the intermediates?

**Blond-crested Woodpecker *Celeus flavescens*:** A testosterone fuelled male challenged us at San Rafael.

**Helmeted Woodpecker *Dryocopus galeatus*:** Views to die for of a male on an exposed trunk just a few metres away from us at Mbaracayú.

**Lineated Woodpecker *Dryocopus lineatus*:** Popping in and out of a nest hole in a dead tree at San Rafael.

**Robust Woodpecker *Campephilus robustus*:** Another tremendous Atlantic Forest endemic, seen at Mbaracayú and San Rafael.

**Cream-backed Woodpecker *Campephilus leucopogon*:** A Chaco endemic "Bobby Dazzler" that we were all able to enjoy at leisure with prolonged views.



*Crested Gallito and Black-capped Donacobius, both highly vocal but at opposite ends of the easy to see spectrum! (Richard Greenhalgh).*

**Southern Crested Caracara *Caracara plancus*:** Seriously common.

**Yellow-headed Caracara *Milvago chimachima*:** Frequent in the Humid Chaco.

**Chimango Caracara *Milvago chimango*:** Becomes a little bit easier as we head further south.

**Collared Forest Falcon *Micrastur semitorquatus* (H):** Heard at San Rafael.

**American Kestrel *Falco sparverius*:** Common, with a strange habit of roosting exposed halfway up telegraph poles!

**Aplomado Falcon *Falco femoralis*:** Several pairs of this "hobby-like" bird hunter were seen in the Chaco, Laguna Blanca and at Yacyreta.

**Bat Falcon *Falco rufigularis*:** One at Lagunita.

**Monk Parakeet *Myiopsitta monachus*:** Is there a lamp post in the Chaco that doesn't have a nest on?

**Yellow-chevroned Parakeet *Brotogeris chiriri*:** We saw it at the hotel in Asunción, then didn't meet it again until we went to Mbaracayú.

**Scaly-headed Parrot *Pionus maximiliani*:** We became familiar with the distinctive call of this parrot at San Rafael.

**Turquoise-fronted Amazon *Amazona aestiva*:** Seeing these birds in flight is a pleasure. Common in the Chaco.

**Maroon-bellied Parakeet *Pyrrhura frontalis*:** Plenty of encounters in eastern Paraguay with this chattering parakeet.

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

**Blue-crowned Parakeet *Thectocercus acuticaudatus*:** The large parakeet in the drier areas of the Chaco, we had no problems adding it to the list.

**White-eyed Parakeet *Aratinga leucophthalma*:** How many thousands were in that ear-splitting roost at Limoy?

**Chaco Earthcreeper *Tarphonomus certhioides*:** Wonderful views of this Chaco endemic.

**Rufous Hornero *Furnarius rufus*:** I think there was one point in the trip where we went 5 minutes without seeing one.

**Crested Hornero *Furnarius cristatus*:** Smaller, cuter and crestier than the rufous, but just as common in the Dry Chaco.

**Short-billed Canastero *Asthenes baeri*:** A pair gave us a bit of a runaround at Laguna Capitán, but eventually showed.

**Chotoy Spinetail *Schoeniophylax phryganophilus*:** The deep, bubbling chuckle it makes sounds like it comes from a much larger bird.



**Rufous-capped Spinetail *Synallaxis ruficapilla*:** Abundant in the San Rafael forests.

**Grey-capped Spinetail *Synallaxis cinerascens*:** Elusive Atlantic Forest endemic, but worth the effort.

**Sooty-fronted Spinetail *Synallaxis frontalis*:** We had heard a few earlier on the trip, but eventually got good looks at Yacyreta.

**Pale-breasted Spinetail *Synallaxis albescens*:** Some at Humedal Rio Verde, other at Aguara Ñu. Brief encounters but reasonable looks.

**Olive Spinetail *Cranioleuca obsoleta*:** A reliable pair getting typically agitated by playback.

**Yellow-chinned Spinetail *Certhiaxis cinnamomeus*:** Prettier than they get credit for, we saw them everywhere we visited a marsh.

**Little Thornbird *Phacellodomus sibilatrix*:** The smallest of the thornbirds, we saw lots attending their hanging nests throughout the Chaco.

**Greater Thornbird *Phacellodomus ruber*:** Several seen, but one at the top of a tree in Loma Plata sang continuously for what seemed like an age.

**Firewood Gatherer *Anumbius anumbi*:** A pair with a convenient nest at our refueling stop in Pozo Colorado helped pass the time.

**Lark-like Brushrunner *Coryphistera alaudina*:** Common and charismatic, we saw a lot of these chatty and highly social birds.

**Brown Cacholote *Pseudoseisura lophotes*:** Could this bird have the most grating call of any? Hard on the ears, but with his rich plumage and peaked crest he is easy on the eyes.

**Buff-browed Foliage-gleaner *Syndactyla rufosuperciliata*:** One bird seen well at San Rafael on the Tuka Pakova trail.

**Ochre-breasted Foliage-gleaner *Philydor lichtensteini*:** Another Atlantic Forest endemic that fell at San Rafael.

**Buff-fronted Foliage-gleaner *Philydor rufum*:** Very similar to the previous species, though somewhat larger and with a buff forehead, we also saw this species at San Rafael.

**White-eyed Foliage-gleaner *Automolus leucophthalmus*:** Whizzing backwards and forwards across a San Rafael trail, we all had good looks in the end.

**Sharp-tailed Streamcreeper *Lochmias nematura* (H):** Despite there being an active nest the month previous, we only managed to hear this bird at San Rafael. Perhaps they were busy feeding young?

**Thrush-like Woodcreeper *Dendrocincla turdina* (H):** The extraordinarily long call of this species was heard at San Rafael, but we didn't see the bird.

**Olivaceous Woodcreeper *Sittasomus griseicapillus*:** Lots of these in the Paraná forests.

**Scimitar-billed Woodcreeper *Drymornis bridgesii*:** One of Nick's "must sees". We all had plenty of good looks at it in the Central Chaco.

**White-throated Woodcreeper *Xiphocolaptes albicollis*:** A giant of a woodcreeper, cooperating with us at San Rafael.

**Great Rufous Woodcreeper *Xiphocolaptes major*:** We had this on the first morning in the Chaco, but though we heard it most days afterwards we never saw it again.

**Planalto Woodcreeper *Dendrocolaptes platyrostris*:** Good views of this species beating a beetle against a tree.

**Lesser Woodcreeper *Xiphorhynchus fuscus*:** Common in the undergrowth at San Rafael on call at least, we only saw this bird once.

**Narrow-billed Woodcreeper *Lepidocolaptes angustirostris*:** The commonest woodcreeper in the Chaco, seen on countless tree trunks throughout the region.

**Red-billed Scythebill *Campylorhamphus trochilirostris*:** Mad bill. Great bird. Seen at Laguna Ganso and Enciso.



*Black-legged Seriema is one of the Chaco "Big 6" (Paul Smith).*

**Spot-backed Antshrike *Hypoedaleus guttatus*:** A neck breaker, but worth the wear on your vertebrae. Good looks at San Rafael.

**Large-tailed Antshrike *Mackenziaena leachii*:** Took some effort to pull it out of bamboo at San Rafael.

**Tufted Antshrike *Mackenziaena severa*:** A male at San Rafael.

**Great Antshrike *Taraba major*:** Lots of these seen throughout the Chaco. If only all antbirds were as showy as this one.

**Rufous-winged Antshrike *Thamnophilus torquatus*:** A nice male in a dwarf palm at Aguara Ñu. This is a highly localized antshrike in Paraguay.

**Variable Antshrike *Thamnophilus caerulescens*:** Common, but skulking. We only saw it at San Rafael.

**Plain Antvireo *Dysithamnus mentalis*:** Heard often along the trail at San Rafael, we saw it on a couple of occasions.

**Stripe-backed Antbird *Myrmorchilus strigilatus*:** It's not supposed to do that, but it did! A male on an exposed perch singing at less than a metre distance.

**Rufous-winged Antwren *Herspilochmus rufimarginatus*:** Dozens of these in what seemed like the canopy of every tree in San Rafael.

**Dusky-tailed Antbird *Drymophila malura*:** Hidden, but not shy. We had some good views after a short wait in San Rafael.

**Streak-capped Antwren *Terenura maculata*:** A good old fashioned canopy neck breaker, this tiddler was eventually seen at San Rafael.

**White-shouldered Fire-eye *Pyriglena leucoptera*:** An agitated male at San Rafael and many more heard besides.

**Barred Antshrike *Thamnophilus doliatus*:** Prison uniform males seen on several occasions in the Chaco.

**Short-tailed Anthrush *Chamaeza campanisona* (H):** Heard but not forgotten.

**Variegated Antpitta *Grallaria varia* (H):** Distant calling birds heard daily at San Rafael.

**Speckle-breasted Antpitta *Hylopezus nattereri* (H):** Also heard at San Rafael, but no luck seeing it.





*Harris's Hawk is one of the more numerous raptors in the Dry Chaco (Richard Greenhalgh).*

**Rufous Gnateater *Conopophaga lineata*:** Much more cooperative! Several at short range in San Rafael.

**Crested Gallito *Rhinocrypta lanceolata*:** Barnstorming views of a showy bird at Laguna Capitán, singing from an exposed tree-top.

**Collared Crescentchest *Melanopareia torquata*:** Needed a bit of chasing, but we all had good looks as he sang from within the fronds of a dwarf palm at Aguara Ñu.

**Olive-crowned Crescentchest *Melanopareia maximiliani*:** It was much easier to get belting looks at this painted beauty at Laguna Capitán though.

**Wing-barred Piprites *Piprites chloris*:** One seen well by all after whistling and whizzing past a few times first.

**Grey Elaenia *Myiopagis caniceps*:** Common in the tree tops at San Rafael and Mbaracayú.

**Greenish Elaenia *Myiopagis viridicata*:** Surprisingly we only saw this species once at San Rafael. Though I'm sure we could have found more had we tried!

**Yellow-bellied Elaenia *Elaenia flavogaster*:** Some at Kanguery, but hardly a bird that lives long in the memory!

**Large Elaenia *Elaenia spectabilis*:** We got it first at San Rafael towards the end of the trip, suggesting that they were just beginning to arrive – it is usually a common bird in the Chaco.

**Small-billed Elaenia *Elaenia parvirostris*:** An unobtrusive individual called in by a real Pygmy Owl at Laguna Capitán.

**Lesser Elaenia *Elaenia chiriquensis*:** So we may have misplaced the scope, but we found this instead at Agroforestal Rio Verde.

**Southern Beardless-Tyrannulet *Camptostoma obsoletum*:** "Laughing horses" were heard in the Chaco and at San Rafael, but the only one we saw was at Toledo.

**Suiriri Flycatcher *Suiriri suiriri*:** Common in the Chaco. Suiriri is the Guaraní word for a flycatcher.

**Straneck's Tyrannulet *Serpophaga griseiceps*:** A cryptic species that is generally a winter visitor to Paraguay. The early dates of this tour allowed us to catch the last few hanging around in the Chaco.

**Yellow Tyrannulet *Capsiempis flaveola*:** Noisy groups pumped their tails at us from bamboo clearings in San Rafael.

**Bearded Tachuri *Polystictus pectoralis*:** We snapped up this little flycatcher on each of our three visits to Arroyos y Esteros.

**Ticking Doradito *Pseudocolopteryx citrina*:** Newly described, this was the third Paraguayan record.

**Dinelli's Doradito *Pseudocolopteryx dinelliana*:** Don't you just love it when rare birds are this cooperative! One bird, totally unconcerned by observers at the Doradito marsh.



*The Chaco endemic Chaco Earthcreeper is like a long-billed Hornero (Paul Smith).*

**Crested Doradito *Pseudocolopteryx sclateri*:** One of the last birds of the trip, at Arroyos y Esteros.

**Southern Antpipit *Corythopsis delalandi*:** Once it settled we were able to get good looks at this skulker on a horizontal branch in the undergrowth at San Rafael.

**Tawny-crowned Pygmy-tyrant *Euscarthmus meloryphus*:** Beating hot sun on the road to Médanos wasn't enough to stop us from finding this unobtrusive LBJ.

**Common Tody Flycatcher *Todirostrum cinereum*:** Another bird in expansion, one at the hotel garden in Katuete was actually the first record for the department of Canindeyú.

**Greater Wagtail-tyrant *Stigmatura budyoides*:** A charismatic yellow long tail who doesn't like trespassers. Seen often in the Chaco.

**Southern Bristle-Tyrant *Pogontriccus eximius*:** Near threatened, which is a shame because it's a little cracker. Seen on a couple of occasions at San Rafael.

**Sepia-capped Flycatcher *Leptopogon amaurocephalus*:** The voice is more notable than the bird, a subtly marked forest flycatcher that was seen at daily at Yacyreta and San Rafael.



**Southern Scrub-flycatcher *Sublegatus modestus*:** Lots of these “mini-elaenias” in the Chaco.

**Plain Inezia *Inezia inornata*:** Plain by name, plain by nature. A common Chaco flycatcher that doesn't exactly set pulses racing.

**Bran-coloured Flycatcher *Myiophobus fasciatus*:** One of those floating around us as we searched for Rufous-faced Crake at Aguara Ñu and another at Arroyos y Esteros as we had more luck finding Spotted Rail.

**Sharp-tailed Grass-Tyrant *Culicivora caudacuta*:** The caudacutest little grassland flycatchers you will ever set eyes on. We saw them at Laguna Blanca.

**Drab-breasted Pygmy-tyrant *Hemitriccus diops*:** Having heard them call constantly along the forest trails at San Rafael we left it until the very last morning to actually see one.

**Pearly-vented Tody-tyrant *Hemitriccus margaritaceiventer*:** Quietly flitting through the thorny Chaco bush, this is a common bird that we saw repeatedly along the way.

**Eared Pygmy-tyrant *Myiornis auricularis*:** Ticking away like a tiny clock, this pea-sized flycatcher was seen at Mbaracayú and San Rafael.

**Ochre-faced Tody-flycatcher *Poecilatriccus plumbeiceps*:** Farty notes in bamboo reveal the presence of this little cutey. We saw it at San Rafael.

**Yellow-olive Flatbill *Tolmomyias sulphurescens*:** A couple of canopy views at San Rafael.

**White-throated Spadebill *Platyrinchus mystaceus*:** As usual it was easy to see once you knew where it was. Nice looks at San Rafael.

**Russet-winged Spadebill *Platyrinchus leucoryphus*:** A serious mega that we are able to enjoy after a tense chase at Kanguery.

**Euler's Flycatcher *Lathrotriccus euleri*:** Some pronounce it "Oiler's Flycatcher", but the birds we found at Yacyreta and San Rafael responded to "Yoolers".

**Scarlet Flycatcher *Pyrocephalus rubinus*:** Looks more vermilion to me than scarlet, but what do I know? Lots in the Chaco.

**Cinereous Tyrant *Knipolegus striaticeps*:** Up down display flights by males were a joy to watch at Laguna Capitán.

**Grey Monjita *Xolmis cinereus*:** One on the Trans Chaco road heading out of Asunción.

**White-rumped Monjita *Xolmis velatus*:** Graceful piebald Cerrado flycatcher that was a joy to watch in Laguna Blanca.

**White Monjita *Xolmis irupero*:** You can see these things a mile off, and they sit so prominently on the tops of trees that they must taste dreadful, otherwise why aren't they all being eaten? A common sight throughout the Chaco.

**Streamer-tailed Tyrant *Gubernetes yetapa*:** A bird and a half! We saw lots at the marshes en route to Ayolas, Laguna Blanca and at Kanguery.

**Black-backed Water-tyrant *Fluvicola albiventer*:** Busy little water birds that are constantly on the move. We saw a lot of them in the Chaco.

**White-headed Marsh-tyrant *Fluvicola leucocephala*:** Black body, white head, unmistakeable. Males and females at Arroyos y Esteros.

**Cock-tailed Tyrant *Alectrurus tricolor*:** Displaying “avioncitos” (little aeroplanes) are a highlight of any trip to the Paraguayan Cerrado. A highly threatened grassland flycatcher.

**Strange-tailed Tyrant *Alectrurus risora*:** Another one from Nick's wish list. And he wasn't the only one who enjoyed watching this bizarre flycatcher at Arroyos y Esteros.

**Long-tailed Tyrant *Colonia colonus*:** There are so many long-tailed flycatchers to be seen on this trip, that this one pales into insignificance beside them. A pair at San Rafael.

**Cattle Tyrant *Machetornis rixosa*:** Frequent in open areas in eastern Paraguay.

**Yellow-browed Tyrant *Satrapa icterophrys*:** One seen on our rainy first day at Arroyos y Esteros.

**Social Flycatcher *Myiozetetes similis*:** Some at San Rafael, some at Mbaracayú.

**Great Kiskadee *Pitangus sulphuratus*:** Everywhere.

**Streaked Flycatcher *Myiodynastes maculatus*:** Everywhere there was forest.

**Boat-billed Flycatcher *Megarynchus pitangua*:** Big-nosed kiskadees. Common throughout eastern Paraguay.

**Variegated Flycatcher *Empidonomus varius*:** Like a mini Streaked Flycatcher without the charisma. A few individuals at San Rafael.

**Crowned Slaty-flycatcher *Empidonomus aurantioatrocristatus*:** Thin on the ground in the Chaco. We were too early for the main brunt of the migration.

**Tropical Kingbird *Tyrannus melancholicus*:** Started arriving towards the end of the trip, when they were abundant everywhere.

**Fork-tailed Flycatcher *Tyrannus savana*:** Same story with this species.

**Sibilant Sirystes *Sirystes sibilator*:** Noisy. We saw them at San Rafael.



An unconcerned Dinelli's Doradito on passage to his breeding grounds was flycatching at close range in a Humid Chaco swamp (Richard Greenhalgh).

**Rufous Casiornis *Casiornis rufus*:** Like a rufous-coloured Myiarchus. We saw it at Laguna Capitán and Lagunita.

**Swainson's Flycatcher *Myiarchus swainsoni*:** A couple of sightings at San Rafael.

**Short-crested Flycatcher *Myiarchus ferox*:** The dullest of the Paraguayan *Myiarchus* seen in the forest at Yacyreta.

**Brown-crested Flycatcher *Myiarchus tyrannulus*:** The brightest of the Paraguayan *Myiarchus*, seen throughout the Chaco.

**Bare-throated Bellbird *Procnias nudicollis*:** Wow, could that bird at Mbaracayú have come any closer?

**Red-ruffed Fruitcrow *Pyroderus scutatus*:** A mega-sized Cotinga seen at Kanguery.

**Band-tailed Manakin *Pipra fasciicauda*:** For such a brightly-coloured bird it can be tough to pick them out sometimes, but we had a few males at Lagunita.

**Blue Manakin *Chiroxiphia caudata*:** Lekking as well weren't they!! Great fun watching them dance at San Rafael.

**Sharpbill *Oxyruncus cristatus*:** Not a falling bomb, a calling Sharpbill. Seen fantastically well feeding in Cecropia trees on a couple of occasions.

**Black-crowned Tityra *Tityra inquisitor*:** Ever present in the canopy in the humid forest.

**Black-tailed Tityra *Tityra cayana*:** This one was too!

**Masked Tityra *Tityra semifaciata*:** Another expanding bird, we had it at Mbaracayú.

**Greenish Schiffornis *Schiffornis virescens*:** Like a torpedo zipping past one way then the other, before eventually settling in a place where we could all get our bins on it.





*A Chestnut-crowned Becard was guarding a nest at San Rafael (Richard Greenhalgh).*

**Green-backed Becard *Pachyramphus viridis*:** A conspicuous pair seen on consecutive days at San Rafael. Odd because you don't often see them there!

**Chestnut-crowned Becard *Pachyramphus castaneus*:** A nesting pair at San Rafael.

**White-winged Becard *Pachyramphus polychopterus*:** Heard at San Rafael and then seen at Mbaracayú.

**Crested Becard *Pachyramphus validus*:** A nesting pair at San Rafael.

**Rufous-browed Peppershrike *Cyclarhis gujanensis*:** Both the Chaco and the eastern subspecies were seen with ease in most localities.

**Red-eyed Vireo *Vireo olivaceus*:** Another migrant beginning to arrive towards the end of the trip.

**Rufous-crowned Greenlet *Hylophilus poicilotis*:** We did well to find this uncommon species at San Rafael.



*Black-breasted Grosbeak was cooperative at Laguna Ganso (Richard Greenhalgh).*

**Purplish Jay *Cyanocorax cyanomelas*:** Dull until the sun hits his purple, we saw this racket-making Corvid in numerous localities.

**Curl-crested Jay *Cyanocorax cristatellus*:** The Cerrado jay. Small flocks as we waited for the nightjar at Laguna Blanca.

**Plush-crested Jay *Cyanocorax chrysops*:** Seen commonly throughout our trip.

**White-rumped Swallow *Tachycineta leucorrhoa*:** Small flocks hawking insects low over the Laguna Capitán salt lakes.

**Chilean Swallow *Tachycineta meyeni*:** Small numbers hanging around at Yacyreta.

**Grey-breasted Martin *Progne chalybea*:** The most commonly seen swallow throughout the country.

**Brown-chested Martin *Progne tapera*:** With this one a close second.

**Southern Rough-winged Swallow *Stelgidopteryx ruficollis*:** A couple hanging around the lake at San Rafael.

**Tawny-headed Swallow *Alopochelidon fucata*:** First seen at Yacyreta, but later also at Arroyos y Esteros.

**Barn Swallow *Hirundo rustica*:** Odd early migrants in the Chaco and at Yacyreta.

**Black-capped Donacobius *Donacobius atricapillus*:** The car alarm call of this conspicuous marsh dweller was given on arrival at almost every swamp we visited.

**Thrush-like Wren *Campylorhynchus turdinus*:** We finally got this expanding species in the palms near the lodge at Mbaracayú.

**House Wren *Troglodytes aedon*:** Show me a house in Paraguay and I'll show you a house wren.

**Sedge Wren *Cistothorus platensis*:** A reliable grassland bird at Kanguery.

**Masked Gnatcatcher *Poliophtila dumicola*:** Following us around imitating our playback throughout the Chaco.





*A friendly Sharpbill was more interested in harvesting Cecropia fruits than who was observing him (Richard Greenhalgh).*

**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.

**White-necked Thrush *Turdus albicollis*:** An uncommon forest thrush that we caught up with at San Rafael.

**Chalk-browed Mockingbird *Mimus saturninus*:** This was the common mockingbird in most localities in eastern Paraguay.

**White-banded Mockingbird *Mimus triurus*:** White wing and tail flashes were a common sight on Chaco roadsides.

**House Sparrow *Passer domesticus*:** Too many!

**Yellow Pipit *Anthus lutescens*:** Odd individuals buzzing in Humid Chaco grass and more flushed from soyfields near San Rafael.

**Hooded Siskin *Spinus magellanicus*:** Small flocks on leaving Asunción and on our return.

**Purple-throated Euphonia *Euphonia chlorotica*:** Males constantly called out for somebody named Phoebe at San Rafael!

**Chestnut-bellied Euphonia *Euphonia pectoralis*:** The jarring call note of this Atlantic Forest endemic is rather less easy on the ear. We saw several at San Rafael

**Blue-naped Chlorophonia *Chlorophonia cyanea*:** And this little feathered gems were also seen at this richly diverse Atlantic Forest site.

**Southern Yellowthroat *Geothlypis velata*:** A common wetland inhabitant.

**Tropical Parula *Setophaga pitayumi*:** Lots of encounters with this pretty little warbler across the country.

**White-rimmed Warbler *Myiothlypis leucoblephara*:** His enchanting song is known as "the characteristic sound of the Atlantic Forest". We saw lots of them.

**Riverbank Warbler *Myiothlypis rivularis*:** And the voice on this one isn't bad either! Skulking in riverside vegetation at Mbaracayú.

**Golden-crowned Warbler *Basileuterus culicivorus*:** Our constant companion in the Atlantic Forest.

**White-browed Blackbird *Sturnella superciliaris*:** Lots of fields with red-bellied males engaged in their butterfly-like display flights.

**Solitary Black Cacique *Cacicus solitarius*:** A couple of encounters in the Chaco.

**Golden-winged Cacique *Archiplanus chrysopterus*:** Birds and nests at Isla Yacyreta.

**Red-rumped Cacique *Cacicus haemorrhous*:** The pleasing flash of a red rump is a common sight in the Atlantic Forest.

**Orange-backed Troupial *Icterus croconotus*:** Birds feeding on aloe flowers at Enciso.

**Variable Oriole *Icterus pyrrhopterus*:** A common oriole throughout the country.

**Screaming Cowbird *Molothrus rufoaxillaris*:** Lots in the Chaco (especially at Toledo) and some at San Rafael.

**Giant Cowbird *Molothrus oryzivorus*:** Odd birds at San Rafael.

**Shiny Cowbird *Molothrus bonariensis*:** Marauding hordes all over the country.

**Scarlet-headed Blackbird *Amblyramphus holosericeus*:** An unmissable flash of red in the vast Humid Chaco marshes, with several also en route to Isla Yacyreta.

**Chopi Blackbird *Gnorimopsar chopi*:** This bird is so conspicuous it even tells you what it is! *Chopi Chopi*! Lots of encounters with lots of birds.

**Greyish Baywing *Agelaioides badius*:** Chestnut wings betray their identity. Flocks of them on Chaco roadsides.

**Unicoloured Blackbird *Agelasticus cyanopus*:** A chisel-billed blackbird of flooded marshes. Many seen in the Humid Chaco and at Yacyreta.

**Chestnut-capped Blackbird *Chrysomus ruficapillus*:** The buzzy calls of flocks of this common species were a familiar sound in the Humid Chaco.

**Saffron-cowled Blackbird *Xanthopsar flavus*:** Now officially a mega, we had a flock coming to roost at Kanguery.

**Yellow-rumped Marshbird *Pseudoleistes guirahuro*:** A charming marsh blackbird with stunning patternation. It's a common sight in eastern Paraguayan marshlands.

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

**Grassland Sparrow *Ammodramus humeralis*:** If there is a grassland there is a grassland sparrow.

**Grey-backed Sparrow *Arremon polionotus*:** A recent split from Saffron-billed Sparrow (*A. flavirostris*), we enjoyed this bird at Isla Yacyreta.

**Red-crested Cardinal *Paroaria coronata*:** Resplendent in the sunshine and abundant in the Chaco.

**Yellow-billed Cardinal *Paroaria capitata*:** Less common than the Red-crested, but equally lovely. Several in the Humid Chaco and at Yacyreta.

**Magpie Tanager *Cissopis leverianus*:** Loud, noisy, distinctive. Like a magpie. At San Rafael

**Orange-headed Tanager *Thylpopsis sordida*:** This twittery, finch-like tanager is common in the Yacyreta forest.





*Planalto Woodcreeper scuttled up trunks (Richard Greenhalgh).*

**Chestnut-headed Tanager *Pyrrhocomma ruficeps*:** A denizen of Atlantic Forest bamboo, this tanager is pleasantly common at San Rafael.

**White-rumped Tanager *Cypsnagra hirundinacea*:** Cerrado concerts, great looks at Laguna Blanca.

**Black-goggled Tanager *Trichothraupis melanops*:** Not the most colourful, but the commonest tanager at San Rafael.

**Ruby-crowned Tanager *Tachyphonus coronatus*:** A shiny black Atlantic Forest endemic, daily at San Rafael,

**Sayaca Tanager *Thraupis sayaca*:** “Azulejos” were a common sight throughout the trip.

**White-banded Tanager *Neothraupis fasciata*:** A near threatened Cerrado endemic. Flocks of “shrike-like” tanagers are easy to see at Laguna Blanca.

**Burnished-buff Tanager *Tangara cayana*:** A cocky male in prime plumage at Yacyreta.





*Common Pauraque abounds on Atlantic Forest tracks (Paul Smith).*

**Swallow Tanager *Tersina viridis*:** Always a pleasure to watch these flying jewels sallying from tree-tops at Mbaracayú and San Rafael. Not quite such a pleasure to hear them though!

**Blue Dacnis *Dacnis cayana*:** Another canopy gem, pairs at San Rafael and Mbaracayú.

**Guira Tanager *Hemithraupis guira*:** “Guyra” is the indigenous Guaraní word for a bird. These bird tanagers are a handsome and common forest bird in eastern Paraguay

**Chestnut-vented Conebill *Conirostrum speciosum*:** Picky males picking about the canopy at San Rafael and Mbaracayú.

**Red Pileated Finch *Coryphospingus cucullatus*:** It’s nice when the abundant birds are this stunning. Regular throughout.

**Black-crested Finch *Lophospingus pusillus*:** Up in the most arid regions of the extreme western Chaco, the “Soldadito” is a welcome sight.

**Long-tailed Reed-finch *Donacospiza albifrons*:** One of the reasons for visiting Arroyos y Esteros. Very cooperative.

**Black-capped Warbling-finch *Poospiza melanoleuca*:** A nosiy and conspicuous member of Chaco mixed flocks.

**Saffron Finch *Sicalis flaveola*:** The “Canario Paraguayo” is common throughout.

**Wedge-tailed Grass-finch *Emberizoides herbicola*:** Almost too big to be a finch, we picked out several of these perching on grass stalks in the eastern grasslands.

**Lesser Grass-finch *Emberizioides ypiranganus*:** Another cooperative species which we had close contact with at Arroyos y Esteros.

**Pampa Finch *Embernagra platensis*:** Ubiquitous wherever there is a marsh.

**Many-coloured Chaco-finch *Saltatricula multicolor*:** Arguably the prettiest Chaco endemic, it is also one of the easiest to see.

**Greyish Saltator *Saltator coerulescens*:** Most of us had ticked this off at breakfast in the hotel garden in Asunción before the trip even began!

**Green-winged Saltator *Saltator similis*:** A master performance from a singing bird at San Rafael.

**Golden-billed Saltator *Saltator aurantirostris*:** The Chaco Saltator. Hulking and handsome.

**Black-throated Saltator *Saltator atricollis*:** The Cerrado Saltator. Numerous at Laguna Blanca.



**Blue-black Grassquit *Volatinia jacarina*:** “Jimmy Jump Ups” are found in every patch of grass in the country.



*Not the most colourful woodpecker, but certainly little, this male Little Woodpecker was seen at Yacyreta (Richard Greenhalgh).*



*A magical up close experience with the endangered White-winged Nightjar (Richard Greenhalgh).*

**Plumbeous Seedeater *Sporophila plumbea*:** The Cerrado seedeater showed well with flocks at Laguna Blanca, and Aguara Ñu.

**Rusty-collared Seedeater *Sporophila collaris*:** Harlequin-like males at Arroyos y Esteros and in the Humid Chaco.

**Double-collared Seedeaters *Sporophila caeruleascens*:** Usually common, we saw only small numbers at San Rafael, Mbaracayú and Laguna Blanca.

**Pearly-breasted Seedeater *Sporophila pileata*:** This is the common seedeater in the Kanguery grasslands.

**Iberá Seedeater *Sporophila iberaensis*:** Newly described, Arroyos y Esteros is a hotspot for the species.

**Red Tanager *Piranga flava*:** Yes, it is. Seen on a few occasions at Enciso.

**Red-crowned Ant-tanager *Habia rubica*:** Noisy undergrowth flocks at San Rafael with some nice males showing well.

**Black-backed Grosbeak *Pheucticus aureoventris*:** Now this is a smart bird. A showy male at Laguna Ganso.

**Blackish-blue Seedeater *Amaurospiza moesta*:** A tough bird to see, but we were treated by a male at San Rafael.

**Ultramarine Grosbeak *Cyanocompsa brissonii*:** Males of the soon to be split Atlantic Forest subspecies *sterea* at San Rafael.

## MAMMALS

**Larger Hairy Armadillo *Chaetophractus villosus*:** One at Fortín Toledo.

**Six-banded Armadillo *Euphractus sexcinctus*:** A huge adult at Toledo.

**Azara's Agouti *Dasyprocta azarai*:** Tame and common at Yacyreta.

**Chaco Yellow-toothed Cavy *Galea leucoblephara*:** The Chaco guinea-pig, in the aloe at Toledo.

**Pampas Cavy *Cavia aperea*:** Easy to see at Yacyreta as evening fell.

**Chacoan Mara *Dolichotis salinicola*:** Half deer, half rabbit. A regular sight in the Chaco.

**Capybara *Hydrochoerus hydrochaeris*:** The world's biggest rodent happily uses cattle ponds in the Central Chaco.

**Coypu *Myoscastor coipus*:** Beaver-like munchers of swamp grass in the Central Chaco.

**Plains Vizcacha *Lagostomus maximus*:** Stripe-faced, chinchillas. Many on our night drives at Enciso.

**Jaguarundi *Herpailurus yaguarondi*:** A surprise encounter of a chilled individual crossing a road slowly at midday in San Rafael.

**Pampas Fox *Lycalopex gymnocercus*:** A handsome fox several times in the Chaco.

**Crab-eating Fox *Cerdocyon thous*:** Comfortingly tame at Mbaracayú.

**Lesser Grison *Galictis cuja*:** Wheely fast weasels whizzing across woads.

**Diminutive Serotine *Eptesicus diminutus*:** The roost at Pirahú is home to 600 of these tiny bats and is the only known roost for the species in the Chaco.

**Hooded Capuchin *Sapajus cay*:** Jumping monkeys at San Rafael.

**Collared Peccary *Pecari tajacu*:** A grazing herd at Laguna Capitán.

**Brazilian Tapir *Tapirus terrestris*:** One nonchalantly doing its own thing at Enciso.