



# BIRDING CHILE

## APRIL 11 – 29, 2015

### A BIRDING AND LOGISTICS REPORT

We visited Chile at a rather unconventional time, as most birding groups visit the country in the austral spring/summer. This report was mostly written at the time of the trip, but due to an additional 4 months of traveling through the tropics it never was finished. Although this report doesn't include the depth and breadth of information I originally planned it to have, I decided to publish it anyway. There is very little information available for birding trips to Chile in April, so hopefully this will be helpful to others that decide to travel to the country during the austral fall. For blog posts on the trip (and a lot more pictures) visit the [Chile section](#) of Budgetbirders.com

# SUMMARY

## WHEN

Most birding groups visit Chile during the austral spring or summer (Nov-Mar) when resident birds are breeding and migrants are present. Due to schedule constraints we visited Chile in the austral fall. Despite not being the prime time of year, overall we had a very successful trip. Most of the typical Chilean target species were still present but we missed several austral migrants, most notably 3 species from tyrannidae, White-sided Hillstar, Austral Rail, and Creamy-rumped Miner.

## TOTAL # OF SPECIES:

Birding highlights included seeing a total of 241 species of which 10 were Chilean endemics.

## RESOURCES:

We used the following trip reports:

Arica to Puenta Arenas: Raphael Lebrun, Mar 2012

Chile, South, Central, North: Michael Mosebo Jensen, 2012

In addition to birding reports, we extensively utilized eBird, which proved to be very crucial in locating target species.

For navigation we used a Nuvi GPS system and purchased the Garmin Chile SD card. If renting a car, having a GPS system is essential. Overall this system was extremely helpful but be wary, the program is not always 100% accurate.

We also brought with us a handheld GPS the Garmin Etrex 30 which was helpful with elevation and inputting GPS coordinates of our destinations. Very useful free maps available for [download online](#)

Free android and/or iphone app titled Maps.Me provided information regarding locations of gas stations, hostels and restaurants in addition to accurate street/road information.

## COST BREAKDOWN:

Total cost of trip was **\$2,783.28 USD** for two people. This can be broken down into \$693.60 for internal airfare, \$508.06 for rental cars, \$657.97 in gas, \$112.34 in lodging, \$447.84 in food, \$116.99 in tolls and \$84.30 in national park admission fees. We took 2 ferries, one to Tierra Del Fuego and another to Chiloe Island. The total cost for ferries was \$138.35. Other costs for items such as souvenirs was \$23.83.

## TRIP ITINERARY

**April 11** – Arrived Santiago 0300, departed for Punta Arenas 0800 and arrived 1630

**April 12** – Laguna Los Palos, Route 9, Puerto Natales, Torres Del Paine

**April 13** – Torres Del Paine (Lago Gray Trail), Sierra Bagueles

**April 14** – Route 405, Port Delgada Ferry, Porvenir

**April 15** – Laguana Verde, Parque Pinguinos Rey

**April 16** – Porvenir, seawatch, ferry to Puenta Arenas

**April 17** – Route (?) south of Puenta Arenas

**April 18** – Laguna Los Palos, flight Puenta Arenas to Santiago, La Campana NP

**April 19** – La Campana NP, Concon to Alarrobo

**April 20** – Los Fallarones, El Yeso

**April 21** – Altos de Licray, Lake Colbun, YBFI spot

**April 22** – Chiloe Island Ferry, W-80 (Cucao)

**April 23** –Punihuil, Chiloe Island Ferry, Los Muermos

**April 24** – Tubul, drive to El Yeso

**April 25** – El Yeso, arrive hostel afternoon

**April 26** – Route 60 (east of Los Andes), 2030 flight Santiago to Arica

**April 27** – Chaca Valley, Codpa, Azapa Valley, Chaca Valley

**April 28** – Putre, Lauca National Park

**April 29** – Lluta River mouth, depart for Bolivia

# SOUTHERN CHILE APRIL 11 - 18

## GENERAL LOGISTICS:

- No rental car companies open before 0800 at Punta Arenas Airport.
- We did the entire trip in a rental car with VERY low clearance and had absolutely no issues navigating roads.
- The ferry from Punta Arenas to Porvenir runs daily Tuesday-Sunday. It is closed on Mondays. The ferry departs Punta Arenas at 0900, therefore it is impossible to arrive in Punta Arenas, get a rental car at 0800, and take the ferry to Porvenir on the same day.
- Ferries depart Porvenir at 1400 daily.
- Port Delgada ferry runs daily from 0800-0100.
- There are no 'real' gas stations after Puerto Natales so it is essential to fill up one's gas tank before heading to Torres Del Paine National Park or Sierra Baguales.
- At the general store town (S 51.259164 W 72.345278) en route to Torres Del Paine it is possible to purchase gasoline, however it will be dispensed via plastic bottles and there's no real guarantee that you get what you pay for.
- If you are planning on birding both Torres Del Paine and Sierra Baguales you will most likely need to visit the general store 'gas station' as one tank of gas to do both probably will not be sufficient.

## BIRDING LOCATIONS:

### LAGUNA LOS PALOS

Laguna Los Palos (S52 43.171 W071 03.193) is a small lake in the Patagonia grasslands located on Route 9. GPS coordinates give exact location. This is a noteworthy stop as this location turned up numerous Patagonian water birds and land birds. E-bird reports show that Magellanic Plover has occurred here but we did not see any during our time there.

#### **KEY BIRDS:**

Silvery Grebe, Upland Goose, Ashy Headed Goose, Yellow-billed Teal, Red Shoveler, Flying Steamer Duck (21), Chiloe Wigeon, Patagonia Yellow-finch, and Austral Canastero.

### PUERTO NATALES

The waterfront in Puerto Natales is an excellent location to find large numbers of various species of water birds. A road leads along the entire waterfront with numerous parking locations along the way. The road eventually turns into a dirt track on the south side once you leave town. This entire section contained large concentrations of waterfowl, gulls and cormorants.

**KEY BIRDS:**

Coscoroba Swan, Black-necked Swan, Dolphin Gull, Imperial Cormorant (Blue-eyed and King), Chilean Flamingo, and Magellanic Oystercatcher.

**NOTES:**

Magellanic Oystercatcher found at S51 30.071, W071 17.439

## LAGO FIGUEROA

This lake is located on the west side of Route 9 at S 51.386088 W 72.440123, directly en route to Torres Del Paine. It is probably worth a quick stop here to scan for birds as we had several spectacled duck along the south shore of the lake.

**KEY BIRDS:**

Spectacled Duck

## TORRES DEL PAINE

Although most birding trips only visit Laguna Porteria to try for Austral Rail, we found Torres Del Paine worthwhile to spend an entire day. Perhaps more species can be seen elsewhere, but this park contains mountainous sights that are about as good as nature can throw at you. The “regular” Austral Rail spot (S 51.027514 W 72.775619) is located just after the ranger checkpoint along Y-150. This wetland is usually a reliable spot for Austral Rail in the austral summer, but being April water levels were extremely low and we did not hear nor see the rail. We did however have a Plumbeous Rail at this location. The park is exceptionally beautiful so we decided to drive through and hike the Lago Gray Mirador trail. Along the trail we saw a pair of Magellanic Woodpeckers and a flock of Austral Parakeets. The Lago Gray Mirador trail itself was very birdy and produced several new species for our trip.

**KEY BIRDS**

Andean Condor (common throughout),  
Magellanic woodpecker, Austral Parakeet,  
Patagonia Tyrant, Patagonia Sierra-finch

**NOTES:**

We stopped at S51 45.663, W072 29.055 to look at a flock of Austral Parakeet. While here we heard the drum of a woodpecker just off the road. We walked into the grasslands about 50m and had a pair of Magellanic Woodpeckers at close range.



Along Lago Gray Mirador Trail, most of our bird activity was at the edge of the forest before the open area. At this location we had a flock of Patagonian Sierra-finches and a single Patagonia Tyrant within a mixed flock.

## SIERRA BAGUALES

Sierra Baguales is located north of Torres Del Paine National Park along Route 9. This birding spot is known to produce White-throated Caracara, Patagonian Mockingbird, Band-tailed Earthcreeper, Yellow-bridled Finch and Cinnamon-bellied Ground Tyrant. Unluckily for us, most of these species are austral migrants and during our trip we were only able to find Band-tailed Earthcreeper and White-throated Caracara. The birding begins a few kilometers before Los Chinas where the thick Patagonian scrub makes for good habitat for Patagonian Mockingbird and Band-tailed Earthcreeper. As route 9 continues past the turnoff for Los Chinas, you will come across numerous cattle gates that you will have to open and close behind you (they are meant as a means to herd cattle and not considered trespassing.) Eventually route 9 dead-ends at an estancia. It was here that we found a small flock of White-throated Caracaras hanging around the corrals next to the farmhouses.

### KEY BIRDS:

White-throated Caracara, Band-tailed Earthcreeper

### NOTES:

Band-tailed Earthcreeper S50 53'06.7" W072 21'40.1"

White-throated Caracara: S 50.73926, W072.41425



## ROUTE 405

Route 405 runs parallel to the Argentina border through vast Patagonian grassland and makes for a productive birding day while en route to or from Puerta Natales. We took the route heading east and found numerous flocks of shorebirds and White-bellied Seedsnipe along the way.

### KEY BIRDS:

White-bellied Seedsnipe, Rufous-chested Dotterel, Tawney-throated Dotterel, Short-billed Miner, Austral Canastero, White-bridled Finch

### NOTES:

Around Km 30 we ran into our first large groups of Rufous-chested Dotterel and our first flock of White-bellied Seedsnipe. The majority of the Tawney-throated Dotterels were found in small flocks around Km 60 and another concentration of White-bellied Seedsnipe was around the Km 90 mark. White-bridled Finch sightings were very sporadic along the highway with the only large flock being seen at Km 145. GPS coordinates on notable birds are as follows:

S 51 49'03.6" W072 09'34.6" – Austral Pygmy Owl, seen on a telephone wire at dawn before along Route 9=, before turning to Route 405.

S 52 07'05.1 W071 19'34.6" – Austral Canastaro

S 52 06'46.7" W071 15'43.0" – Rufous-chested Dotterel

52 06'37.0" W071 06'20.1" – Short-billed Miner

S52 06'12.6" W071 04'13.5" – Tawney-throated Dotterel

S 52 05'54.0" W071 01'12.3" – White-bellied Seedsnipe, Correndera Pipit, Rufous-chested Dotterel, Common Miner



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## TIERRA DEL FUEGO LOCATIONS:

### LAGUNA VERDE

Laguna Verde has been a reliable spot for Magellanic Plover over the last few years. The lake is easily accessible just north of Porvenir. You are able to park your car at S 53 12' 12.9" W 070 17' 48.0" just across the street from a small farmhouse. From here you can walk the south shore and look for the plover. We found a single bird after walking about a mile.

#### KEY BIRDS:

Flying Steamer Duck, Magellanic Plover, Patagonian Yellow-finch

#### NOTES:

Magellanic Plover – S 53 11'31.3", W 70 18'50.6"



### PORVENIR AND ROUTE Y-71:

Porvenir harbor itself contained a large number of Kelp Gulls and various other water bird species including Dolphin Gull, Brown-headed Gull, and Kelp Geese. Route Y-71 is the main route heading southwest of Porvenir and it parallels large sections of the seacoast providing many opportunities to scan the ocean for sea birds. The southernmost points proved to be most birdy.

#### KEY BIRDS:

Black-browed Albatross, Southern Giant Petrel, Southern Fulmer, Sooty Shearwater, South American Tern, Chilean Skua, Magellanic Penguin, Flightless Steamer Duck, Kelp Goose, Dolphin Gull, Brown-headed Gull

#### NOTES:

- A family group of Kelp Geese roosted on the western shore of Porvenir Harbor each morning we were there. Another group was found just north of Bahia Chilota
- We stopped to seawatch along Y-71 once it hit its southernmost point. This appeared to be the best spot and provided an opportunity to scan through hundreds of seabirds flying by.
- Four different pairs of Flightless Steamer Ducks were observed along the coast of Y-71 once it started heading west.

### PARQUE PENGUINO REY:

The now-famous King Penguin Colony is located about 2 hours south of the town of Porvenir at coordinates S 53 27'35.7' W069 18'20.7'. It is possible to make reservations online but I do not think this is necessary and we had no issues not making reservations. The cost to see the colony is 12,000 Chilean Pesos per person. The park is open 7 days a week from 1100-1800. Once there, the growing colony of King Penguins can be observed from a distance of about 50 yards. On our visit 68 adults and 2 pulli were observed. Arriving right at 1100 would be best for photography. Much later in the evening and the sun will be setting behind the birds.

# CENTRAL CHILE

## BIRDING LOCATIONS:

### LA CAMPANA:

Located a little over an hour outside of Santiago, La Campana National Park is the closest and easiest place to pick up Chile's chaparral specialists (although some species like Mustaced Turca are much easier to see other places). When entering the park from Olume there are two sections, La Granizo and La Grande. Our research suggested that Granizo was usually a little more productive so we started our morning in the park there. There is a carpark at the ranger station and a dirt road that is drivable for a few km before being chained off (though it seems the chain might be removed at times). The sign says 4WD only, but we drove our small saloon car up the road with no issues. We parked at the sign Segundo Puente and walked up the switch backs through the Chaparral. The second location, La Grande, consisted of a parking lot at a ranger station and numerous trails heading up the canyon. We started up the trail, but quickly cut off to the right and up the steep chapparal hillside. The walking was difficult, but this allowed us to get great looks at Mustached Tapaculo and White-throated Tapaculo

**KEY BIRDS:** Rufous-legged Owl, Magellanic Horned Owl, White-throated Tapaculo, Dusky Tapaculo, Mustached Turca, Dusky-tailed Canastero, Pearl Treerunner, and Striped Woodpecker.

### NOTES:

- We heard White-throated Tapaculo from the Segundo Puente and finally saw it on the chaparral hillside in the La Grande Section.
- Mustaced Turca were easily heard calling, but difficult to see at this location.
- Dusky Tapaculo was seen along the switch backs uphill from Segundo Puente
- Striped Woodpecker responded very well to playback along the switch backs at La Granizo
- Both Rufous-legged and Magellanic Horned Owls were very vocal at the Segundo Puente sign. Both species had fully fledged young which were very vocal. It took a lot of effort to finally see the Rufous-legged Owls. The Magellanics were seen at dawn flying around from tree to tree along the switch backs.

### CONCON TO ALGARROBO

The town of Concon with its close proximity to La Campana is a good location to start a southerly route along the coast searching for Chile's seaside species. We spent an afternoon birding from here down to Desembocadura Estero San Geronimo wetlands just north of Algarrobo. Most birders also visit the Rio Mapio estuary (a good location for Ticklings Doradito and Spectacled Tyrant), but being the wrong time of year we skipped these locations.

### KEY SPECIES:

Stripe-backed Bittern, Black-headed Duck, Peruvian Booby, Peruvian Pelican, Red-legged Cormorant, Guanay's Cormorant, Inca Tern, Chilean Seaside Cinclodes, Gray-flanked Cinclodes, Dark-faced Ground-Tyrant.

## NOTES:

- We were able to easily locate a pair of Chilean Seaside Cinclodes along the rocky shoreline of Concon. There are multiple places to park your vehicle and scan the rocks along this coastal town.
- Driving south along the coast, there are numerous places to pull off and scan the ocean and rocky shoreline. All of the “seabird” targets should be easy to see along this stretch.
- SG estuary (S 33.354766 W 71.652843) is located just north of Algarrobo. It is possible to park your car just south of the bridge in a dirt lot. From here, you are able to walk onto the bridge to scan the reeds as well as scan from a wooden platform on the north shore of the river. At the moment (and still in 2016), Stripe-backed Bittern is being regularly seen and we were able to get great views of a single bird in the reeds on the south shore just east of the bridge (best viewed from the wooden platform). There was also a single Black-headed Duck present at this location.

## LOS FALLORONES

We spent a single morning birding this area. Being outside of the austral summer, a lot of the expected species were absent, but overall the site is still worth a visit. The upper slopes of the ski slopes above the Ski Resort town held huge flocks of Rufous-banded Miners (a few hundred) with Greater Yellow-Finches mixed in.

**KEY SPECIES:** Rufous-banded Miner, Crag Chilia, Mustached Turca, Greater Yellow-Finch.

## NOTES:

- Our largest flocks of birds were located on the upper ski slopes above the ski resort. There is a dirt road that allows you to gain further elevation.
- Crag Chilia and Mustached Turca were located at (GPS, elevation)
- This area is also known for Creamy-rumped Miner, Black-fronted Ground-Tyrant, and White-sided Hillstar, but being late April all seem to have disappeared.

## EL YESO

We visited El Yeso on two occasions. The road is in very good shape and is easily traveled in any type of vehicle. The roughest patch is actually the first 5-6 km. It is a little over 30 km to get to the known Diademed Sandpiper-Plover spot. Along the first few km (km 3 – km 8) both Crag Chilia and Mustached Turca were numerous. On multiple occasions we saw Turcas feeding brazenly in the middle of the road! The main target for most birders is Diademed Sandpiper-Plover which is reliably found after navigating the windy road along El Yeso. As you pass the lake you'll see the bog to your left, but you'll need to continue past it until crossing over a wooden bridge (about 10 km from the dam.) After crossing the bridge take your first left and continue on the dirt track. The track crosses the stream twice (at the time of our visit we easily drove through with our small car) and continues to the edge of the bog. We walked along the dirt road that leads along the edge of the bog (it is slightly elevated.) This road acted as a good vantage point to scan the bog and on both occasions we actually found DSPP sitting along the dirt road! (S 33 37' 27.4' W 70 01' 17.8').

**KEY BIRDS:**

Diademed Sandpiper-Plover, Crag Chilia, Moustaced Turca, Scale-throated Earthcreeper

**NOTES:**

- We encountered 3 Crag Chilia at Km 4.1 and two more at Km 7.5
- There is a stream on top of the small ridge, this was a good location for Dark-facked Ground-Tyrant, Rufous-banded Miner, Scale-throated Earthcreeper, and Moustaced Turca
- The DSSP bog also held multiple South American Snipe. This area is also known as a very reliable spot for Grey-breasted Seedsnipe, but they were surprisingly absent during our visit (time of year?).
- Overall birds were sparse, but once again, this was probably due to it being late April and most austral migrants had departed.



## ALTOS DE LICRAY NATURE RESERVE

Altos de Licray is located a few hours south of Santiago and east of the city of Talca. Take Ave San Miguel through San Clemente and then turn left on 705 towards Vilches (there's a wooden sign saying Altos de Licray 29 km, S 35.574731 W 71.325654) follow this road (eventually becoming a dirt track) to its end. The reserve is opened from 0830-1830, but the gate is never left open. There is a ranger station about 100 meters before the gate and it is necessary to stop in and have them open the gate for you. Otherwise you can walk the 2 km to the actual park area. Once at the car park, the A Trail is located about 100 meters past the ranger station. This loop trail is very reliable for Chuaco Tapculo and Chestnut-throated Huet-Huet. This area is good for Magellanic Woodpecker, Patagonian Sierra Finch, and Patagonia Tyrant.

**KEY BIRDS:** Austral Parakeet, Chuaco Tapaculo, Chestnut-throated Huet-huet

**NOTES:**

- We heard multiple Chuaco Tapaculos along the A Trail with one seen well between points 2 & 3
- We heard multiple Chestnut-throated Huet-huets along the trail with good views of a pair just before point 7
- Numerous Patagonia Tyrants were heard throughout (including at the first gate)
- This area is known for Magellanic Woodpeckers, but since we had already seen this species in Torres Del Paine and were pressed for time, we didn't put in much effort to find them here.

## LAKE COLBUN

Located about 45 minutes south of the turnoff for Altos de Licray, this is THE spot for Burrowing Parakeets. Most sightings seem to be along the north eastern side of the lake (where it's more of a river). Although I had read that the birds frequented "farm fields" in the area, their actual location isn't what one would expect for "farm fields." On our second pass along the section of road, we heard a noisy flock and located them at (S 35.72222 W 071.18922). The birds were in trees along the river directly across from the San Sebastian's store and behind a small church. There's also a farm field present here.

**KEY BIRDS:** Burrowing Parakeet

### **YELLOW-BRIDLED FINCH SPOT (NEAR ARGENTINE BORDER)**

This spot probably won't be of much interest to many birders, as Yellow-bridled Finches only move north during the "winter" and most people will be visiting during the austral summer. If you find yourself in Chile during the winter as we did, this spot could be worth a visit. Located along Route 115 past Lake Colbun, we found a flock of three Yellow-bridled Finches (first reported two weeks earlier on eBird) just past km 150 marker (S 36.00704 W 70.47694). There is a small bog on your right which was also good for Greater Yellow-Finch and Sharp-billed Canastero which was in the vegetation on the uphill side.



**KEY BIRDS SEEN:** Sharp-billed Canastero, Yellow-bridled Finch, and Greater Yellow-Finch

## CHILOE ISLAND FERRY:

Ferries run constantly from Pargua to Chiloe Island and last 20-30 min. During the ferry ride we were able to see a few seabirds including Black-browed Albatross, Pink-footed Shearwater, and Chilean Skua. At the ferry approach Chacao there was a small group of Chiloe Flightless Steamer Ducks along the rocks

### **KEY SPECIES:**

Black-browed Albatross, Pink-footed Shearwater, Chilean Skua, Flightless Steamer Duck

## W-80 (ROAD TO CUCAO)

This road, about 1 ½ hours from Ancud and just south of Castro, runs west to the coast and is a one stop shop for most of the target birds of Chiloe Island. After the first few km, good patches of chusquea bamboo is present along the road. Stopping at good patches of bamboo should produce Black-throated Huet-huet, Ochre-flanked Tapaculo, Chuaco Tapaculo, and Des Mur's Wiretite. This road is also known

to produce Rufous-tailed Hawk, a species we were fortunate to have fly over us while birding the road. At the end of the road, a marshy area holds shorebirds and a scan of the sea should produces hundreds/thousands of Sooty Shearwaters in the distance.

**KEY BIRDS SEEN:**

Rufous-tailed Hawk, Austral Pygmy-Owl, Black-throated Huet-huet, Ochre-flanked Tapaculo, Chucao Tapaculo, and Des Mur's Wiretail.

**NOTES.**

We made the following stops along the road. First stop at S 42.67524 W 073.98383. Second stop at S 42.66636 W 074.00171. Third stop at S 42.66435 W 074.00841. Fourth stop at S 46.66328 W 074.01967.

Rufous-tailed Hawk: stop 3

Black-throated Huet-huet: 2 seen at stop 1, heard stop 3

Ochre-flanked Tapaculo: 1 heard stop 1, 2 seen stop 4

Chucao Tapaculo: 2 heard stop 1, 2 heard stop 2, 1 seen stop 3

Des Mur's Wiretail: 1 seen stop 1, 2 seen stop 2

## PUNIHUIL

Located about 30 km west of Ancud, the well sign posted village of Punihuil is a good vantage point to see both Magellanic and Humbolt's Penguins. The last section of the road requires you to cross a small creek and drive on the beach (doable in a small car). Numerous tours are available to take a boat to visit the islets. Being the offseason, not a large number of penguins were around, but we were able to see 3 Humbolt Peguins after scanning the offshore islets. The islets are best scanned from the hill above Punihuil a dirt road leading to the top).

**KEY BIRDS SEEN:** Humbolt's Penguin, Flightless Steamer Duck, Kelp Goose

## LOS MUERMOS

Located west of Puerto Montt, this area contains large tracts of farm land which is good for large winter flocks of Slender-billed Parakeets. We found a small flock within the town itself, but the large flocks were located north along V-46

**KEY BIRDS SEEN:** Slender-billed Parakeets

**NOTES:** Over 500 birds were seen along V-46 north of Los Muermos with a single flock of 350 at (S 41.30158 W 073.4588)

## CHILEAN TINAMOU

Heading east of the Slender-billed Parakeet spot, we chanced upon a single roadside Chilean Tinamou at S 41.33265 W 073.3226 along V-50. If looking for this species, the roads in this area pass through a lot of good habitat and spending a morning driving the roads would probably be worthwhile.

**KEY BIRDS SEEN:** Chilean Tinamou

## TUBUL (SOUTH OF CONCEPTION)

Located about 45 min south of Conception, the small town of Tubul, was a great location for large concentrations of waterbirds. This area is probably not visited by many birders as most do not drive from Santiago to Puerto Montt. If you do undertake the drive, this a good half way stop. The bridge just outside of the town of Tubul was a good location to scan for birds and it was here that we had a group of 14 Snowy-crowned Terns. Thousands of other birds are also present including large numbers of American Oystercatcher, Black Skimmers, and Black-necked Stilts. This was also the only location that we had Hudsonian Godwit, a numerous winter bird (but by the end of April they seem to have already departed from everywhere else we checked.)

**KEY BIRDS:** Snowy-crowned Tern, Hudsonian Godwit, Austral Negrito, marshbirds

### **NOTES**

S 37.230385 W 73.457045

# NORTHERN CHILE

## BIRDING LOCATIONS:

### CHACA VALLEY

Located about 30 km south of Arica, the Chaca Valley is a known spot for Tamarugo Conebill and Chilean Woodstar. To reach this oasis continue on the Pan American highway for ~35km before turning right to enter the valley (you'll see the valley below to your right as you approach from above along the Pan American highway), S 18.797470 W 70.174528. Although Tamarugo Conebill is reliable here during the austral summer, we were unable to find any on our visit. The conebill regularly moves to higher elevations during the winter and we believe the majority had already moved on. If trying for this bird from early April on, we recommend heading directly to Codpa, roughly another 70 km past Chaca Valley. The town of Chaca itself is located on the left side of the Pan American highway. This is known area for Chilean Woodstar and we were able to observe a single bird a few km up the road from the school at S 18.81357 W 70.15171.

**KEY BIRDS SEEN:** Chilean Woodstar, Slender-billed Finch, Burrowing Owl

### CODPA

Located roughly 70 km from Chaca, the desert oasis of Codpa is home to large numbers of Tamarugo Conebills during the austral winter months. We visited this spot in the heat of the day and were able to find a pair of conebills after a bit of effort. After reaching the town, take the dirt road towards Guanacagua. The valley of trees/orchard will be on your right and you can easily bird the area from the road, S 18.84110 W 069.74403.



**KEY BIRDS SEEN:** Tamarugo Conebill, Slender-billed Finch, Grayish Miner

**NOTES:** On the drive to Codpa you pass through a vast rocky area deprived of almost all types of vegetation. At S 18.85266 W 069.70086 we had a single Grayish Miner.

### AZAPA VALLEY (PALACIO DE PICAFLORES)

The Azapa Valley is another well-known hotspot for Chilean Woodstar. Although there are a few locations visited in the valley, the only place we went to was Maria Teresa Hummingbird Garden (Palacio de picaflores is the hotspot in ebird). From the Azapa Valley roundabout, head east 14 km before turning right onto a dirt road. Follow this road for a few km before reaching the Hummingbird Garden on your right. The location is well signposted and there is a small entrance fee of CLP 1000. During our visit the area was loaded with Oasis Hummingbirds (four active nests seen) and Peruvian Sheartails. Unfortunately, after talking with Maria, the Chilean Woodstars (picaflores de arica) are most

common at her place during June, July, and August. She suggested trying the Chaca Valley for the rare hummingbird and that is where we eventually found one.

**KEY BIRDS SEEN:** Bran-colored Flycatcher, Croaking Ground-Dove, Oasis Hummingbird, Peruvian Sheartail, Slender-billed Finch

## PUTRE

The well-known birding town of Putre is located roughly 140 km from Arica and just outside of Lauca National Park. The main birding location at this town is a dry gorge north of the town. Access to the gorge is via a dirt road located near the north eastern corner of town. The road quickly goes downhill to a creek bed (S 18 11' 34.5' W 69 33' 30.4) before heading steeply back up. We saw the majority of our targets (all three earthcreepers and Dark-winged Canastero) near the creek bed. Others have reported Ornate Tinamou and Mountain Parakeet from the fields on top of the hill, but we were unable to locate either.

**KEY BIRDS SEEN:**

Andean Hillstar, Giant Hummingbird, Bare-faced Dove, Golden-spotted Dove (outside of town) White-throated Earthcreeper, Plain-breasted Earthcreeper, Straight-billed Earthcreeper, Dark-winged Canastero, Canyon Canastero, Tamarguo Conebill, Black-hooded Sierra-finch.

**NOTES:**

Our only Golden-spotted Ground-Doves were seen along Route 11 after departing Putre in the evening and heading west towards Arica. At roughly S 18.24623 W 069.54607. A creek flows underneath route 11 where had 12 birds coming to drink at this creek about an hour before dark. This could be a very worthwhile site to check in the late afternoon if you're having trouble finding this sometimes tricky species.

## LAUCA NATIONAL PARK LOCATIONS:

The national park is the most convenient place to pick up numerous high altitude Andean species in Chile. Once entering the park from Putre, there are three main birding sights that we visited: Las Cuevas, Bofedal Chuyacuta y Comolioco, and the southern point of Lake Chungara. Route 11 which runs through the park is still undergoing road construction, but it doesn't seem to be as bad as reported in prior bird reports. The first section of road is in very good shape, but the second is littered with potholes (though still very navigable in a small car).

### LAS CUAVAS:

Located at km 146, the location consists of a car park on the right side of the road and a trail which begins across the road. The short trail takes you to a bofedal bog before circling back to the main road and a view of the bofedal bog along Route 11. The bog is a known spot for both seedsnipe, ground-tyrants, Puna Tinamou, White-throated Sierra Finch, and other high altitude species.

**KEY BIRDS SEEN:** Puna Tinamou (heard only), Grey-breasted Seedsnipe (in the bofedal along route 11), Puna and White-fronted Ground-Tyrants, Puna Miner, Cordilleran Canastero, White-throated Sierra-Finch (near km 145), and White-winged Duica Finch.

### BOFEDALS CHUYACUTA Y COMOLIOCO:

These bofedals are along the northern side of route 11. We scanned them from S 18.22074 W069.31316 and S 18.21688 W069.29392 From these two locations we were able to see all three species of flamingo as well as Andean Avocet.

**KEY BIRDS SEEN:** Chilean Flamingo (36), Andean Flamingo (47), and Puna Flamingo (1), Andean Avocet (10)

**NOTES:** We were surprised to see all three species of flamingo after research suggested this was a poor time of year from them. Andean was surprisingly the most numerous and the single young Puna Flamingo was easily recognized next to the Andeans by its smaller size and very limited black tipped bill.

### LAKE CHUNGARA (SOUTHERN TIP):

Although the lake can be viewed from many stops, the best spot was along the causeway at the very southern tip of the lake. The area of water to the south of the causeway held a number of interesting species.

**KEY BIRDS SEEN:** Puna Rhea (9), Puna Plover (5), Andean Lapwing, Andean Negrito, Cordilleran Canastero

### LLUTA VALLEY RIVER MOUTH:

This location is just south of Arica airport (but still north of the city) and makes for a nice quick stop on the evening of arrival or just before departure. We made a quick stop on our last morning and added a number of new trip birds at the river mouth.

**KEY BIRDS SEEN:** Band-tailed Gull, Grey-hooded Gull (rare), Franklin's Gull, Common Gallinule, and White-cheeked Pintail