

Bird & Mammal Trip Report
NW Argentina (Oct-Nov 2023)



Rob Jansen
photography

Introduction

About us

We are two enthusiastic nature lovers who travel the world together to search for stunning birds, fascinating mammals and incredible nature. Our world travel started in October 2021 in Chile, where we bought a car to drive through South-America in search of birds and mammals for about 2 years.

Rob Jansen is a biologist and wildlife photographer, and thus has a lot of knowledge about species and ecology. He's enthusiastic about all that's in nature, but mainly photographs birds and mammals.

Romy Jansen-Houtzager is a marketing professional. Our social media accounts, the look and feel of this report and the website are her work. In the field, she is an excellent spotter and very patient (give me some of her patience ...and hurry!).



Rob with a **Common Woolly Monkey**



Romy with Condor feather

Information and how to use this trip report

This trip report covers the region of northwest & central Argentina. We travelled this part of Argentina from the 14th of October – 17th of November 2023. For all photos of our Argentina trip, comments, compliments, any specific questions, visit and/or contact us via our website. We would love to hear from you!

 www.robjansenphotography.com/argentina

 www.instagram.com/robjansenphotography

Species are highlighted in this trip report: **blue for birds**, **red for mammals** and **green for herpetofauna**. Target species which we missed at a specific spot are written in *italic*. This gives you an idea which species to pay extra attention to. All observations made by us in Argentina can be found on Observation.org. We observed a total of about 317 bird species and 15 mammal species in NW Argentina. Click here for the: [total bird list](#), [total mammal list](#) or [the total species list](#).

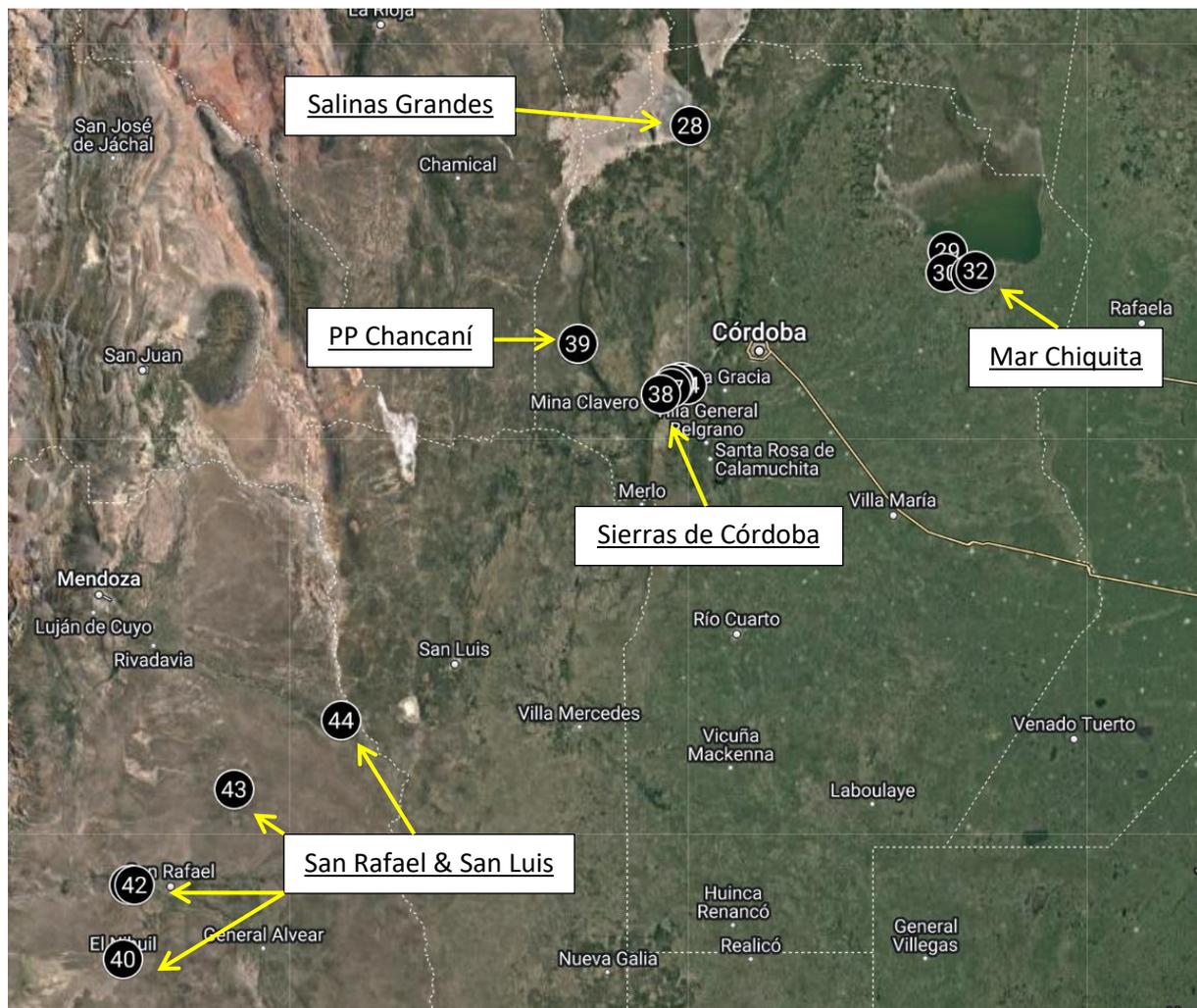
For more trip reports see our website: www.robjansenphotography.com/trip-reports

Map and specific locations

After bird- & mammalwatching a big part of South America (see previous trip reports), we still had the north-western part of Argentina left to explore. The map underneath shows places we visited in NW Argentina. You can click on the heading to go to that specific section in this trip report if you are only planning on visiting a certain part of the country during your vacation.

We made a [map in Google My Maps](#) with pointers of interesting trails and places and specific bird and mammal locations. You can view this map, download the points and add them to your own map (click on the three dots above the legend and download the KML file and drag this to your own map), or add them in the app 'Maps.me'. Maps.me has most walking trails on it and is usable offline. Route navigation by car doesn't always work great and it's better to use Google Maps for that purpose.





Weather and timing

We visited NW Argentina as part of our world travel from the 14th of October until the 17th of November 2023. It was often surprisingly cold, not only in the mountains but also at lower altitudes. According to Argentinians this was exceptional, except for the clear and colder nights; every camping night started off warm and ended up being quite cold, even in the Chaco/Monte. We also had quite some days with rain and strong winds. Probably due to droughts and little snowfall higher up in the Andes (making the lowlands drier due to less snowmelt) the migration started later this year than normal. This was both a great thing (catching up with species that should have migrated more south around San Luis for example) and a bad thing (migrants like Becards just starting to get back). Generally I would reckon this is a great period to visit, especially as temperatures get even higher in the lowlands in December-January.

Transportation

Our transportation in Chile was of course our Toyota 4Runner SR5 4.0 2010 (2WD) called 'Forrest'. We bought this car in Santiago (Chile) and got it converted so that we could sleep in it as well. Our

2WD did well in the NW Argentina and we had no problems. Main roads are generally really good, but gravel roads can be bad ripio/washboard for some parts.



Our loyal friend Forrest at Reserva Ñacuñán

Forrest at PPN Chancaní

Literature

- Birds of Argentina and the South-west Atlantic, Helm Field Guides, 1st edition, 2020, Mark Pearman & Juan I. Areta. *Drawings are ok, but for some species the details and proportions seem a bit off. But then, it's practically the only book for birders in Argentina. Searching up a bird (family) isn't made easy as the list in the beginning of the book is not alphabetically ordered. They do, however, pay extra attention to taxonomy and possible splits.*
- Mammals of the Southern Cone, Argentina, Chile, Paraguay, Uruguay, 2020, 1st edition, Lynx. *Happy that Lynx decided to make mammals guides. This book is small and easy to take along and has all the mammals in there! For naturalists who are interested in the bigger fauna (not being bats, mice etc) this guide should suffice.*
- BirdNet app for recording the bird sounds. *If you don't know all the sounds, BirdNet can give a possible ID.*
- iOverlander app for camping places. *This app gives nice information on where to camp or buy stuff.*
- Add this number to your contacts: +54 9 11 5349 5987. You can forward Spanish voice messages you get in WhatsApp and it will transcribe and translate to the language of your choosing!

Equipment

Photography: Sony A9 II + 200-600mm + 1.4x converter + Sony 24-105mm, GoPro Hero 9

Binoculars and telescope: Swarovski EL 8x32 WB, Eden 8x32 XP, Swarovski 65HD + 25-50mm

Heat scope/Thermal imager: Lahoux Spotter Elite 35V (lahouxbirding.com). A great heat scope from a company in The Netherlands. I owned other brands, but we are super happy with the sharpness, modes and light weight of this heat scope! More here: robjansenphotography.com/lahouxbirding

Spotlighting: Fenix HT18 Long Distance Flashlight (powerful, very focussed and my preferred choice for open areas), Fenix TK35 2018-edition (less powerful and focussed than the HT18, but still very strong and nice for spotlighting), Fenix FD41 Focus Flashlight.

Use of cell phones in Argentina

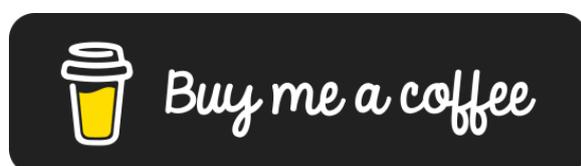
There are two bigger providers in Argentina; Claro and Movistar. Both require foreigners to register the SIM-card online with their help via social media. We bought a Movistar chip at a kiosk. This couldn't be bought at Movistar stores surprisingly. Activating it was rather cumbersome. Information is all in Spanish when activating it on the phone, and then they refer you to a number or Facebook. On FB they refer you again to WhatsApp. On WhatsApp we got only automatic messages from a bot. Only by putting comments on random posts on FB I got in contact and was able to register in the end (took me 2 weeks). Romy tried this but never got help, so she went to a store and they were able to help her there. So if you are going for Movistar: buy a chip at a kiosk and go to a Movistar store to get it activated. Cumbersome, but it will be the quickest fix for short holidays. Note: on airports it's often way easier to get a local SIM card as a foreigner. We weren't very happy with the signal/coverage of Movistar most of the time in the NW of Argentina. We would opt for Claro if you have a choice.

Cash Argentina

Bring dollars/euros when visiting Argentina and be sure to look up the 'Blue Dollar' rates. As inflation is high in Argentina, currencies like dollars and euros are wanted to make sure savings don't go up in smoke. However, it's hard for Argentineans to get these currencies. The 'Blue Dollar' rates are way higher than the official exchange rates (double the amount as we write this). Western Union will give you the Blue Dollar rate when you transfer money to yourself and pick it up at the counter (we pay a €3.90 fee for this). Your money will bring you twice as far or you can spend twice as much (depending on your style). Check online if the 'Blue Dollar' still exists, as politics made it 'disappear' for a few years (it's back since 2019). Argentinean pesos are worth nothing if you want to change them back to your local currency (and not many places do this anyways) so be smart on how many Argentinean pesos you get and spend it all in Argentina ;).

Water-to-Go

To reduce plastic usage on our travels we bought Water-to-Go water bottles. Read about our experience with Water-to-Go on our website: www.robjansenphotography.com/water-to-go. The bottle and filters are not too expensive, and you will have your investment back within one holiday. If you order with the voucher **RJANSEN15** you will get **15% discount** as well! Check the website here: www.watertogousa.com (United States of America, Canada), www.watertogo.eu (United Kingdom) or www.watertogo.shop (most countries in the EU).



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Visited sites

Yavi

[-22.12802, -65.46337](#)

Visited dates: 15-16 October 2023

Coming from the Chilean border we first made our way up towards Yavi, close to the Bolivian border. The road is paved all the way until the town itself. Yavi is a quaint little town and a lovely place to stay. Bird-wise it's interesting as there are certain species that -in Argentina- can only be found around this town.

We parked the car near the viewpoint (-22.128022, -65.463372) and walked the little road downhill. Along this road we encountered **Brown-backed Mockingbird** and multiple Cavies. These turned out to be **Southern Highland Yellow-toothed Cavy** (*Galea comes*), as luckily I had the characteristic orange ear tufts visible in the photo. There is a little stair on the right hand side at the end of the road. The path behind leads to the stream. Rubber boots aren't necessary, but if you brought them anyways you might as well put them on. Both in the afternoon as well as the next morning we found **Citron-headed Yellow-finch** in the canyon along the stream. In the morning they seemed to loosely mix with **Diuca Finch** (ssp. *crassirostris*), **Greenish Yellow-finch** and even one **Puna Yellow-finch!** **Bare-faced Ground Dove** is another one of those species that is only found here in Argentina and they were quite abundant in the canyon. Yet another is **Wedge-tailed Hillstar**, and this species too was encountered a couple of times on both visits. Other nice species observed are **Black-hooded Sierra-finch**, **Rock Earthcreeper** and **Streak-fronted Thornbird**.



Black-winged Ground dove

Citron-headed Yellow-finch

We hoped to encounter **Mountain Degu**, which has been seen by a couple of people in this canyon. Even though we searched in the late afternoon, at night and in the morning, we weren't able to find any individual. At night we encountered **Band-winged Nightjar** (HO) and **Common Mountain Viscacha**.

A note for mammal watchers that I want to include is that a birder has made amazing pictures of **Andean Mountain Cat** east of Yavi. In a corner of the main road (-22.217461, -65.205050) they were birding during the day at a Viscachas colony when they spotted the cat and made the best picture of it I've seen so far. Of course the cats have a huge territory, but at least it gives some more info to mammal watchers on exact locations where the cat has been found in recent years.



Bared-faced Ground dove



Black-hooded Sierra-finch

Abrapampa

[-22.7098, -65.70901](#)

Visited dates: 15-16 October 2023

Just northwest of Abrapampa is a lagoon located next to the road. This is a nice place to get many high altitude species, including **Andean Negrito**, **Andean Avocet**, many duck species, **Band-tailed Sierra-finch** and **James's Flamingo**. It took a while, turning over many **Slender-billed Miners**, **Puna Miners**, **Common Miners**, and trespassing some land before we finally found **Puna Pipit**.



Straight-billed Earthcreeper



Streak-fronted Thornbird

We continued for a while on the gravel road (washboard) and made two stops (-22.622077, -65.822645 and -22.594972, -65.84679). These are known spots for **Puna Yellow-finch**, but we only found **Greenish Yellow-finch** here besides **Creamy-breasted Canastero** and **Streak-fronted Thornbird**. On the stony walls we observed **Straight-billed Earthcreeper** and **Ornate Tinamou** called

from the opposite field. We didn't continue all the way to Laguna de los Pozuelos for species like *Horned Coot*, *Andean Flamingo*, *Puna Tinamou* etc., as we had seen those up close in Chile already.

Potrero De Yala Park

[-24.10751, -65.47908](#)

Visited dates: 17-18 October 2023

The main star of Yala Park is the near-endemic Rufous-throated Dipper. The first obvious point to search for this species is from the bridge (-24.120674, -65.438146). The second spot is further up the road, where we parked the car (-24.12062, -65.45853) and took the little trail going to the river. Judging by the rubbish this is a popular weekend spot for locals, so be sure to visit during the week. There is a kind of trail going along the river, which ends up at the road again (-24.12092, -65.46139). The first time we mainly scanned the river and only found **Torrent Duck** with a little duckling.



Torrent Duck female with chick and male



Torrent Duck male and female

The second time I walked until a corner even though I hadn't seen anything by scanning, and suddenly **Rufous-throated Dipper** (ne) flew from behind a rock. It wasn't shy at all and foraged upstream. By sitting still already upstream it would just walk by. We were amazed by how long it could disappear behind a little rock in the river, so take your time scanning.



Rufous-throated Dipper



Rufous-throated Dipper

Walking the roadside we encountered **Yungas Dove**, **Yungas Guan**, **Red-faced Guan** and **(Yungas) White-bellied Hummingbird**. Besides common flock birds like **Brown-capped Redstart**, **Common Bush-tanager**, **Mottle-cheeked Tyrannulet** and **White-throated Tyrannulet**, we also had **Buff-banded Tyrannulet** and **Rusty-browed Warbling-finch** mixed with the flocks. A typical nest turned out to be from **Spot-breasted Thornbird**.



Red-faced Guan



Spot-breasted Thornbird

We then drove higher up to the lake (-24.10735, -65.47893) where one can camp for free. Walking around here we encountered **Fulvous-headed Brushfinch** (e), **Red-tailed Comet** and again **Rusty-browed Warbling-finch**. We tried spotlighting at night, but it was too foggy to see anything.



Fulvous-headed Brushfinch



Rusty-browed Warbling-finch

Dique los Alisos

[-24.25566, -65.34269](#)

Visited dates: 18-19 October 2023

Not the most interesting place to bird in our opinion, but it seemed like a good spot for Yungas Sparrow (ne). We parked our car in front of the police station (-24.25565, -65.34265) and walked the roadside. Opposite from the police station we heard and then observed **Olive-crowned Crescentchest** (*ssp. argentina*). Going there we flushed **Andean Tinamou** from the ditch right next to

the road. Walking east towards the viewpoint we encountered **Giant Antshrike** (HO), **Yungas Guan**, **Moss-backed Sparrow** and a bunch of Warbling-finches; **Black-capped Warbling-finch**, **Rufous-sided Warbling-finch** and **Black-and-chestnut Warbling-finch**. Opposite of the viewpoint **Rufous-capped Antshrike** called loudly. Walking westwards from the police station we came to a more open area, which is where we finally found **Yungas Sparrow** (-24.254261, -65.345139).

We camped on the municipal camping (400ARS/€0,50 in total) and from there we scanned the lake with our scope. **Sooty Tyrannulet** foraged along the lake side at the camping spot. On the lake we observed birds that we hadn't seen in a long time on our world travel; **Coscoroba Swan**, **Great Grebe**, **Southern Screamer** and **Rosy-billed Pochard**, to name a few.



Yungas Sparrow

Olive-crowned Crescentchest

PN Calilégua

[-23.75956, -64.85049](#)

Visited dates: 19-20 October 2023

After 'twitching' **Large Elaenia** that has been breeding at Plaza Cristo de la Hermandad in Libertador General San Martín (-23.8169, -64.7986) we continued towards PN Calilégua (-23.7596, -64.8505). Another great NP, and free to visit. The main road is always open, but the trails can officially only be walked between 08.00-19.00. After scribbling our names down we were free to go wherever and we drove up to the first parking (-23.757793, -64.854359). Walking the road we soon heard **Giant Antshrike**, but it took at least half an hour and the use of our thermal camera to actually see it sitting between all the vines. Walking further along the road **Pale-legged Warbler** and **Two-banded Warbler** were observed, as well as common birds like **Ochre-faced Tody-tyrant**, **White-barred Piculet**, **Narrow-billed Woodcreeper** and **Scaly-headed Parrot**. **Great Black Hawk** and **Hook-billed Kites** were seen flying overhead. We also finally observed some Swifts which turned out to be **Sick's Swift** and despite taking many pictures we couldn't find **Rothschild's Swift** in between them.

**Giant Antshrike male****Yungas Guan**

The more interesting parts are higher up in the park. We started walking somewhere halfway the mountain (-23.6972, -64.8618) and walked the road upwards for about 2km. We soon heard **White-throated Antpitta** as well as **Yungas Manakin** (a lek close to the road can be found at -23.695763, -64.867256), which both turned out to be quite common around here. Another target that turned out to be very common around this part and higher up was **Slaty Elaenia**. **Plumbeous Tyrant**, **Dot-fronted Woodpecker**, **Black-goggled Tanager** and **Bolivian Squirrel** were observed by us only here in the park. The Squirrel looked quite different to us than the ones we had seen in Bolivia, as the eye-ringing and belly are more rufous than creamy here.

At night we drove up until the top, where the NP ends. Both at the higher and lower entrance there is free camping. We continued a bit and camped in a roadside quarry (-23.675798, -64.898922). **Barred Forest-falcon** called around dusk. At night we heard and later observed **Stygian Owl** close to the quarry. **Montane Screech-owl** turned out to be very common here too, with an estimate of about 8 individuals between the quarry and the end of the park calling between 20.00 and 21.00.

**Montane Screech-owl****Bolivian Squirrel**

The next morning we walked from our campsite into the park for about 3km. We finally managed to observe **White-throated Antpitta** at the top of the mountain. **Fulvous-headed Brushfinch** (e) was fun to see again. **Tucuman Parrots** flew over the park campsite at the top of the mountain. Walking down we observed **Golden-olive Woodpecker**, **Orange-headed Tanager** and quite some **Andean**

Slaty Thrush and **Highland Elaenia**. Walking down here and again farther down another 4km until the point halfway the mountain where we birded the day before, we mainly paid attention to hummers and to the sky for Swifts and raptors. Somehow we didn't manage to find (*Yungas*) **Speckled Hummingbird**, despite seeing 100's of hummers; mostly (*Yungas*) **White-bellied Hummingbird**, but also some **Glittering-bellied Emerald**, **Blue-capped Puffleg** and **Red-tailed Comet**.

**Slaty Elaenia****Red-tailed Comet**

Scanning the sky we observed **Hook-billed Kite**, **White-rumped Kite**, **Short-tailed Hawk** and **Andean Condor**. Sitting with a coffee at a viewpoint (-23.696428, -64.862320), I was saying we might be sitting at too low an altitude and just put the bird book away when the bird from the page I had been looking at made an appearance; **Solitary Eagle** circled up in a thermal on the opposite side of the valley and then took off towards the higher part of the park. Our last Eagle of South America, and despite searching at many good places only finding it at the last possible spot for this species on our journey!

On the way back down we heard another **Giant Antshrike** (-23.735676, -64.850693), which we were able to see really well!

**Mountain Wren****Plush-crested Jay**

Reserva Las Lancitas

[-24.1714, -64.44174](#)

Visited dates: 20-21 October 2023

On the way to Las Lancitas we made a stop more northerly on Ruta 80. This is where we found **Plain Tyrannulet** (-23.880749, -64.272148), a species we had only heard in Bolivia. We also added some more common species to the Argentina list like **Chaco Chachalaca**, **Sooty-fronted Spinetail** and **Black-legged Seriema** (HO).

We then drove to [RN Privada Ecoportal de Piedra Santa Barbara](#) (-24.09926, -64.39945). There we were welcomed by very friendly people who –after hearing our target species- recommended us to camp further south near a canyon in RNP Las Lancitas. These people know a great deal about birds and have hummingbird feeders in their garden. They have cabins and it seems like a great place to stay! We later spoke to them and they told us they have a waterhole with a hide, which attract a diverse array of mammals too; guests had seen **Ocelot** there, other guest had run into **Puma** and **Yungas Long-nosed Armadillo** supposedly showed up there too. It's always difficult to tell how good chances are of running into mammals without having taken the time yourself at such a place, but it seems promising and we wished we would've had more time ourselves here.



Rothschild's Swift on nest

Rothschild's Swift

We continued south and went through a cattle gate (-24.156682, -64.396981, just open and close it) and continued for another 6km until our camping spot (-24.171405, -64.441749). As we arrived at dusk we spotlighted right after and went to the canyon. We thought we observed a Bat hanging there, but to our surprise this turned out to be **Rothschild's Swift**! We eventually found 4 of them, two of which were sitting on a nest. The people at Ecoportal de Piedra told us they nest here from October on normally, but that they hadn't seen them this year yet at their nesting sites due to the drought. The next morning they were gone, so it seems they only spent the night here (before breeding?). Besides these we only encountered **Rhinella arenarum** at night.

The next morning we walked the road going up for about 5km until the site where they were logging the non-native pine trees. We had few targets left, but still didn't manage to find **Green-backed Becard** nor **Yellow-striped Brushfinch** (e). We did observe **White-browed Tapaculo** (e, *ssp. santabarbarae*, -24.170750, -64.454491), which according to the people from Ecoportal de Piedra is supposed to be split in the near future after a PhD research on this population. Even though we found it generally quiet we did observe species like **Slender-tailed Woodstar**, **Rusty-browed Warbling-finch**, **Green-cheeked Parakeet** and **Andean Condor**.



Brown-capped Redstart

White-browed Tapaculo

NOTE TO MAMMALWATCHERS: Unfortunately we didn't visit [El Rey NP](#) (-24.722904, -64.644815) due to time constraints and it not being clear whether the park was open; but it seems like a perfect place to camp for free with the family for a couple of days and observe some good wildlife (reached with a 4x4). We heard quite some non-naturalist seeing Lowland Tapir, Greater Capybara, Geoffroy's Cat and other cool stuff in this park.

Cuesta del Obispo

[-25.18396, -65.85335](#)

Visited dates: 22-23 October 2023

Our next stop was southwest of Salta; driving into the mountains again towards Cuesta del Obispo. Most of the road is paved, except for one larger stretch of road toward the top. Still this is driveable with any vehicle.

When we arrived at the first stop (-25.178494, -65.815826) we tried for **Zimmer's Tapaculo** and for **Tucuman Mountain-finch**. The former is often seen on the rocks north of the road, the latter in the shrubs south of the road. We were unpleasantly surprised by the strong winds and the amount of traffic. Except for lots of dust from the road we didn't see or hear anything. The same happened farther up the road at Quebrada Sunchales (-25.162847, -65.840651) and Quebrada del Escoipe (-25.166772, -65.849906), which are supposed to be good for the Mountain-finch too.

**Bare-eyed Ground-dove****Puna Canastero**

We then decided to drive into Valle Encantado (-25.183962, -65.853351), where we found **Puna Canastero** right next to the road. Just around the corner we observed **Bare-eyed Ground-dove** (e) and **Buzzing Miner** (split by the bird book from Rufous-banded Miner) despite the wind being only marginally less strong here. Biggest advantage in the valley was that all the day tourists had left, thus no cars driving by and getting dust up in the air. We parked the car at the end of the road (about 4km down) and walked around there. Pretty soon we observed **Zimmer's Tapaculo** (ne) in the canyon (-25.196590, -65.840691), which was there again the next morning. **Rock Earthcreepers** were present in the same canyon. **Red-tailed Comets** were going from flower to flower and **Andean Hillstars** tried to secure their flower patches by chasing them away. **Bare-eyed Ground-doves** (e) were quite common here too. Just seeing the head of **White-tipped Plantcutter** from far away made us think we finally found the Mountain-finch for a second. We walked around at night –hoping for **Puna Pampas Cat**– just finding **Common Mountain Viscacha**. In the morning we heard and observed quite some **Highland Tuco-tucos** (*Ctenomys opimus*)¹ sticking their heads out of their burrows. We flushed **Patagonian Snipe** from the little wet gully here.

**Highland Tuco-tuco****Highland Tuco-tuco**

¹ <https://cma.sarem.org.ar/es/especie-nativa/ctenomys-opimus>

Back up at the top of the valley we again found **Puna Canastero** as well as both species of Chat-tyrant in Argentina; **White-browed Chat-tyrant** and **d'Orbigny's Chat-tyrant**. **Andean Fox** was present at the viewpoint, begging for food from the many tourists present.

We then birded many places along the road with shrubs, hoping for the Mountain-finch. The two quebradas yielded more birds than the afternoon before, including **Ringed Warbling-finch**, **Rufous-sided Warbling-finch**, **Brown-capped Tit-spinetail** and **Tufted Tit-tyrant**, but no Mountain-finches.

Cafayete

[-26.1502, -65.95669](#)

Visited dates: 23-24 October 2023

The landscapes along the RN68 between the previous location and Cafayete are absolutely gorgeous, and you might want to plan enough time just to make some stops and walk around. We made a stop at Los Colorados ([-26.01836, -65.82417](#)) in the late afternoon, but decided to come back in the morning due to strong barely-able-to-stand-on-your-two-feet-winds. The morning was windy as well, but way more enjoyable. The **Steinbach's Canastero** (e) that we encountered in some low shrubs (-26.018391, -65.821320) helped making it more enjoyable as well of course. **Monte Yellow-finch** has been seen on the red cliffs here. More common birds encountered are **Cliff Flycatcher**, **Greater Wagtail-tyrant** and **Grey-hooded Parakeet**.

Around Cafayete and driving south towards the next spot we enjoyed the sight of 100's of **Burrowing Parrots** flying around, perching perfectly on the cacti (-26.1506, -65.9565). **White-fronted Woodpeckers** occupied other cacti. Both were encountered as well on our next stop.



Steinbach's Canastero



Burrowing Parrot

RP357/RP307

-26.73803, -65.76292

Visited dates: 24-26 October 2023

Coming from Ruta Nacional 40 (RN40) we took the RP357 towards Amaicha del Valle. After this the road turns into the RP307, towards the top El Infiernillo, going down again towards Ruta N38. There are many stops to make to get some good bird species.

Encallilla

-26.51772, -65.99793

Shortly after turning from the RN40 we stopped alongside the road. Walking anywhere along the road or between the trees could get you the main targets. At our first stop (-26.517729, -65.997932) we had **Tufted Tit-spinetail** (our last Tit-spinetail and only real target here), as well as **Southern Mountain Cavy** (*Microcavia australis*) along the road. At our second stop (-26.5302, -65.9864) we again found the Tit-spinetail as well as **Ringed Warbling-finch** and **Sandy Gallito** (HO). We didn't observe **White-throated Cacholote**, but as we had seen that species earlier on our travels we didn't put much time in during the hot middle of the day. Stupidly we totally forgot to check for **Black-crowned Monjita** (ne), as there was a recent territory of a pair –which we only found out afterwards–.

Los Cordones

-26.67173, -65.81777

At our next stop higher up we quickly found another bird that completed the family for us; **Monte Yellow-finch** (e). As we often found the case with Yellow-finches we didn't find the ID-features so clear in the field (the greyish webbed tertials and bright yellow underparts), but luckily these Yellow-finches can be readily ID'ed by sound. **Steinbach's Canastero** (e) and **Bare-eyed Ground-dove** (e) were present as well in this gully. As we had seen this target we skipped the next two back-up spots (-26.694038, -65.802996 and -26.706041, -65.795391).

El Infiernillo

-26.73803, -65.76292

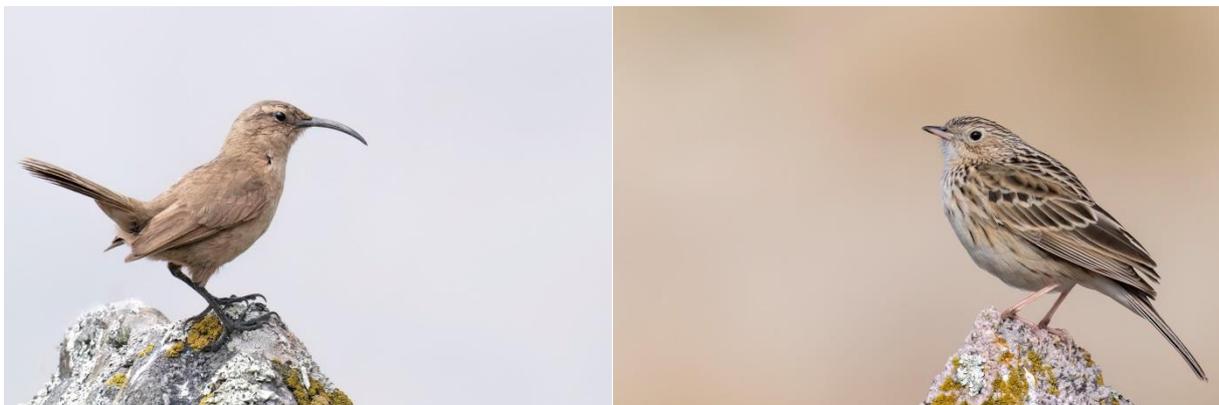
We arrived at the top to find it covered in dense fog. We decided to stake out the Tuco-tuco burrows along the road (-26.7405, -65.7665) and by doing so observed a lifer walking amongst the burrows; **Hellmayr's Pipit**. Not much later the drizzle stopped, the fog lifted a bit and some sunrays came through. Within 5 minutes we observed the first fresh ground flying through the air, and not much later the owner of the burrow stuck its head out. This should be **Robust Tuco-tuco** (*Ctenomys tuconax*); it had clear markings on the face; white tufts below the ear, black line behind the ear, and a white spot above the snout².

² <https://cma.sarem.org.ar/es/especie-nativa/ctenomys-tuconax>

**Robust Tuco-tuco** *Ctenomys tuconax***Tufted Tit-spinetail**

As is often the case with eBird hotspots; once on the spot you realise this is probably not the place where most people actually birded. The hotspot is on some houses/stores at the top, but all the fields behind it are fenced off. Opposite side of the road is where I went down to where large boulders and rocks are strewn between the grassland along the quebrada. I made a loop this way coming back more easterly; on route observing **Scale-throated Earthcreeper**, **Puna Canastero** (common) and **White-browed Tapaculo** (e. *ssp. ambatensis*).

I then went to the quebrada more east (-26.738033, -65.762921) and walked up for about 1.3km. It was only after climbing up big hills, climbing amongst all the rocks and then back to the stream that I finally heard **Scribble-tailed Canastero**. Two were calling from the other side of the valley, which was impossible to cross at that point. Once I went to a point where I was able to cross I didn't hear them anymore and returned. My advice would be to work your way along the west side of the quebrada and walk along the west side of the fence. This makes for easier walking and judging by eBird lists that I looked up afterwards the Canasteros have been seen on that side more often. **Hellmayr's Pipit** was seen multiple times during the walk. **Ornate Tinamou** crossed between tussocks of grass at one point and I flushed **Andean Tinamous** while climbing up a hill. The latter called fairly often as well.

**Buff-breasted Earthcreeper****Hellmayr's Pipit**

El Infiernillo - Gullies

[-26.77587, -65.7292](#)

Farther down along the road are two gullies. We stopped at the first (-26.775876, -65.729202) and within seconds found **Tucuman Mountain-finch** (e). If only we would have known they are that easy here, we wouldn't have searched a whole morning at Cuesta del Obispo ^^ . We camped here and found them again in the morning as well as the next afternoon. **Andean Fox** walked by our car late afternoon. **White-browed Tapaculos** (e) were present in the gully on the west side of the road. We were able to get quite close after sneaking down on the south side of the bridge. **Red-tailed Comet** was a treat to see as always. Both **Andean Tinamou** and **Huayco Tinamou** called often here. The other gully (-26.789776, -65.726456) to try for the Mountain-finch is located parallel to the road, and we found 2 individuals the next morning with great ease. Cavies seen here we identified as a probable **Brazilian Cavy** (*Cavia aperea*) considering colour, size and head shape (but we are gladly corrected).



Tucuman Mountain-finch



White-browed Tapaculo

Punta Carrera – Rio de La Angostura

[-26.96369, -65.6604](#)

Again farther down the slope we made a stop for our last target on this road; **Yellow-striped Brushfinch** (e). This species was easily found at the first stop we made (-26.963694, -65.660400). It was heard often going down the road, stopping often to check the river for **Rufous-throated Dipper** (which ironically we *dipped* here).



Yellow-striped Brushfinch



Yellow-striped Brushfinch

Salinas Grandes

[-30.04361, -64.68287](#)

Visited dates: 26-27 October 2023

The endemic Monjita can be found at multiple places around Salinas Grandes, but it seems that most people go to the south, so that is what we did. From San José Las Salinas you need to drive a washboard road to get to the entrance of the Salinas. One can enter after about 5.3km (-30.04665, -64.66251) or 2.7km farther west (-30.6442, -64.6805), which is what we did. Once at the low vegetation along the salt flat we scanned for **Salinas Monjita** (e), which Romy eventually spotted at the end of the other entrance from a distance of 300m (-30.043619, -64.682877)! After enjoying these stunners we walked back to the car, and encountered **Lesser Shrike-tyrant**.



Salinas Monjita



Salinas Monjita

We camped near the first entrance and spotlighted at night, but only observed **Scissor-tailed Nightjar**. The next morning we birded from that spot towards the village. At the entrance we heard and eventually got views of **Crested Gallito**. About 1-1.5km from the village we spotted **Spot-winged Falconet** (-30.018476, -64.633682). Other interesting birds encountered along the walk are **Black-crested Finch**, **Many-coloured Chaco-finch**, **Ringed Warbling-finch** and **Austral Spinetail** (split by the bird book from Pale-breasted Spinetail *ssp. australis*).



Black-crested Finch



Spot-winged Falconet

Mar Chiquita

[-30.93995, -62.8836](#)

Visited dates: 27-28 October 2023

At Mar Chiquita we first went to Península de Mare (-30.807545, -62.876837), reached by a bumpy gravel road. As it was quite warm and windy during the afternoon we didn't walk all the way to the water, which was quite far from the parking due to prolonged droughts. Around the parking we found **Chaco Sparrow** (-30.807184, -62.876225), **Austral Spinetail**, **Olive-crowned Crescentchest** (HO) and **Dinelli's Doradito**.

The next morning we went to the camping Laguna la Plata near the main road (-30.93995, -62.8836). They are building a boardwalk there, but as the ground was very dry we were able to walk along the only patch of vegetation that was there. Soon we heard **Dot-winged Crake** and by placing the speaker near an open patch we lured it into the open. With the water so far away there were few places which were interesting enough that could be scanned for **South American Painted Snipe**.



Romy with the sun



Dot-winged Crake

In Miramar we shortly visited Mirador de Aves Lomas de los Indios (-30.94652, -62.71184). From the observation tower we observed **Chestnut-capped Blackbird** singing beautifully, but other than that there wasn't much around at noon. The water here too was far away, and we were glad we had already seen the Crake as it would have been way more difficult here. As there were just a few holes from Tuco-tucos here we drove around to search for bigger colonies with fresh holes. Once we drove past the cemetery (-30.93415, -62.67342), I figured that would be the ideal ground to dig a hole for a Tuco-tuco. We turned around, asked the warden and sure, there were thousands he said. He had only seen it once, but heard them all the time. The warden found it fantastic that we came all this way for them, and he seemed to have no problem with us waiting at the holes in our camping chairs. During the hot midday we only heard them, but didn't see them. One tactic is to open the holes that are closed off with fresh soil, but obviously that didn't seem like the best tactic given the location. At 16.00 we walked quietly and for sure soon enough we saw earth flying at multiple spots and observed at least 5 different individuals of **Rosendals Pascuals Tuco-tuco** (*Ctenomys*

rosendopascuali)³ (e). If a graveyard is not your mammal watching destination, you can also try at a smaller colony at the ranger station where they are in the slope next to the road (-30.922432, -62.684839). Along the way towards the ranger station we observed **Olive-crowned Crescentchest** (*ssp. pallida*) beautifully at the small bridge (-30.931906, -62.684571).



Rosendals Pascuals Tuco-tuco



Chestnut-capped Blackbird

Sierras de Córdoba

[-31.62478, -64.70876](#)

Visited dates: 29-31 October 2023

West of Cordoba is a mountain range up to almost 3000m in altitude. This explains range maps of many species with a distribution in the Andes also having a tiny dot in the middle of Argentina (like some Sierra Finches). We had some time to kill and therefore spent some more time than necessary looking for the targets. Driving to Condorito NP (-31.62478, -64.70876) we observed our first **Long-tailed Meadowlark**, by some split as **Sierran Meadowlark** (e). We walked a little round opposite of the ranger station and observed **Grass Wren**, **Plumbeous Sierra Finch** and **Ash-breasted Sierra Finch**.



Grass Wren



Sierran Meadowlark

³ <https://cma.sarem.org.ar/index.php/es/especie-nativa/ctenomys-rosendopascuali>

Along Ruta Provincial 14 we tried for the remaining targets (-31.603505, -64.755286), but due to the strong wind we only heard **Puna Canastero** (*ssp. brunnescens*). Along the main road we stopped at two water bodies (-31.612028, -64.792923 and -31.612453, -64.806192). As they are quite far below the road **Cordoba Cinclodes** (e) and **Olrog's Cinclodes** (e) were only observed from a distance. The next day we climbed down over the fence to get closer by. **Puna Canastero** was finally seen instead of just heard at the second stop.

**Cordoba Cinclodes****White-winged Cinclodes**

We then drove an unpaved road going south from the main road (-31.610626, -64.826936) and drove to coordinates I had found in a research paper⁴. These eventually led to a farm with Francisco as owner. When asked about Tuco-tucos he grabbed the car and brought us from the gravel road through the field towards a river on his land. Once there he pointed to two fields where there were supposed to be many. Arriving there we were a bit disappointed by the low number of fresh holes, but waited anyway. After 4 hours the wind finally laid down a bit and we finally observed 1 **Oswaldo Reig's Tuco-tuco** (*Ctenomys osvaldoreigi*)⁵ (presumably a juvenile considering the fur) digging a fresh hole in the slope next to the stream. Walking quietly around we managed to observe another individual, an adult this time, sticking its head out of a hole without any fresh dirt around it (-31.644081, -64.813927).

**Olrog's Cinclodes****Oswaldo Reig's Tuco-tuco**

⁴ Contreras, F., Perez, M., Priotto, J. W., Coda, J. A., & Mapelli, F. J. (2022). Nuevos registros del tuco-tuco de Reig (*Ctenomys osvaldoreigi*) para la Pampa de Achala, Córdoba, Argentina.

⁵ <https://cma.sarem.org.ar/index.php/es/especie-nativa/ctenomys-osvaldoreigi>

It seems that for now this is the only place to see this endemic mammal that was presumed extinct for a long time. Francisco definitely wouldn't mind if you go search on his land, but if you do want to ask for permission in advance its best to email (alejodelcarmen@gmail.com) beforehand. He is also constructing 3 basic cabins for tourists in case you want to stay in the area.

Talking to the very hospitable Francisco, he confirmed the presence of another smaller species of Tuco-tuco living on his land further to the west. This seemed to be in agreement with another paper I had read⁶. Unfortunately this turned out to be on private land, and being there it wasn't clear if this was Francisco's or someone else's. If you meet someone there ask if he is named Raúl and that you simply want to see the Tuco-tucos. We found the exact same small hill as on the photo in the research paper (-31.685440, -64.89859), but there were only a couple of fresh holes. Another small colony is located behind the small shed (-31.68491, -64.89770). Unfortunately the weather was not favourable with strong winds, low temperatures and no sun. Despite posting the afternoon and morning we didn't see this recently discovered species *Tuco-tuco heniacamiare*. Taking the entrance opposite of the road (-31.6866, -64.8990), we also walked all the way towards a farm (4.5km) as Francisco said there were many Tuco-tucos of this smaller species too. Arriving there (-31.6626, -64.9175) we talked to the owner and we walked around in search of fresh holes, but couldn't find any. He said that it was strange but probably had to do with the drought this year. We did see *Lygophis anomalus* and a probable *Xenodon merremi*, although the pattern looked different, so it might be a highland phenotype or a new species. Big thanks to Alfredo Sabaliaukas from [Herping Argentina](#) for the ID! A Cavy we observed was most likely **Lowland Yellow-toothed Cavy** (*Galea leucoblephara*).



Spectacled Tyrant



Plumbeous Sierra-finch

⁶ Mapelli, F. J., Teta, P., Contreras, F., Pereyra, D., Priotto, J. W., & Coda, J. A. (2023). Looking under stones: A new *Ctenomys* species from the rocky foothills of the Sierras Grandes of central Argentina. *Journal of Mammalian Evolution*, 30(1), 281-298.

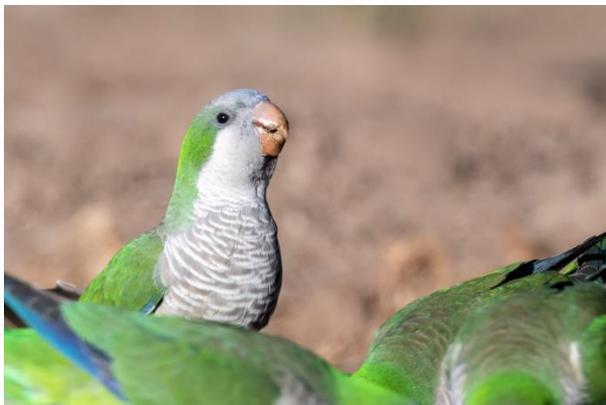
PP Chancaní

[-31.3768, -65.48021](#)

Visited dates: 31 October - 4 November 2023

Due to a fuel shortage in Argentina we had some more time to kill and went to Parque Provincial Chancaní. The drive there gives stunning views of Chaco habitat stretching out for kilometres, seen from a high altitude plane. Once at the park (-31.3768, -65.48023) we found the entrance closed. Eventually we found the ranger who told us we had to reserve online, but luckily he led us in anyway. Entrance and camping is free. There are toilets, and hot showers if you make a little fire under a boiler. In one of the toilets I found *Leptodactylus bufonius*. The stunning lizard *Teius teyou* was common in Chancaní.

This normally scorching hot habitat was now surprisingly cold, rainy and windy. Due to this we didn't explore it as much as we would have liked to. One morning we walked the circular 2km loop and encountered **Black-bodied Woodpecker** as lifer. Other things we encountered are **Common Brocket Deer**, **Chaco Earthcreeper**, **Chaco Sparrow** and **Crested Gallito**. Around the camping area was probably the best place to bird, with **Black-crested Finch**, **Lark-like Brushrunner**, **Crested Hornero** and **Blue-crowned Parakeet** being common. We hoped for *Cinnamon Warbling-finch* (e), *Chaco Eagle* or *Spot-winged Falconet*, but didn't see any of these.



Monk Parakeet



White-tipped Plantcutter male

Tuco-tuco holes are evident around the camping area, but surprisingly we heard them often but had problems actually observing one. It took until the last night that I was walking around and spotted one coming out of a burrow (without any obvious soil next to it) to feed on some plants. It was a very small and greyish Tuco-tuco, and some sources say it could be *Ctenomys bergi*, which should only occur around the river El Eje⁷. A scientific paper⁸ reporting a sighting of *Patagonian Weasel* hunting the Tuco-tucos on this camping keeps it as *Ctenomys sp.*, and so will I for now.

⁷ <https://cma.sarem.org.ar/index.php/es/especie-nativa/ctenomys-bergi>

Spotlighting didn't yield much, except for some **South American Grey Foxes**, which were most common around the campground. We also observed *Leptodactylus bufonium* and **Chaco Owl** was heard only (-31.37352, -65.47178).



Chaco Sparrow



Ctenomys sp.

San Rafael – San Luis

Visited dates: 5-9 November 2023

El Nuhuil

[-35.0399, -68.6834](#)

After driving from San Rafael through the gorgeous Cañon Río Atuel we arrived at El Nihuil. We drove to the lakeside (-35.0399, -68.6834) and mainly walked on the small dunes to scan the low vegetation. As we still missed some endemic (breeding) bird species we had looked on eBird for some recent sightings. It seemed that on migration lots of Rusty-backed Monjitas come by this lake. For the first hour we didn't encounter anything, except for **Great Grebe**, **Chiloe Wigeon** and **Red Shovelers** on the lake and **Snowy-crowned Terns** above it. Then suddenly we spotted some movement far away and with the scope we were able to see it was a Monjita. Getting closer we came across a nice group of at least 6 **Rusty-backed Monjitas** (e), feeding on insects on the ground and between the shrubs.

We then drove the road south of town (-35.0331, -68.6726) and stopped and scanned regularly. With heat haze being already strong around 09.30 it was still possible to make out the clear head pattern of **Black-crowned Monjita** (ne). Trying to get closer we observed **Lesser Shrike-tyrant** and two more **Rusty-backed Monjitas**. It being Sunday the roads and lakeside were soon overtaken by families, fishermen, cross motors and dune buggies, so we left.

⁸ Sferco, G., Toledo, M., Canio, E., Tello, A., Giaquinta, A., Mendizabal, F. F., & Rossi, F. (2018). Nuevo registro del huroncito patagónico (*Lyncodon patagonicus*, Carnivora: Mustelidae) para el centro de Argentina y aportes sobre su historia natural. Acta Zoologica Lilloana, 36-41.



Great Grebe



Rusty-backed Monjita

Los Reyunes

[-34.60486, -68.60648](#)

Going to Los Reyunes was a bit of a long shot, as we had only seen one record of a dead, probable *San Luis Tuco-tuco* (*Ctenomys pontifex*) on top of a dyke. But we figured if someone found a dead one, live ones must be around. It still being Sunday the place was crowded and every part of non-rocky area –suitable for Tuco-tuco holes– was overtaken with Argentinean people having an *asado*. We asked around and were directed to many different places, but only found a few fresh holes of Tuco-tuco next to Camping El Tigre (-34.60486, -68.60648). We staked them out late afternoon, but needless to say we didn't see any Tuco-tucos. Along Ruta 150 going north (-34.5791, -68.5780) we found some fresher Tuco-tuco holes, but staking them out for a while didn't yield anything either.



Crested Gallito



Black-crested Finch

Reserva Ñacuñán

[-34.04481, -67.9095](#)

Ruta Provincial 153 is a good gravel road and only the last 4.3km to the actual reserve are a bit sandy (but doable with a 2x4). When we arrived we heard the park was closed as the water pump was broken –for 4 months already–. We brought our own water, but the ranger kept insisting he was just doing his job by refusing us as the park was closed. Luckily things smoothed out a bit and we were allowed to walk around and later even camp on the parking (there is an official campground normally). It was already incredibly hot so we enjoyed some of the wooden art around the station, the 5 **Chaco Owls** including chicks and waited until 16.00 to start walking. The small trail around the

station wasn't very interesting so we took a straight path going southwest for a while. Except for some common birds like **Crested Gallito** (mostly heard), **Greater Wagtail-tyrant** and **Golden-billed Saltator** we didn't see much. **South American Grey Fox** crossed the path once, following the example of 100s of **Southern Mountain Cavies** (*Microcavia australis*) that cross the path all the time. We took a path going northwest and ended up back in town, meaning we had to walk the 4.3km long entrance road back to the reserve. **Spot-winged Falconet** was a great distraction. The next morning we walked most of the entrance road and observed this bird again. Besides **Suruiri Flycatcher**, **Ringed Warbling-finch**, **Tufted Tit-spinetail** and **Stripe-crowned Spinetail**, we finally connected with our last target in this region of Argentina; **Cinnamon Warbling-finch** (e). **Chaco Eagle** has a nest in the park. The nest is off limits of course, but they are apparently sometimes seen resting on the electricity poles along the entrance road, but not by us –bummer–.

**Chaco Owl****Southern Mountain Cavy**

The first night we spotlighted the main road, driving it up and down twice. We observed many many Tarantulas (probably *Grammostola inermis*) on the road, as well as 2 **Molina's hog-nosed skunk** and at least 5 **South American Grey Foxes** (mainly near the village). We tried to drive the main paved road, but there was too much traffic even late at night. Talking to the ranger we had hoped for a lot, but as usual it was very hard to get an idea of odds of encountering a certain mammal species –like we are city people coming to our first park ever: “it’s nature...”–. Cool things occurring in the park are **Pichi**, **Screaming Hairy Armadillo**, **Lesser Grison**, **Patagonian Weasel** and at least 4 cat species including **Puma** and **Geoffroy's Cat**. The next morning we did see some small cat tracks on the road.

**Blue-and-yellow Tanager****Grammostola spec**

Another cool mammal occurring in this region is **Pink Fairy Armadillo**. The ranger had multiple in jars on alcohol and we were surprised by the small size of them. He has seen 6 individuals in the ten years he worked here, but always after he got called that a farmer had ploughed the land and encountered one (which would happen around October/November). They apparently live solitary and don't have clear holes in the ground where you could search for them. Someone I contacted on iNaturalist said he encountered them twice, but only crossing the road after very heavy rainfall. Not a mammal you're likely to encounter without having very bad weather or a tractor and some sandy land to plough.



Spot-winged Falconet



Cinnamon Warbling-finch

Delta Rio Tunuyan

[-33.6352, -67.14689](#)

We found this place when checking eBird for recent sighting of **Cinnamon Warbling-finch** (e). A river delta sounded great, so we went. Along the 30km gravel road we encountered **Patagonian Mara** and **Spot-winged Falconet**. Arriving at the river we were surprised to only find a dry sandy riverbed, fenced off as being private land. As walking around in the morning and at night only yielded a snake (*Xenodon pulcher*⁹) and a cool looking frog (*Pleurodema* sp), I thought about just leaving the place out of this report at all. We decided to drive the road slowly back and scan the road and trees. This way we found 3 **Black-crowned Monjitas** (ne), 2 pair of **Patagonian Mara** (around -33.52476, -67.11742 again), **Lesser Rhea** and on top of that a subadult **Chaco Eagle** sitting on one of the electricity poles. That made this place worth writing about after all.



Black-crowned Monjita

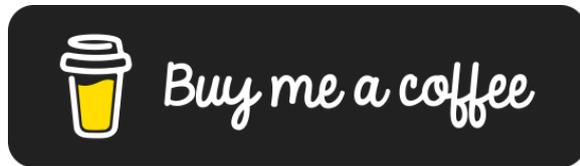


Pleurodema sp

⁹ Again big thanks to Alfredo Sabaliaukas from [Herping Argentina](#) for the ID!

You made it! Thank you for reading 😊

For all photos of our trip, comments, compliments, any specific questions, visit and/or contact us via our website. We would love to hear from you!



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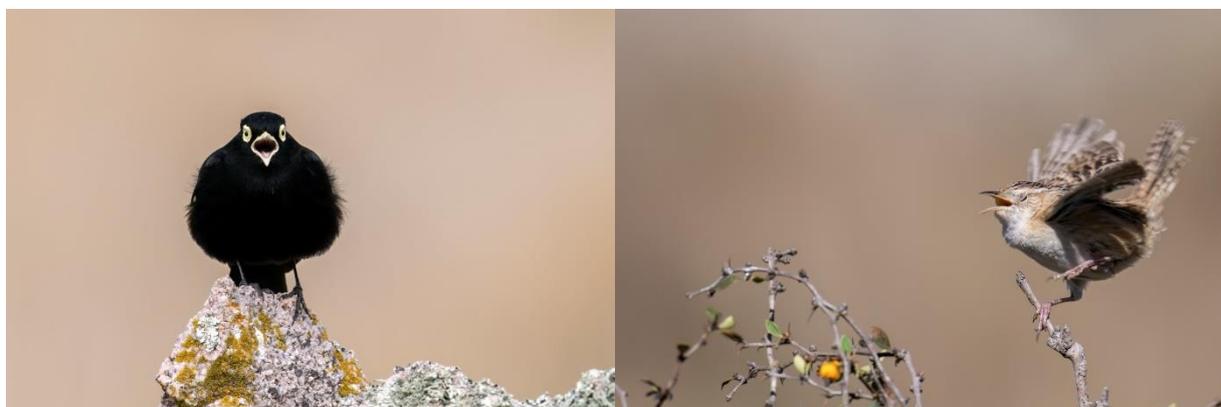
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All observations made by us in Argentina can be found on Observation.org. We observed a total of about 317 bird species and 15 mammal species in NW Argentina. Click here for the: [total bird list](#), [total mammal list](#) or [the total species list](#).

Our Top 10	Birds	Mammals
1	Rufous-throated Dipper	Robust Tuco-tuco
2	Spot-winged Falconet	Patagonian Mara
3	Chaco Eagle	Osvaldo Reig's Tuco-tuco
4	Crested Gallito	S Highland Yellow-toothed Cavy
5	Tucuman Mountain Finch	Molina's hog-nosed skunk

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Spectacled Tyrant

Grass Wren



Plumbeous Rail



Burrowing Parrot



Spot-winged Pigeon



Blue-crowned Parakeet



Yellow-browed Brushfinch



Salinas Monjita