

Buckbird Journeys Ltd

Central Argentina Extension

Thursday 21 – Friday 29 August 2014

(Merilyn Browne, Peter Buck (day 1 only), Elaine Nye, Gloria Shrubbsall, Hugh Buck (leader), Mark Pearman (guide))

This extension, following our Paraguay adventure, was designed to look for several of the endemic birds of the pampas, Monte desert and others of Central Argentina. It proved again to be intense with long days but largely problem free and the knowledge and expertise of MP ensured a good return for all. It left many of us thirsting for yet more of this dramatic country

All photographs by Merilyn



Itinerary

Thursday 21 August

Aerolineas Argentina behaves, has us into Buenos Aires by late evening and we are abed at the Imperial Park Hotel by midnight

Friday 22 August

With the Red-and-white Crake under our belts from Paraguay Mark amends the itinerary to a relatively gentle introduction to Argentina's birds at Otamendi in the morning and the Costanera Sur in the afternoon. We say goodbye to Peter at midday and he misses our first parrillada steaks in the evening

Saturday 23 August

A familiar early start and Aerolineas has us to a rather cloudy and wet Bahia Blanca and checking into our hotel by late morning. The roads NW of town are a bit wet and slushy but we get to our destination and a patch of native grassland by early afternoon.

Here the rare Pampas Meadowlark can be distinguished from its commoner relative and Darwin's Nothura, a trio of Elegant Crested Tinamous, a Lesser Grison and a smart Patagonian Pichi are additional highlights. Wind probably robs us of any chance of Pipits including our target Pampas and a closed bridge at Cerri later in the evening any chance of Gulls and other shorebirds

Sunday 24 August

Still wet and windy but we negotiate yesterday's "closed" bridge out to the shoreline where several in plumage Olrog's Gulls are a welcome sight. But the weather, both here and in BA, has led to the cancellation of our afternoon flight and the alternative, which we take, is a 10 hour bus journey (albeit a comfortable one) back to the capital

Monday 25 August

Is long. We arrive in BA at 0100 and take a taxi to Jorge Newberry Airport where we while away the time before our new 0605 flight to Mendoza. But here the air is dry and cool (and will remain so for the rest of trip) and the majestic and cloudless line of the Andes, topped by the dome of Aconcagua, is clearly visible to the west. This is our destination and a long drive up to 2900m and the Chilean border takes us there and back. But it is rather frozen and lifeless up high and we miss both our main targets even if the first of several majestic Andean Condors do offer some consolation. We are back and into our comfortable hotel by 1900. Dinner includes roast kid for at least one person

Tuesday 26 August

Our fortunes start to change now and the last 3 days will be trouble free and memorable. First the RN Divisadero Largo then through the lower lying Monte Desert where, at our picnic lunch stop near Telteka, a nicely plumaged female Cinnamon Warbling-Finch comes in to the "tape". On to the scenic sandstone Las Quijadas NP and a long wait until dusk when a few of the recently re-instated Monte Yellow-Finch come in to roost. A group of the large Patagonian Mara are on the exit road and we are happy two hours later to find accommodation and dinner at Villa Dolores



Wednesday 27 August

0730 and away up to the equally scenic plateau of the Pampa de Achala and its two endemic Cinclodes as well as several other interesting species and races endemic to these mountains. As good as anything is a kettle of no less than 19 Condors, both adults and juveniles, spiralling up from below us. We lunch at the aptly named Portal del Condor before descending to Ichao Cruz and another go for that elusive Black-bodied Woodpecker. No luck and on to our new base at Capilla del Monte



Thursday 28 August

A last early morning start has us on the shores of the Salinas Grande at daybreak and it is not long before we are enjoying great views of 3 of the endemic Salinas Monjita breakfasting on the lakeshore. Back at Capilla del Monte another afternoon go for the Woodpecker produces no response although a fine resting and obviously tired adult White-throated Hawk and a dazzling male Red-tailed Comet are notable. Then along another road out of town where, in the early evening, we at last induce a male Black-bodied Woodpecker into a trackside tree. He is flighty though and although he drums briefly only a long flyby overhead is our additional reward. But claim it we at last have and the evening parillada and the excellent Malbec taste all the better for it



Friday 29 August

The anticlimax of real life as we drive early to Coerdoaba and our flights to BA and home. Lots of memories go with us

O = Otamendi, CS = Costanera Sur, BB = Bahia Blanca, A = Andes, Q = Las Quijadas NP, PA = Pampa de Achala, SG = Salinas Grande, CM = Capilla del Monte

Birds

(Follows IOC taxonomy)

1. Greater Rhea (*Rhea americana*)
BB several 23 and 24/8. *Ssp albescens*
2. Andean Tinamou (*Nothoprocta pentlandii*)
CM heard only (H). *Ssp doeringi*
3. Brushland Tinamou (*Nothoprocta cinerascens*)
SG 1 flushed 28/8. Nominate ssp
4. Darwin's Nothura (*Nothura darwinii*)
BB 2 23/8 with one giving excellent views by the roadside. Nominate ssp
5. Elegant Crested Tinamou (*Eudromia elegans*)
BB 3 23/8. Nominate ssp
6. White-faced Whistling- Duck (*Dendrocygna viduata*)
CS around 20 22/8
7. Fulvous Whistling Duck (*Dendrocygna bicolor*)
CS 2 22/8
8. Coscoroba Swan (*Coscoroba coscoroba*)
CS a pair with 4 cygnets 22/8
9. Brazilian Teal (*Amazonetta brasiliensis*)
O, CS 22/8. *Ssp ipecutiri*
10. Silver Teal (*Anas versicolor*)
CS 2 22/, BB 4 24/8. Nominate ssp
11. Chiloe Wigeon (*Anas sibilatrix*)
BB around 10 24/8
12. Speckled Teal (*Anas flavirostris*)
The most commonly encountered duck. Nominate ssp
13. Yellow-billed Pintail (*Anas spinicauda*)
CS, BB and PA. *Ssp spinicauda*

14. Rosy-billed Pochard (*Netta peposaca*)
CS 6 22/8
15. White-tufted Grebe (*Rollandia rolland*)
CS 3 22/8. *Ssp chilensis*
16. Great Grebe (*Podiceps major*)
Near Coerdoba 3 27/8. Nominate ssp
17. Chilean Flamingo (*Phoenicopterus chliensis*)
BB 25+ 24/8, SG 50+ 28/8
18. Neotropic Cormorant (*Phalacrocorax brasilianus*)
BB 2 23/8. Nominate ssp
19. White-faced Ibis (*Plegadis chihi*)
O a straggling flock of 40+ 22/8
20. Turkey Vulture (*Cathartes aura*)
SG 2 28/8. Far outnumbered by Condors! *Ssp ruficollis*
21. Black Vulture (*Coragyps atratus*)
A few here and there. *Ssp brasiliensis*
22. Andean Condor (*Vultur gryphus*)
A, Q, PA and CM daily for 4 days. That kettle of 19 birds at PA 27/8 will live long in the memory
23. Long-winged Harrier (*Circus buffoni*)
O 1 22/8
24. Black-chested Buzzard-Eagle (*Geranoaetus melanoleucus*)
PA 3 27/8 including 1 being mobbed by a pair of Variable Hawks. *Ssp australis*
25. Variable Hawk (*Geranoaetus polyosoma*)
Regularly encountered. Nominate ssp
26. Roadside Hawk (*Rupornis magnirostris*)
O 24 22/8. *Ssp pulcherani*
27. White-throated Hawk (*Buteo albigula*)
CM 1 28/8. A first record for the province of Cordoeba of this elusive long distance migrant which breeds exclusively in the Patagonian forest
28. Spot-winged Falconet (*Spizapteryx circumcincta*)
CM 1 28/8
29. Southern Crested Caracara (*Caracara plancus*)
Common.
30. Mountain Caracara (*Phalcoboenas megalopterus*)
A 3 25/8
31. Chimango Caracara (*Milvago chimango*)
Abundant. Nominate ssp
32. American Kestrel (*Falco sparverius*)
Common. *Ssp cinnamonimus*
33. Giant Wood Rail (*Aremides yopecaha*)
O 3 22/8
34. Rufous-sided Crake (*Laterallus malanophalus*)
CS heard 22/8. Nominate ssp. (H)
35. Plumbeous Rail (*Pardirallus sanguinolentus*)
CS heard 22/8. Nominate ssp. (H)

36. Common Gallinule (*Gallinula galeata*)
CS 6 22/8
37. Spot-flanked Gallinule (*Gallinula melanops*)
CS 2 22/8. *Ssp crassirostris*
38. Red-fronted Coot (*Vanellus chilensis*)
CS 8 22/8
39. Southern Lapwing (*Vanellus chilensis*)
Common. Mostly *ssp lampronotus* with some nominate around Mendoza
40. American Oystercatcher (*Haematopus palliatus*)
BB 2 at Cerri 24/8. Nominate *ssp*
41. White-backed Stilt (*Himantopus melanurus*)
Several encounters
42. South American Snipe (*Gallinago paraguaiiae*)
O heard 22/8. Nominate *ssp*. (H)
43. Brown-hooded Gull (*Chroicocephalus maculipennis*)
A few big flocks from the bus 24/8
44. Olrog's Gull (*Larus atlanticus*)
BB around 10 in plumage at Cerri 24/8. An Argentine endemic breeder
45. Kelp Gull (*Larus dominicanus*)
BB common
46. Gull-billed Tern (*Gelochelidon nilotica*)
BB 1 at Cerri 24/8
47. South American Tern (*Sterna hirundinacea*)
BB 2 at Cerri 24/8
48. Picui Ground-Dove (*Columbina picui*)
As common as ever
49. Picazuro Pigeon (*Patagioenas picazuro*)
Common. Nominate *ssp*
50. Spot-winged Pigeon (*Patagioenas maculosa*)
Common around CM. Nominate *ssp*
51. Eared Dove (*Zenaida auriculata*)
Common. *Ssp chrysauchenia*
52. White-tipped Dove (*Leptotila verreauxi*)
A few. *Ssp chalcauchenia*
53. Blue-crowned Parakeet (*Thectocercus acuticaudatus*)
CM 4 28/8. Nominate *spp*
54. Nanday Parakeet (*Aratinga nenday*)
Easily seen at CS 22/8 where they have been introduced
55. Burrowing Parrot (*Cyanoliseus patagonus*)
BB pleasingly common even in the town 23 and 24/8. Nominate *ssp*
56. Monk Parakeet (*Myiopsitta monachus*)
Common. *Ssp calita*
57. Grey-hooded Parakeet (*Psilopsiagon aymara*)
Divasadero Largo 1 briefly 26/8
58. Yellow-chevroned Parakeet (*Brotogeris chiriri*)
O 2 22/8. Also introduced here. Nominate *ssp*

59. Guira Cuckoo (*Guira guira*)
Occasional sightings
60. Burrowing Owl (*Athene cunicularia*)
BB 2 23/8. *Ssp partridgei*
61. Andean Swift (*Aeronautes andecolus*)
Q around 50 26/8, CM 1 28/8. Nominate *ssp*
62. Red-tailed Comet (*Sappho sparganura*)
CM a fine male 28/8. *Ssp sappho*
63. Chaco Puffbird (*Nystatus striapectus*)
SG a responsive bird 28/8
64. White-barred Piculet (*Picumnus cirratus*)
CM 1 28/8. *Ssp pilcomayensis*
65. Checkered Woodpecker (*Veniliornis mixtus*)
O, CS 22/8. *Ssp mixtus*
66. Green-barred Woodpecker (*Colaptes mealanochlorus*)
CS, BB and CM, the distinct *ssp melanolaimus*
67. Campo Flicker (*Colaptes campestris*)
BB 23 and 24/8. *Ssp campestroides*
68. Black-bodied Woodpecker (*Dryocopus schultzi*)
After all the frustrations a male finally responded at CM on the evening of 28/8. He flew in to land briefly then flew over one more time to climax the tour. Always uncommon it appears to be declining with the removal of big trees in its quebracho habitat and is now probably threatened
69. Rufous –banded Miner (*Geositta rufipennis*)
A 25/8. Both nominate and, higher up, the possibly distinct *fasciolata* seen well. Divasadero Largo 26/8 2 nominate
70. Chaco Earthcreeper (*Tarphonomus certhioides*)
Divasadero Largo 1 26/8
71. Cordoba Cinclodes (*Cinclodes comenchingonus*)
PA 2 27/8. Endemic to this plateau
72. Olrog's Cinclodes (*Cinclodes olrogi*)
PA 1 27/8. Also endemic to this area



73. White-winged Cinclodes (*Cinclodes atacamensis*)
PA 5 27/8. *Ssp schocolatinus* a local endemic
74. Rufous Hornero (*Furnarius rufus*)
Common. Nominate *ssp*. The national bird of Argentina

75. Curve-billed Reedhaunter (*Limnornis curvirostris*)
O 1 22/8
76. Straight-billed Reedhaunter (*Limnoctites rectirostris*)
O 1 22/8. A highly sought after species of limited distribution
77. Brown-capped Tit-Spinetail (*Leptasthenura fuliginiceps*)
Divasadero Largo 2 26/8.
78. Tufted Tit-Spinetail (*Leptasthenura platensis*)
CM 1 27/8
79. Spix's Spinetail (*Synallaxis spixi*)
O 2 22/8
80. Sooty-fronted Spinetail (*Synallaxis frontalis*)
O heard 22/8. (H)
81. Stripe-crowned Spinetail (*Cranioleuca pyrrhoptera*)
A few here and there. Nominate ssp
82. Sulphur-throated Spinetail (*Cranioleuca sulphurifera*)
O 1 22/8
83. Sharp-billed Canastero (*Asthenes pyrrholeuca*)
BB 3 at Cerri 24/8. *Ssp flavogularis*
84. Short-billed Canastero (*Asthenes baeri*)
CM 1 27/8. Nominate ssp
85. Cordilleran Canastero (*Asthenes modesta*)
PA 1 27/8. *Ssp cordoba* another local endemic
86. Steinbach's Canastero (*Asthenes sreinbachi*)
C up to 5 26/8. Endemic to Argentina
87. Puna Canastero (*Asthenes sclateri*)
PA 1 27/8. Nominate ssp endemic to Sierra de Cordoba and sometimes split as Cordoba Canastero
88. Hudson's Canastero (*Asthenes hudsoni*)
BB 1 at Cerri 23/8. A surprise in crops
89. Freckle-breasted Thornbird (*Phacellodomus striaticolis*)
CS 1 22/8
90. Brown Cacholote (*Pseudoseisura lophotes*)
CM common 27 and 28/8
91. Scimitar-billed Woodcreeper (*Drymornis bridgesii*)
CM 2 27/8
92. Variable Antshrike (*Thamnophilus caerulescens*)
CM 1 27/8. *Ssp dinelli*
93. Rufous-capped Antshrike (*Thamnophilus ruficapillus*)
O 2 22/8. Nominate ssp
94. Crested Gallito (*Rhinocrypta lanceolata*)
Common by voice in the Monte desert, at Cerri and at SG. CM 2 by the roadside 27/8
95. Yellow-billed Tit Tyrant (*Anairetes flavirostris*)
A 1 24/8, Divasadero Largo 2 26/8. Nominate ssp
96. Sooty Tyrannulet (*Serpophaga nigricans*)
O several 22/8
97. White-crested Tyrannulet (*Serpophaga subcristata*)
O 2 22/8. Nominate ssp

98. Straneck's Tyrannulet (*Serpophaga griseicapilla*)
O 2 22/8, CM 1 27/8
99. Greater Wagtail-Tyrant (*Stigmatura budytoides*)
CM 2 27/8. *Ssp flavocinerea*
100. Spectacled Tyrant (*Hymenops perspicillatus*)
O 1 22/8, BB 1 at Cerri 24/8. Nominate ssp
101. Yellow-browed Tyrant (*Satrapa icteophrys*)
O 2 22/8
102. Cinnamon-bellied Ground-Tyrant (*Muscisaxicola capistratus*)
Q 2 26/8, PA up to 12 27/8
103. Rufous-naped Ground-Tyrant (*Muscisaxicola rufivertex*)
PA 4 27/8. *Ssp achalansis*, another local endemic
104. White Monjita (*Xolimis irupero*)
BB singles 23 and 24/8. Nominate ssp
105. Salinas Monjita (*Xolmis salinarum*)
SG 3 of these endemics feeding on the shoreline 28/8 and giving excellent views. The "Last of the Monjitas " for HB!
106. Great Kiskadee (*Pitangus sulphuratus*)
Common. *Ssp argentinus*
107. White-tipped Plantcutter (*Phytotoma rutila*)
BB heard at Cerri 23/8 and 1 seen well 24/8. Nominate ssp
108. Rufous-browed Peppershrike (*Cyclarhis gujanensis*)
O and CM. *Ssp viridis*
109. Blue-and-white Swallow (*Pygochelidon cyanoleuca*)
O 1 22/8. *Ssp patagonica*
110. Tawny-headed Swallow (*Alopochelidon fucata*)
CM 3 17/8
111. Brown-chested Martin (*Progne tapera*)
O 1 22/8. *Ssp fusca*
112. White-rumped Swallow (*Tachycineta leucorrhoa*)
O 1 22/8
113. House Wren (*Troglodytes aedon*)
Common as ever. *Ssp bonairiae* and *rex*
114. Masked Gnatcatcher (*Polioptila dumicola*)
Common. Nominate ssp
115. Chiguanco Thrush (*Turdus chiguanco*)
Common in the interior. *Ssp anthracinus*
116. Rufous-bellied Thrush (*Turdus rufiventris*)
O, CS common 22/8. Nominate ssp
117. Creamy-bellied Thrush (*Turdus amaurochalinus*)
O, CS common 22/8
118. Chalk-browed Mockingbird (*Mimus saturninus*)
Common. *Ssp modulator*
119. Patagonian Mockingbird (*Mimus patagonicus*)
BB 2 at Cerri 24/8, SG 3 28/8
120. European Starling (*Sturnus vulgaris*)
CS and BB a not very welcome introduction

121. Sayaca Tanager (*Thraupis sayaca*)
O, CS 22/8. Nominate ssp
122. Golden-billed Saltator (*Saltator aurantirostris*)
Several encounters. Nominate around BA, *nasica* in the centre
123. Many-colored Chaco-Finch (*Saltatricula multicolor*)
CM 1 27/8 coming to the Owl call gave close views not obtained in Paraguay
124. Rufous-collared Sparrow (*Zonotrichia capensis*)
From sea level to the highest peaks. Probably *argentina* at O, CS and BB, *sanborni* in the Andes and *choraules* in the centre
125. Grassland Sparrow (*Ammodramus humeralis*)
BB 1 23/8. Ssp *xanthornus*
126. Grey-hooded Sierra-Finch (*Phrygilus gayi*)
A common 25/78, several at C 26/8. Ssp *caniceps*
127. Mourning Sierra-Finch (*Phrygilus fruticeta*)
A 25/8, Diasadero Largo 26/8 several. Nominate ssp
128. Plumbeous Sierra-Finch (*Phrygilus unicolor*)
PA 3 26/8. Ssp *cyaneus* another local endemic
129. Ash-breasted Sierra-Finch (*Phrygilus plebejus*)
PA 26/8 common. Ssp *naroskyi* again endemic to these mountains
130. Long-tailed Reed-Finch (*Donacospiza albifrons*)
O 4 22/8
131. Cinnamon Warbling-Finch (*Poospiza ornata*)
Telteka a single female coming to the ipod graced our picnic stop. Endemic to Argentina



132. Black-and-rufous Warbling-Finch (*Poospiza nigrorufa*)
O. CS 22/8 several
133. Black-capped Warbling-Finch (*Poospiza melanoleuca*)
CM 27 and 28/8
134. Grassland Yellow-Finch (*Sicalis luteota*)
BB around 20 23/8. Ssp *luteoventris*
135. Monte Yellow-Finch (*Sicalis mendozae*)
Q a few coming into roost at dusk 26/8. A newly re-described (by MP et al) Argentine endemic and species number 9000 for HB
136. Great Pampa-Finch (*Embernagra platensis*)
O 3 22/8. Nominate ssp

137. Band-tailed Seedeater (*Catamenia analis*)
CM a male 28/8 was a surprise in this habitat. Nominate ssp
138. Plain-colored Seedeater (*Catamenia inornata*)
A 4 25/8. Nominate ssp
139. Tropical Parula (*Parula pitiayumi*)
Occasional birds. Nominate ssp
140. Brown-capped Redstart (*Myioborus brunniceps*)
CM 2 28/8
141. Solitary Cacique (*Cacicus solitarius*)
CS a solitary bird 22/8
142. Variable Oriole (*Icterus pyrrhopterus*)
O, CS 22/8 a few
143. Scarlet-headed Blackbird (*Amblyramphus holosericeus*)
O good views of 3 22/8
144. Yellow-winged Blackbird (*Agelasticus thilius*)
O common 22/8. Ssp *petersi*
145. Brown-and-yellow Marshbird (*Pseudoleistes virescens*)
O 4 22/8
146. Bay-wing (*Agelaioides badius*)
O 22/8. Nominate ssp
147. Screaming Cowbird (*Molothrus rufoaxillaris*)
O 22/8
148. Shiny Cowbird (*Molothrus bonariensis*)
Here and there. Nominate ssp
149. Pampas Meadowlark (*Sturnella defilippii*)
BB 20 or so 23/8 nicely separated from Long-tailed. A threatened, through loss of native grassland habitat, Argentine endemic though perhaps also just clinging on in Uruguay
150. Long-tailed Meadowlark (*Sturnella loyca*)
BB common 23 and 24. Nominate ssp. Several of the distinctive ssp *obscura* were seen at PA 26/8
151. Hooded Siskin (*Carduelis magellanica*)
O 10 or so 22/8. C ditto 26/8
152. House Sparrow (*Passer domesticus*)

Mammals

(Names follow Duff and Lawson 2004)

1. Pichi (*Zaedyus pichyi*)
A single of this Southern Cone endemic armadillo gave good views on the "Meadowlark" road at BB 23/8
2. Brazilian Guinea-Pig (*Cavia aperea*)
A few especially at PA
3. Patagonian Mara (*Dolichotis salinicola*)#
C a family party of 5 on the exit road at dusk. Endemic to Argentina
4. Pampas Fox (*Pseudalopes gymnocercus*)

- O 1 22/8
5. Lesser Grison (*Galictis cuja*)
BB 1 23/8

Others

1. Red-eared Slider (*Trachemys scripta*)
CS 2 22/8. This turtle has been described as the most abundant in the world
2. Hilary's Side-necked Turtle (*Phrynops hilarii*)
CS 10 22/8

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