

## Argentina Complete Northeast – Pampas to Selva

**November 4 – November 22, 2018**

**Cost:** TBA (approx. \$6500.00 CAD) from Buenos Aires.

Costs include all accommodation, meals, transportation (including boat trips and 4x4) and guide fees from Nov 4<sup>th</sup> to Nov 21<sup>st</sup> (18 nights). Does not include international flights to Buenos Aires. Alcoholic drinks, gratuities and items of a personalized nature are not included. The tour is limited to six participants plus the two guides. We feel strongly in providing personalized service and sharing our knowledge with others.

**Single Supplement:** \$750 CAD

**Deposit:** \$700 at booking

**Tour Duration:** 18 days

**Tour Starts/Ends:** Buenos Aires

**Leaders:** Thomas Plath, Wildlife Biologist, R.P. Bio; Pablo Jost, BSC

### Overview

Enjoy northeastern Argentina's threatened and range-restricted birds of the estuarine habitats of Punta Rasa, riparian and dry woodland habitats of Entre Rios, the Ibera marshes - Argentina's largest wetland featuring thousands of water birds, specialty-rich pampas grasslands of Corrientes Province, and subtropical Atlantic forest, in a relaxed fun way. Expect a lot of great scenery and interesting habitats while searching for the avifauna and wildlife of northwestern Argentina.

Our aim is to try for all the region's specialties - an array of interesting *Furnarids*, several threatened and range-restricted grassland Tyrant Flycatcher species, including the crazy looking Strange-tailed and Cock-tailed Tyrant and many seedeaters.

This 18 day trip (14 birding days) begins in Buenos Aires at the mouth of the river Plata; and continues north stopping in Entre Rios Province with rich marsh habitat of Otamendi Reserve and Ceibas, grassland habitat of Estancia Rincon del Socorro and Estancia Virocay, arriving at our final birding destination the subtropical forests of Misiones and Provincial Parks Cruce Caballero and Urugui-I.

Participants will be rewarded with a large number and diversity of South American bird families and species, including some of its most spectacular birds:

**Highlights:** 420 - 440 species, Greater Rhea, **Black-fronted Piping Guan**, Maguari Stork, Long-winged Harrier, Southern Screamer, Coscoroba and Black-necked Swan, Giant and Slaty-breasted Wood-Rail, Olrog's Gull, Dot-winged and Red-and-White Crake, Olrog's Gull, Snowy-crowned Tern, **Vinaceous-breasted Parrot**, **Sickle-winged Nightjar**, Red-breasted and Toco Toucan, White, Cream-backed, Helmeted and Blond-crested Woodpecker, Brown Cachalote, Chotoy and Sulphur-bearded Spinetail, Little, Greater and Freckle-breasted Thornbird, **Bay-capped Wren-Spinetail**, Lark-like Brushrunner, **Curve-billed** and **Straight-billed Reedhaunter**, Scimitar-billed Woodcreeper, Giant and White-bearded

Antshrike, **Spotted Bamboo-Wren**, **Araucaria Tit-Spintail**, **Cock-tailed**, **Strange-tailed** and Streamer-tailed Tyrant, **Sharp-tailed Grass-Tyrant**, Blue-billed Black-Tyrant, **Black-and-White** and White **Monjita**, Chaco Suiriri, Crested and Warbling Doradito, **Azure Jay**, **Ochre-breasted Pipit**, Masked and Creamy-bellied Gnatcatcher, Yellow-billed, **Yellow** and Red-crested **Cardinal**, Ultramarine and Glaucous-Blue Grosbeak, Dark-throated, Entre Rios, Marsh, Chestnut, Pearly-breasted, and Rufous-rumped Seedeater, Black-and-Rufous Warbling-Finch, Long-tailed Reed-Finch, Great Pampa Finch, Brown-and-Yellow Marshbird, Yellow-winged, Chestnut-capped, Unicolored, **Saffron-cowled** and Scarlet-headed **Blackbird**.



### General

Accommodation will vary from good to excellent including some eco-lodges and estancias with emphasis on locations conducive to birding. Lodgings are selected with comfort in mind, combined with wildlife-rich surroundings. Several days will be spent at some sites offering a relaxed birding atmosphere. Birding and nature study will be conducted along roadsides and good trails/ into forest considered easy. Walks will be at a slow and leisurely pace that is best for locating birds and allowing nature study and photography.

### **Itinerary**

**Nov 4:** Arrival in Buenos Aires. Costanera del Sur birding. Dinner together and overnight Buenos Aires.

**Nov 5:** We start the tour by visiting one of Buenos Aires top birding spots – Costanera Sur. This is a large wetland located in the city centre, and supports an excellent collection of birds. Birds to look for include Ringed Teal and Brazilian Teal, Rosy-billed Pochard, Giant Wood-Rail, Spot-flanked Gallinule, White-winged, Red-Gartered and Red-fronted Coot, Picazuro Pigeon, Black-hooded and Yellow-chevroned Parakeet, Guira Cuckoo, Checkered and Green-backed Woodpecker, Narrow-billed Woodcreeper, White-crested Tyrannulet, Masked Gnatcatcher, Rufous-bellied and Creamy-bellied Thrush, Chalk-browed Mockingbird, Golden-crowned Warbler, Black-and-Rufous and Black-capped Warbling-Finches Epaulet Oriole and many others!

Following lunch we will head southeast for the seaside village of San Clemente birding the pampas grasslands and marshes en route. Common birds along roadside habitat include White-faced and Bare-faced Ibis, Maguari Stork, Southern Crested and Chimango Caracaras, Southern Lapwing, Brown-and-Yellow Marshbird, and White-browed Blackbird. Brief birding stops will give us many others. Optional night drive for rails (Dot-winged Crake) will be conducted. Night in San Clemente.



Bay-capped Wren-Spinetail

Photo: Thomas Plath

**Nov 6:** San Clemente is only minutes away from Punta Rasa Reserve, the premier migration hotspot along coastal Argentina. Pampas grassland at the base of the point hold species like Long-winged and

Cinereous Harriers, Great Pampa-Finch, Long-tailed Reed-Finch, Unicolored and Yellow-winged Blackbirds, the local and threatened Bay-capped Wren-Spinetail and the endemic Hudson's Canastero. Further down the spit are ponds, and mudflats teeming with herons, flamingos, shorebirds, terns and other water associated birds. Long-winged Harrier and Chimango Caracara cruise the fields searching for prey. Channels and tidal flats on the west side of the tip provide feeding and resting areas for thousands of more birds. Here one can find Coscoroba Swan, large flocks of terns including Snowy-crowned Tern, Grey-hooded, Brown-hooded Gull and Olrog's Gull, and shorebirds like Two-banded Plover and good numbers of Hudsonian Godwit. Scoping offshore can yield pelagic birds like Southern Giant Petrel, Atlantic Yellow-nosed and Black-browed Albatross. Overnight in San Clemente.

**Nov 7:** Following an early start from San Clemente we drive north through the pampas grasslands stopping at Campos del Tuyu Reserve. This reserve hosts several goodies and a chance for Stripe-backed Heron and South American Painted Snipe, two difficult-to-get species. Other birds to look for en route include Greater Rhea, Tawny-headed Swallow, and the gorgeous Scarlet-headed Blackbird. Roadside ponds en route to Campana will be searched for more southern waterfowl species such as Southern Wigeon and Red Shoveler. Our destination for the next day's birding is Otamendi Reserve north of Buenos Aires. Depending on time we will spend the late afternoon or evening searching for Red-and-White Crake. Overnight in Campana.

**Nov 8:** An early start will allow us to look for two localized and range-restricted *furnarid* species at Otamendi Reserve: Curve-billed and Straight-billed Reedhaunter. In addition to the reedhaunters the extensive reed beds and forested areas of Otamendi Reserve harbor many others: Red-and-White Crake, Guira and Ash-throated Cuckoo, Campo Flicker, Chequered Woodpecker, Blue-billed Black-Tyrant, Southern Scrub-Flycatcher, Masked Gnatcatcher, Warbling Doradito, Rusty-collared and Double-collared Seedeaters and several blackbirds including Scarlet-headed. This reserve protects a variety of wetland and upland habitats that will be explored all day. Night at Campana.

**Nov 9:** Another early start will allow us to bird one of the most accessible and premier dry woodland, pasture and wetland/grassland complexes in Entre Rios Province - the marshes and surrounding wooded areas of Ceibas. Within the Rio Parana floodplain, dry woodland habitat harbor ovenbirds like Brown Cachalote, Short-billed Canastero and Lark-like Brushrunner and others like Spotted Nothura, Nacunda Nighthawk, Striped Cuckoo, Narrow-billed Woodcreeper and Golden-billed Sparrow. Extensive permanent and ephemeral wetlands hold an extensive list of aquatic associated species. These include Brazilian Teal, Rosy-billed Pochard, Black-headed Duck, Southern Screamer, Pinnated and Stripe-backed Bittern, Giant Wood-Rail, both reedhaunters, Bay-capped Wren-Spinetail, Southern Scrub and Sooty Tyrannulet, Yellow-chinned, Chotoy and Sulphur-bearded Spinetail, and Unicolored, Chestnut-capped and Scarlet-headed Blackbird. The area is also known for some very rare seedeaters but a certain amount of luck will be required. Following lunch at Ceibas marshes we drive north to El Palmar NP.

El Palmar is a large oasis of habitat in a mosaic of agriculture and forestry, protecting significant stands of Yatay Palm, a rapidly disappearing species in Argentina. It is also known for its interesting mammals. An optional evening drive will be conducted to search for wildlife particularly Plains Viscacha and Geoffrey's Cat, but also Little and Scissor-tailed Nightjar and owls. Overnight Aurora del Palmar Lodge.



Spotted Nothura, El Palmar NP

Photo: Thomas Plath

**Nov 10:** El Palmar National Park preserves 8,500 hectare of savannah and forest along the banks of the Uruguay River, including some of the last extensive Yatay Palm stands in coastal Argentina. Gallery forest and grasslands abound with wildlife, and this is an excellent mammal-watching site. Capybara herds are common along the roadsides, and Plains Viscacha at the campground fields at night; both Crab-eating and Andean Foxes are frequently seen, along with Yellow and Nine-banded Armadillos; and Lesser Grison and Geoffrey's Cat are a possibility. The good gravel roads lead to nice trails through grasslands and riparian forest where we will seek Spotted Nothura, Blue-crowned Parakeet, Sooty-fronted Spinetail, Tawny-crested Pygmy-Tyrant, Euler's Flycatcher, Blue-billed Black-Tyrant, Gray Monjita, Diademed Tanager, Glaucous-blue Grosbeak, Red-rumped Warbling-Finch and seedeaters. An optional evening drive will be conducted to search for mammals, displaying Scissor-tailed Nightjars and owls. Night at Aurora del Palmar Lodge.

**Nov 11:** Following an optional pre-breakfast birding on our lodge grounds we will take the long drive to our accommodation in the heart of the wildlife rich Ibera wetlands. Argentina's largest wetland offers a large variety of aquatic and upland habitats supporting a great cast of mammals including Giant Anteater, Maned Wolf, Marsh and Pampas Deer and holds an excellent assortment of rare and local birds largely tyrant flycatchers and seedeaters. Depending on road conditions and driving time we will bird the long stretch of road from Mercedes to the village of Colonia C. Pellegrini. Overnight at Estancia Rincon del Soccoro.

**Nov 12:** An early morning boat excursion into the Ibera marshes will ensure great wildlife and bird sightings. Wildlife abounds and we could see Black Caiman, herds of Capybara, Coypu, Black Howler Monkey, Pampa and Swamp Deer, and others if lucky. Southern Screamer, Brazilian Teal, Rosy-billed Pochard, Whistling Heron, Plumbeous Ibis, Jabiru, several rails including Ash-breasted and Yellow-breasted Crake, White-headed Marsh-Tyrant, Pied Water Tyrant, Chotoy Spinetail and several blackbird species are birds which we will seek out during our boat trip. This area still holds a population of the threatened Yellow Cardinal our main target bird in upland areas. Species in the surrounding riparian forest and grassland include Spotted Nothura, if lucky Crowned Eagle, White Woodpecker, Narrow-billed Woodcreeper, Little and Greater Thornbird, Firewood Gatherer, Cock-tailed and Streamer-tailed Tyrant, Black-and-White Monjita, Ochre-breasted Pipit, Yellow-billed and Red-crested cardinal and several seedeaters. Overnight at Estancia Rincon del Socorro.



Giant Wood-Rail, Ceibas marshes

Photo: Thomas Plath

**Nov 13:** Following early morning birding around the ranch we head east to the grasslands of Corrientes province birding along the way. Roadside birding is great with lots to be seen in the open habitats including herons, ibis, storks, screamers, many raptors and passerines utilizing the ponds, marshes and grasslands en route. We will target both the Strange-tailed and Cock-tailed Tyrants two of the most bizarre looking South American Flycatchers. Our destination and lodging for the night is Estancia Virocay a large cattle ranch involved in the protection of grassland birds.

**Nov 14:** Conservation is important to Estancia Virocay and they are instrumental in trying to protect the rapidly disappearing beautiful Saffron-cowled Blackbird. Natural grassland set-asides are key in protecting many grassland species and the ranchers pride themselves in maintaining habitat for birds like Red-legged Seriema, Sickle-winged Nightjar, Sharp-tailed Grass-Tyrant, Ochre-breasted Pipit, Lesser Grass-Finch, Marsh, Dark-throated, and Pearly-breasted Seedeater (amongst others). All day will be exploring the extensive grasslands and marshlands searching for birds found on the estancia including two striking flycatchers: the Sharp-tailed Grass Tyrant and the Streamer-tailed Tyrants, and numerous other open country birds including the enigmatic Black-and-White Monjita and a number of rare and scarce seedeaters. An evening spotlighting trip will be made for Sickle-winged Nightjar. Overnight Estancia Virocay.

**Nov 15:** Another morning of birding Virocay Ranch will ensure our target species are located. Following breakfast we head northeast through open country through increasingly forested areas to the town of San Pedro and Araucaria State Park. This small park at the edge of town holds a significant patch of the "Monkey-Puzzle Tree" and its associated species, including a few very local, rare birds. Overnight San Pedro.

**Nov 16:** The *Araucaria* forest in San Pedro support some very localized birds including the endangered Vinaceous-breasted Parrot, Plovercrest, Araucaria Tit-Spintail, Canebrake Groundcreeper and Azure Jay. In addition this is one of the few sites for Helmeted Woodpecker a very rare and declining species. We will spend the day searching for these and others like Scaled Woodcreeper, Chicli, Grey-bellied and Olive Spintail and Sharp-billed Treehunter. Overnight in San Pedro.

**Nov 17:** The nearby Cruce Cabellero Park is gateway to excellent subtropical birding with many of the same species mentioned for the day before. We will spend the morning birding the park looking for those species. After birding the park we head for the rich bird grounds of San Sebastian Lodge and area, centered in Atlantic sub tropical forest full of range-restricted species associated with these threatened forests. Overnight San Sebastian Lodge.

**Nov 18:** Leaving early from San Sebastian Lodge we will spend the morning birding Urugua-i National Park an excellent locality for the rare and local Black-throated Piping Guan. With extensive bamboo patches this very large park hosts most of the region's specialties including Giant, Large-tailed, Spot-backed and Tufted Antshrikes, Bertoni's and Dusky-tailed Antbirds. The afternoon will be spent birding the grounds of San Sebastian Lodge. An optional owling trip could produce Tawny-browed Owl, nightjars Overnight San Sebastian Lodge.

**Nov 19:** Situated beside a small lake and surrounded by beautiful subtropical forest with bamboo patches, San Sebastian Lodge is the ideal place to seek out the many stunning birds of southeastern subtropical forest. Feeders attract Slaty-breasted Wood-Rail, Yellow-fronted Woodpeckers, Green-naped Tanagers and many other species offering leisurely looks of birds. The surrounding forest is a good place to find Spot-winged Wood-Quail, Red-ruffed Fruitcrow, Blond-crested Woodpecker, Short-tailed Antthrush, Variegated Antpitta, Spotted Bamboo-Wren, Planalto Tapaculo, Blue Mannikin amongst many others. Overnight San Sebastian Lodge.



Surucua Trogon, San Sebastian Lodge

Photo: Thomas Plath

**Nov 20:** The last day at San Sebastian will be spent birding forest patches in the early morning focusing on bamboo or other habitats in search of any key species. Our guide at San Sebastian knows this hill forest intimately. Following breakfast we drive to Puerto Iguazu for lunch and a visit to famous hummingbird gardens in the late afternoon. The “Jardin Picaflores” in Puerto Iguazu offers close viewing of all the region’s hummingbirds: Black Jacobin, Scale-throated and Planalto Hermits, Black-throated Mango, Glittering-bellied and Versicolored Emeralds, the dazzling Violet-capped Woodnymph, occasionally White-throated Hummingbird, Gilded Sapphire and frequently the scarce Swallow-tailed Hummingbird. Overnight Puerto Iguazu.

**Nov 21:** All day at Iguazu National Park. The sheer power and volume of the largest falls in the world, is a must-see natural wonder. Lying within a large protected area of eastern subtropical forest, we will bird the entrance road until park opening and then visit the Devil’s Throat to watch Great Dusky Swifts blasting through the parks most famous section of falls. Mammals are used to people in this world-renowned site with Brazilian Cavy and Azara’s Agouti feeding on the lawns and South American Coati and Brown Woolly Monkeys in the picnic areas. Several opossums are possible including Rufous-headed Pygmy-Opossum. The day will be spent birding the falls and forest trails for Maroon-bellied Parakeet, Blue-winged Parrotlet, toucans, tanagers, euphonias and a myriad of other species. Night at Puerto Iguazu.

**Nov 22:** Flight to Buenos Aires.

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**Leaders:** Thomas Plath, Wildlife Biologist, R.P.Bio, Pablo Jost, BSC; GIS Specialist

**Trip Booking:**

We have limited our trip to 6 participants in order to provide an intimate and personal experience. To reserve the trip we require a \$700.00 per person deposit. The first 6 people we receive a deposit from will be advised and further trip specific information will be sent to them. The balance of payment is 180 days before your trip departure. Payments are accepted through personal cheque or money transfer.

**Cancellation and Refund:**

We receive your notice of cancellation more than 180 days prior to your trip departure: you will receive 100% of your refund; between 120-180 days you receive 50% of your final payment; between 120 and 0 days you will no refund.

Please note: Thomas Plath Environmental Services reserves the right to cancel your trip at any time, purchasing cancellation insurance on your flight is essential. This policy protects us from unforeseen emergency events i.e. sickness, death in family.