



Sunrise Birding LLC
CHILE
 October 11 – 20, 2016
TRIP REPORT



Photos: Puma, Hooded Grebe, King Penguins, fantastic group.



Sunrise Birding LLC

CHILE! Trip Report

Torres del Paine & Tierra del Fuego

October 11 - 20, 2016

Local Guide: Claudio Vidal, assisted by Sebastian Saiter

Sunrise Birding Leaders: Gina Nichol & Steve Bird

TRIP HIGHLIGHTS & GROUP FAVORITES:

5 Pumas

King Penguin colony & Chicks

Hooded Grebe

Guanaco & Guanaco rescue

Black-browed Albatross

Black-faced Ibis

Darwin's (Lesser) Rhea

Steamer Ducks - Flying &

Flightless

Magellanic Plover

Spectacled Tyrant

Magellanic (Lesser) Horned Owl

Austral Pygmy Owl

Chilean Hawk

Big Hairy Armadillo

Gray-bellied Seedsnipe

Tawny-throated Dotterel

The Towers of Torres Del Paine

Birding with Claudio

REPORT

Day 1, October 11 • Travel to Santiago, Chile

Today was a travel day with many of us arriving in Santiago, Chile for an overnight stay to connect with a flight to Punta Arenas the next morning. Some of us met at the airport hotel and shared our anticipation of the days ahead.

Day 2, October 12 • Fly Punta Arenas / Afternoon visit San Juan Bay

This morning our group converged at the Santiago airport for a flight to Punta Arenas, Chile's southernmost city at 53 south latitude. Full of anticipation, we were pleased to meet our local guide Claudio Vidal waiting for us when we arrived at the Punta Arenas airport along with his assistant Sebastian and driver Victor. We checked into our hotel and quickly regrouped to explore the coast down to San Juan Bay some 60 km away. The weather was cooperating with some moderate Patagonia wind to start and mostly sunny skies as we drove south along the coast road adjacent to the Strait of Magellan.

Our first stop along the road overlooking a farm field offered Upland Geese which were common throughout the afternoon and the rest of the trip. In the back of the field was our first Ashy-headed Goose and we had a few Black-faced Ibis, **Magellanic Oystercatchers**, and Southern Lapwings to round out our first birding stop of the



day. As we traveled along the shoreline, the rocky outcrops close to shore offered Kelp Gulls, and our first Cormorants – Imperial, Neotropic and Rock.

Our next stop was quite exciting as we pulled off the road for some Two-banded Plovers and flushed two Least Seedsnipes from the side of the road by opening the door of the coach. The flock landed further down and we moved a few feet ahead and got great views of the birds using our bus as a hide. A Southern Lapwing seemed to be swooping in and flushing the flock but we were pleased with our views.



Further on, Claudio spotted a pair of **Flying Steamer Ducks** in the water and we backed up the bus to get good views. Out over the Straits were several Southern Fulmars flying showing their stiff-winged soaring mode of *flight* with a few fast wing beats mixed in.

Our next stop was near a small pond across the road from the coast where a quickly departing Speckled Teal was seen with three Yellow-billed Pintails. A Cinnamon Teal was spotted further along the shore of the pond and we had our first views of White-tufted Grebe. Chiloe Wigeon were abundant in a pond nearer to the shore and we ticked our first Rufous-collared Sparrow. A Fire-eyed Diucon perched in a dead tree offering good scope views and we admired the smart looking Austral Negrito that performed for us at the next stop. Ahead there were South American Terns feeding off shore and as we strained to see them in the distance someone noticed a pair of Southern Lapwings just below our line of sight and one appeared to be on a nest.

Over the sea there were Imperial Cormorants, Kelp Gulls, some distant Black-browed Albatross, Southern Giant Petrel and a couple of Crested Caracaras flying over the open water which was unusual. A South American Sea Lion moved in the water close along the shore and **Blackish Oystercatchers** and **Patagonian Crested Ducks** offered good views. An Austral



Thrush introduced itself but it was the sea birds that were keeping our attention. At one stop, a lone male Kelp Goose posed for photos and a little further on there was a pair of Flightless Steamer Ducks standing out of the water on a rock. This gave us a chance to note their bill color and small wings so we were ready to distinguish them from Flying Steamer Ducks when they appeared.



In a little cove off the main Straits were two boats were moored, tied to the beach. There must have been some food in the water as there were several very close Black-browed Albatross sitting on the water with Dolphin Gull, Southern Giant Petrels, Kelp Gulls, and even a Chilean Skua. While we watched this spectacle a Buff-winged Cinclodes flew next to us landing on a beached boat but we were enthralled with this seabird show so close to shore. As we moved back to the bus, the Cinclodes showed well for us as it moved across some open grass.

During our next stop, we took a walk in a forest along a lovely river. A pair of **Spectacled Ducks** swam upriver offering great views and there was an Ashy-headed Goose hanging around with an Upland Goose on the opposite bank. A Ruddy-headed Goose was nearby as well so we became well versed in the differences between these three. Suddenly a pair of Thorn-tailed Rayaditos appeared in a tree above us and began scolding us. A couple of Southern House Wrens joined in and we enjoyed were close views of the birds and realized their size when an Austral Thrush flew in. On the way back we stopped to watch a Dark-bellied Cinclodes feeding in the river like a Dipper. Near the road, there was an Austral Blackbird posing on a wooden post and in a field a couple of Chimango Caracaras were flying and harassing each other. It was a wonderful afternoon with at least 20 Black-browed Albatross and some good close views of these and several of the duck species. We capped off the day with a delicious dinner, an official welcome by Claudio and a review of the checklist.



Day 3, October 13 • Travel to Torres del Paine National Park

We woke up to snow flurries this morning and as we packed up the bus, Claudio noted that it as “fresh”, apparently the Patagonian word for freezing cold! Not dissuaded, we were troopers and got out of the warm bus at our first stop of the morning at Tres Puentes Reserve, a wetland area outside Punta Arenas. The wind was howling but we managed to see Red-gartered Coot, a distant Red Shoveler, White-rumped Sandpiper, Chiloe Wigeon, White-tufted Grebe, and Flying Steamer Ducks. Behind us in a pond,

Chilean Flamingos stood bright and beautiful and there were many Kelp Gulls and Magellanic Oystercatcher.

By now the snow had covered ground and it looked nice in the sun. We drove through the Patagonian steppe on our way to Torres del Paine and stopped to see our first Darwin's Rheas in an open area about 25 yards from the road. The next stop was along the road at a lake called Laguna Los Palos. We scaled the fence and hiked out along the shore with the wind at our back.



Baird's Sandpipers were around and Sebastian spotted a distant Magellanic Plover. He moved on ahead and motioned us to come forward to see a pair of **Magellanic Plovers and a young chick** in a nest depression. We stayed at a respectful distance while the birds showed well for us and then retreated, leaving them and wondering how they survive in this harsh environment.

We had been traveling on the main road (Ruta del Fin del Mundo) and after a while we turned off onto Pali Aike Road traversing the open steppe with the wind continuing to howl as the snow subsided. It became obvious how the winds had sculpted the vegetation of the Patagonian steppes with small, compact shrubs scattered over desert-like expanses. We made a stop for a **Band-tailed Earthcreeper** that was foraging near some bushes on a hillside. The bird went into hiding but a few of us climbed the fence and got a little closer earning good views.

In the meantime, a Gaucho appeared on the other side and we watched as he rode his horse with several dogs in tow over a distant hill. Claudio told us about the Gauchos and how they are disappearing in Chile and we began to get a sense of what life is like in this remote part of the world.

As we traveled, there were several ponds that held Patagonian Crested Ducks, Chilean Flamingoes, and a host of shorebirds that were a little too far to see clearly. At one stop, we watched two Black-necked Swans come in and land in the pond and noted a breeding plumaged Brown-hooded Gull.

Our first Guanacos were seen as well as more Darwin's Rheas. Next, Steve spotted a Southern Gray Fox running quickly across a field. It seemed to know we were watching and stopped and hid itself in a bush.



Now we were getting into good habitat and made stops for Double-banded Plovers and our first Black-throated (Canary-winged) Finches. The Finches were always moving making views more challenging but eventually we saw the features voting that the "Canary-winged" was really the best of the multiple names for this bird. Chocolate-

vented Tyrants were flying around as well and finally gave themselves up for good views. In one area, Rufous-chested Dotterels were displaying with each other, an amazing sight. Love was in the air as Least Seedsnipes were also doing display flights. Greg spotted a Tawny-throated Dotterels that flew ahead of us and landed on the ground but remained elusive for most.

The snow was starting up again and soon we were in the middle of a Patagonian style blizzard with horizontal snow and near whiteout conditions. It was exciting to say the least as Victor slowly made safe progress for us. All at once, Claudio stopped the bus and said, "I have to save this Guanaco." He got out and approached a Guanaco caught on a fence presumably from a failed jump. Claudio, Steve, Sebastian and Greg somehow freed the massive animal and as it moved away, it turned back to look at them as if to say thank you.



We made a pit stop and enjoyed a hot drink at a roadside café and then continued on to Puerto Natales still in a raging snowstorm. We made a quick stop in town for supplies and eventually made our way up into Torres del Paine National Park. As darkness fell, we checked into our lovely hotel and later enjoyed an excellent dinner and review of our exciting day in Patagonia.

Day 4, October 14 • Exploring Torres del Paine – Puma searches

Today we spent the day in and around one of the most stunning and beautiful places on the planet, Torres del Paine National Park. This very special UNESCO World Biosphere site was recently voted the 8th Wonder of the World and we found out first hand why. We were up before dawn to a fresh covering of snow on the ground making the spectacular scenery even more enchanting. We traveled east into the park as daylight came up and saw our first Andean Condors flying over. It wasn't long before Claudio spotted a **Puma** up on a ridge and we got out to see the face of this magnificent creature staring back at us. It was only a head shot but at that hour and in the morning light we were invigorated and ready to continue our search.



We continued on seeing more and more Guanaco as we traveled and we stopped briefly for a Patagonian Hog-nosed Skunk that was working up a hillside. Next, we stopped and got out to scan a known area for Puma. Claudio quickly found two Pumas low on the hills above a lake but they were too far to see well. We decided to move closer and positioned ourselves directly across the lake and scanned again for the cats. Steve spotted one laid down near a bush and we soon spotted the other cat nearby. This was a mother with a well grown cub and we watched for a while as it seemed the two were settled in. We decided to walk around to the other side of the lake to get a better view. We hiked up from behind a hill but soon after we entered their view, the cats got up and moved off further up the hill.

In the meantime, Gina scanned the lake below and found a **Hooded Grebe** among a group of Silvery Grebes. It was remarkable for this bird to be here as it is found in isolated lakes in the most isolated parts of Patagonia and is critically endangered. Panic ensued as we gathered the group and got everyone to see this rare bird with binoculars and scopes. News of this bird traveled to Santiago and beyond and some world birders traveled to Torres to see it in the following days. But we had it in our sights now and we moved down to the lake shore for closer views and photos of the bird as it preened and rested on the water. We spent time with the bird as for many of us; it would be the only opportunity to ever see this rare and declining species. Later on, we continued walking back out to the bus adding Two-banded Plover, Austral Canastero, Gray-hooded Sierra Finch, Scale-throated Earthcreeper and more Andean Condors to our list of birds seen after our Puma sighting.





Our next stop was at the Cascada Paine where we enjoyed great views of the waterfalls and had a gorgeous male **Torrent Duck** that was swimming in the river. As Steve predicted, the bird finally got out on a rock to preen and be inspected by our vigilant group.

By 11 AM, we had seen 3 Pumas, a rare Hooded Grebe, stunning scenery and a gorgeous male Torrent Duck. After a rest stop at the ranger station, we moved on to explore more of the park. At Laguna Azul ranger station we had Black-faced Ground Tyrant, Long-tailed Meadowlark, White-winged Coot, many Austral Thrushes, a couple of

Southern Gray Foxes, Buff-winged Cinclodes, and some Magellanic Oystercatchers. Tullio and Greg saw a Green-backed Firecrown wiz by near a flowering tree but the bird vanished before others got on it.

Just up the hill from the ranger station there were several Black-faced Ibis moving in the grasses. As we approached, they flew noisily and then circled back to their original spot. We walked into a little wooded area where we had a couple of very cute Tufted Tit Spinetails, Thorn-tailed Rayadito, Southern House Wren and a few others. As we walked back toward the bus, a **Long-tailed Meadowlark** posed for us on an open branch and was well photographed.



We continued on passing many Guanaco and saw a close Cinereous Harrier from the bus. Also from the bus we had good views of Black-chested Buzzard Eagle, several American Kestrels, and three White-throated Caracaras.

We stopped many times to admire the gorgeous views noting the brilliant red **Patagonian Scarlet Gorse** that added color to the landscape. Claudio pointed out some of the other plant species to those interested and some of us worked the gorse into our photo compositions.

Moving on, a stop at a small pond yielded Spectacled Duck, more Silvery Grebes and a male and female Andean Duck. At Camp Pehoe, we had Rufous-tailed Plantcutters, some



very tame Austral Blackbirds, Patagonian Sierra Finches, Thorn-tailed Rayadito, a nesting pair of Southern Crested Caracaras, Dark-bellied Cinclodes, and a quickly departing White-crested Elaenia. Over the distant hills, we watched Andean Condors doing a display flights! What a scene! On the way back to the hotel, we stopped for a Great Shrike Tyrant perched close to the road. Back at the hotel, we had another delicious dinner, reviewed the checklist, and celebrated an awesome day of stunning scenery, great birds, and our first successful puma search!

Day 5, October 15 • Exploring Torres del Paine – Puma searches

Once again we left the hotel under cover of darkness as this morning we went for an early run to look for **Puma**. The bright full moon lit our way as we headed back toward the eastern side of the park in the hopes of seeing more cats. As we traveled, the headlights of the bus illuminated European Hares and “Old World” Rabbits and a Patagonian Hog-nosed Skunk. Daylight eventually came up and lit the snow covered mountains turning them pink. After about 45 minutes, Sebastian stopped the



bus for two Pumas sat together on a hill just up from the road. The cats looked curiously at the bus and us as we quietly got out. They slowly moved along the hillside just above us and then crossed the road in front of us as we watched in awe. They were so close but still the cameras were fighting with the low light. They eventually walked up to the ridge of another hill and made for nice silhouettes against the now pink sky. They moved over the hill and out of sight leaving us absolutely thrilled with our sightings.

The sun lit up the **towers** nicely so we stopped for a quick photo session and then continued on to another area overlooking a pond which held Chilean Flamingos, Brown-headed Gulls, Patagonian Crested Ducks, and Yellow-billed



Teal. The wind was calm as we tried to read the demeanor of the Guanacos to indicate if there were more pumas around. Mind reading a Guanaco turned out to be tough, especially since some were feeding calmly while others were giving alarm calls.

We moved to another area where we walked a trail between the ranger stations. Here we found Correndera Pipit, Cinnamon-bellied Ground Tyrant, Long-tailed Meadowlark and Austral Negrito for the day and plenty of RCS (Rufous-collared Sparrows) and Guanaco. As we got near the ranger station we had nice views of Black-billed Ground Tyrant and a singing Mourning Sierra Finch.

We drove to another wetland area that offered White-tufted Grebe, Red-gartered Coot, and a number of vocal Sedge Wrens. A Cinereous Harrier coursed over the marsh grasses and a Spectacled Tyrant was briefly seen in the distance. A Plumbeous Rail was spotted in the reeds and Bill got a view of the Austral Rail that was calling. There were Yellow-winged Blackbirds nearby and we had close views of Chilean Swallows as they flew by. A Correndera Pipit was giving a show with its display flight and try as we may the Austral Rail was being uncooperative.



After a rest break mid-day at the hotel, we went out to Lago Grey. The icebergs at the end of the lake made for more scenic photos and we could see the glacier in the distance that had given birth to the bergs. We walked a wooded trail which was mostly quiet until we found a group of Austral Parakeets feeding on the buds and young leaves

of a *nothofagus* tree. As we stood quietly and watched, we noticed more and more parakeets. Some were allopreening and many photos were taken.

Claudio called us back for some woodpeckers he had found near the parking lot. As we arrived there was a South American Snipe working around an old tree trunk and a Chilean Flicker was attacking its reflection in the window of a building while the female looked on. There were Striped Woodpeckers working on the trees and some very friendly Austral Blackbirds. We returned to the hotel for dinner and reviewed our checklist for the day which once again included Pumas!



Day 6, October 16 •

Torres del Paine National Park – Sierra Baguales

As we started our pre-breakfast walk outside our hotel, the enormous full hunter's moon still up as the sun rose. Views of the mountains were stunning with no clouds at all and a pinkish hue as the light of the day came up. There were the usual Southern Lapwings, Upland Geese and an American Kestrel around. Two Ashy-headed Geese watched us walk by from the river edge. Some Chimango Carcaras were cavorting in the dead trees (remnant from one of the fires in the park) and Chilean Flickers were perched and warming in the morning sun.





After breakfast, we drove north into the park. Another spectacular day was shaping up with sparkling blue skies and little wind. We stopped at Puente Weber for the view and decided this was the perfect place for our group photo. Spectacled Ducks and Red-gartered Coots were seen in the river and a **Black-chested Buzzard Eagle** was perched and posing and then took off and soared over our heads. We checked the campsite and this time walked up to an overlook for more spectacular views. A Fire-eyed Diucon was foraging on the beach which seemed odd. We were called back to the parking lot to see an Austral Pygmy Owl being mobbed by several birds. On the way, we passed a Plumbeous Rail feeding in the open at the edge of the lake. Male and female Rufous-

tailed Plantcutters looked on as the annoyed Owl flew back and forth being followed by an assortment of small birds.

Our next stop was the marsh we had visited the day before. The Sedge Wrens were there and the Austral Rail and Wren-like Rushbird were heard but remained out of sight. A pair of Cinereous Harriers flew over the marsh and two Spectacled Tyrants flew by. Across the road up on a hill there were Guanacos fighting and on the open water the Upland Geese were squabbling. The pond held White-tufted Grebes, Red-gartered Coots and Yellow-billed Teal. Behind us the Correndera Pipit was displaying and an Austral Canastero put in a quick appearance. Back on the bus, we watched two Buff-winged Cinclodes working on the roof of the rest room building.

Heading out of the Park, we had an unscheduled stop at Cerro Guido to deal with some paperwork needed for the bus. We walked around the village and found a young Gaucho who performed his lassoing skills for us. Finally we found a Big Hairy Armadillo but unfortunately it was “muerto”.



Moving up into the Sierra Baguales range, we birded the high desert habitat (3000 feet). There were soaring Andean Condors and plenty of Cinnamon-bellied Ground Tyrants. **Yellow-bridled Finches** were finally seen well and we found a wet area where there were four South American Snipe. Flocks of Plumbeous Sierra Finches were in attendance and we had great views of Gray-breasted Seedsnipe. Later in the day, we descended the Sierra and drove to Puerto Natales for a stay at the unique Hotel Remota for the night.



Day 7, October 17 • Pali Aike Road – Straits of Magellan – Tierra del Fuego

Our pre-breakfast walk in Puerto Natales once again featured a stunning full moon while daylight came up on the mountain peaks above the fiord. We walked to the water's edge in the crisp morning air and could see by the lack of clouds that it was going to be another stunning day in Patagonia. Near shore were several pairs of **Black-necked Swans** and Chiloe Wigeons. An early bird Black-chested Buzzard Eagle flew across the fiord and over us and we could see distant Chilean Skuas.

Passerines included Correndera Pipit, the very familiar Rufous-collared Sparrow and Austral Negrito.

We returned to the hotel for breakfast and then packed up and set off for Tierra del Fuego. Just outside of town we stopped again to look out over the fiord and saw several Southern Giant Petrels feeding close the shore. With them were Kelp and Brown-hooded Gulls, and a lone Southern Fulmar. There were many Black-necked Swans feeding nearby and a Neotropic Cormorant just up the shoreline.

We continued driving and soon turned off the main road and began once again traversing the Patagonian steppe. As usual there were many Lesser Rheas and this time we had good views of Tawny-throated Dotterel and a couple of close Common Miners. A perched **Aplomado Falcon** was a new and welcome sighting and we had a few Least Seedsnipe, Black-throated Finch, and Double-banded Plovers. Several ponds held Chilean Flamingos, Baird's Sandpipers, White-rumped Sandpipers and one spot had a group of Wilson's Phalaropes spinning. Another pond held many Upland Geese, Greater and Lesser Yellowlegs and a few Red Shovelers. As we were ready to depart this spot, Gina found a Short-billed Miner and everyone got back out of the bus to see it.



We made our way south to the ferry from Punta Delgada to Tierra del Fuego and prepared to cross a narrow stretch of the Strait of Magellan. It was amazing to think that Magellan himself had sailed through here 496 years ago almost to the day. As we waited to board the ferry, we saw a few Dolphin Gulls and a Chilean Skua flew by. On the crossing there were a couple of distant Magellanic Penguins and at least two Magellanic Diving Petrels. The crossing seemed so quick that we decided to go back and cross two more times to make a more complete survey of the Strait. During those crossings we had a large flock of White-rumped Sandpipers, several Imperial and Rock

Cormorants, at least one Commerson's Dolphin and a Dusky Dolphin. Chilean Skuas were around and it was interesting to see Chilean Swallows over the Strait.

Now officially in Tierra del Fuego, we continued toward Porvenir crossing the extensive pasturelands with many sheep, a few Southern Gray Foxes, Upland Geese, Darwin's Rheas, and Guanacos. We stopped at a cliff near the road to see a **Magellanic (Lesser) Horned Owl** perched in a hole



in the cliff. It looked sleepy and fairly unimpressed with us and was seen well by all. As we traveled, our first Coscoroba Swans were seen. We arrived in Porvenir in the early evening and checked into our accommodation for the night. After dinner at a local restaurant, we reviewed our list and prepared for our next day's adventure in Tierra del Fuego.

Day 8, October 18 • Tierra del Fuego: Useless Bay for King Penguins

Once again we awoke to sparkling clear skies over Porvenir. After breakfast we headed toward Bahía Inútil - Spanish for "Useless Bay" for one of the highlights of our visit to Tierra del Fuego. Along the way, we stopped and found Plain-mantled Tit Spinetail, a nesting Black-faced Ibis, and had quick views of Patagonian Yellow Finch.

Later in the morning we arrived at the Parque Pinguino Rey, the only known continental **King Penguin** breeding colony. In the past few years King Penguins have congregated here and recently they have successfully re-started to breed here. There were 100 adults in all stages of molt and at least 10 large, healthy looking chicks. We spent time watching all kinds of cool penguin behavior including



preening, allopreening, bugling, and feeding chicks. Claudio explained the current status of the colony and said that the chicks looked healthy so the future of the colony looks good. It was indeed a highlight of the tour and we came away with many photos, video and memories of these remarkable creatures.

We headed back toward Porvenir enjoying fantastic views of the Bay. The bus was accumulating dust inside for some reason so we stopped to assess the problem. Looking over the Bay, Steve noticed some spouts of water in the middle of the bay- many spouts stretching out over a large area. We couldn't see any whales or dolphins but it was quite distant so we moved to a spot closer to the shore. At this point we could see some interesting optical illusions in the distant cliffs and shores and realized that we must have been on a penguin high as what we were seeing turned out to be a combination of whitecaps on the water and heat shimmer.



As we determined that we were having some sort of hallucination, a nearby Short-billed Miner brought us back to reality. We continued on finding a pair of Flightless Steamer Ducks near shore and a flock of Black-chinned Siskins flew by as we drove off. Back in Porvenir, we stopped to get closer looks at some Dolphin Gulls on an old pier. There were several groups of Imperial Cormorants along the coast but not much else in the way of bird life. We went to the “lighthouse” and looked over the sea for any sign of real cetaceans. There were more cormorants and at one point a group of six Kelp Geese came flying toward us. On the way back, we spotted a Black-crowned Night Heron (obscure race) perched on some rocks along the shore. Back at the hotel, we updated our checklist then enjoyed a nice dinner with a special toast to the King Penguins.

Day 9, October 19 • Laguna de los Cisnes – Ferry to mainland – Punta Arenas

This morning, we visited some alkaline lagoons and ponds east of the village. Our first Coscoroba Swans were distant but we later bettered our views tallying 400+ of these once rare birds for the day. As we investigated several ponds along our route, we saw White-rumped Sandpiper, Double-banded Plover, Yellow-billed Pintail, and a South American Fox. We savored our last views of Guanacos and Foxes, Austral Negritos,



Chilean Flamingos, and Brown-hooded Gulls. Another lake held a couple of close **Great Grebes** allowing much better views of these gorgeous birds. On the other side of the road were some perched South American Terns and a few Baird's Sandpipers on the ground. Further on there were hundreds of Patagonian Crested Ducks, a few Steamer Ducks, Magellanic Oystercatcher, Yellow-billed Teal, and Chiloe Wigeon. Still another pond held more Coscoroba Swans we found ourselves at the same cliff as yesterday but this time there were two Magellanic Horned Owls sitting in their holes.

We went back to our guest house for lunch and a short break before taking a 2-hour ferry journey towards Punta Arenas. This was a longer crossing the mythic Strait of Magellan and was quite smooth and offered Southern Giant Petrel, Magellanic Diving Petrel, Chilean Skua, Kelp Gull, Dolphin Gull, South American Tern and at least one South American Sea Lion.

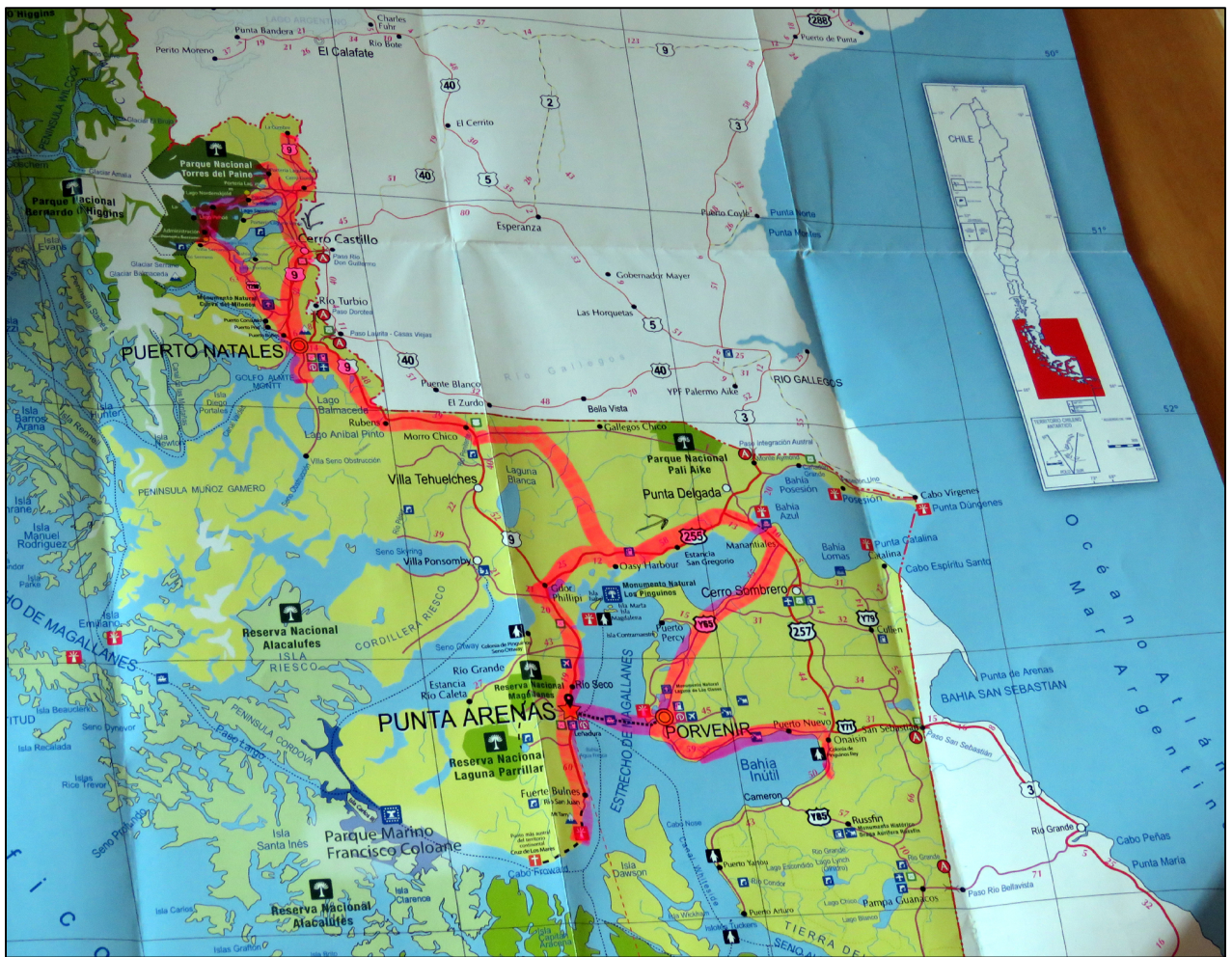


Photo: Carolyn Cimino

After disembarking the ferry we checked into our hotel and met in the bar for a slide show of some highlight photos by Steve. We enjoyed a delicious dinner and reminisced about all of the wonderful sightings we had enjoyed and all agreed that this was a very nice group to travel with. Claudio reviewed the map of our travels and we thanked Claudio and Steve for their expertise and retired for the night in anticipation of the next day and the long journey home.

Sunrise Birding's return to Chile reminded us why this captivating country is widely regarded as one of the most beautiful countries in the world. Our Chilean wildlife adventure yielded a stunning variety of landscapes, majestic scenery and abundant wildlife including 5 Pumas, a visit to the only known continental colony of King Penguins; good views the rare Hooded Grebe and so much more. During our travels in Chilean Patagonia, we marveled at the massive towers of Torres del Paine and watched Andean Condors performing display flights above the rugged mountain peaks. We crossed the Straits of Magellan five times and explored the sprawling steppes of Tierra del Fuego. This trip offered lasting memories of spectacular scenery, unique flora and fauna and fascinating culture. Thanks to all who participated!

Gina & Steve



Photos by Gina Nichol and Steve Bird unless otherwise indicated.