

Endemic Birds of Central Argentina

Córdoba Central Hills

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INTRODUCTION

The province of Cordoba is a perfect destination for birders looking for Argentine specialties. A variety of habitats hold very interesting and localized birds, including endemic species and subspecies, as well as a few birds hardly found outside Argentina.

The most interesting feature of the landscape is perhaps the Central hills. Surrounded by woodlands and scrub typical of the Chaco region, this mountain range raises to 2800 m, nearly as high as some areas of the Andes. Isolation favored the evolution of endemic forms and Cordoba Cinclodes is therefore one of our main targets. Many birds shared with the Andes are classified as endemic subspecies, and even now, the taxonomy of some forms remains controversial. So every time we climb to the mountain tops we pay special attention to "Olrog's" Cinclodes, "Cordoba" Canastero and many others.

At lower elevations, we look for the Chaco habitat species such as the Black-crested Finch, Crested Hornero and the magnificent Scimitar-billed Woodcreeper. With luck we can also find Black-legged Seriema, Black-bodied Woodpecker, Spot-winged Falconet and other birds for which Argentina is a great place to look for.

Our trip usually ends at the huge salt pan of Salinas Grandes, which spreads for 8900 Km² and holds yet another endemic, the Salinas Monjita.

On this trip Adrian, Kate and I were able to find many of the species that inhabit the different areas of this province and also enjoy a very nice medium-pace birding trip, with excellent results in terms of bird species.

After we met at the international airport in Cordoba city we drove to the highest mountain plateau of the region, Pampa de Achala, where our birding started. We found some interesting birds such as Subtropical Doradito, Cordoba and Olrog's Cinclodes, Cordoba (Puna) Canastero, and many Andean Condors. Right after we had our target species it started to rain, so we decided to drive towards the valley, stopping in some grassland areas where we found Darwin's and Spotted Nothura, White-browed Blackbird and Long-tailed Meadowlark among others. We continued through the main road and stopped along the way each time bumping into species such as the Lark-like Brush-Runner, Brown Cacholote and the Chaco Earthcreeper, all typical of Chaco habitats.

The next day we walked near the hotel and found Many-colored Chaco-Finch, Little Thornbird, Great Antshrike and a very nice Crested Gallito that was calling from an open bush. We had great scope views of it. We also got to see Sooty-fronted and Stripe-crowned Spinetail, Stripe-capped Sparrow and White-bellied Tyrannulet. In the afternoon we went to a reservoir near town and saw some waterfowl such as Red-gartered, White-winged and Red-fronted Coot. Also Great, White tufted and Pied-billed Grebe, Amazon Kingfisher and Striated Heron. There were Wattled Jacanas and several Wren-like Rush-Birds. Later in the afternoon we drove again up into the mountains and found Band-tailed Sierra-Finch and Hellmayr's Pipit, returning to town for a good dinner. In the evening, we found a Band-winged Nightjar perched on top of a fence post.

Sunday morning was cool and sunny and the light was delightful. The woodland was teeming with bird activity. We had great looks of both male and female Blue-tufted Starthroat, a beautiful Olive-crowned Crescentchest, Tataupa Tinamou and one of the specialties of this area: Spot-winged Falconet. After we saw all these great species we were really excited when we heard a Black-bodied Woodpecker calling from the forest. We started to look for this scarce species in the direction from where the sound came. Suddenly Adrian spotted a male at the very top of the hill in front of us. After a while two other birds joined the first one so there were three of these very rare woodpeckers in one tree!!!

After lunch we drove north to our next destination: The Salinas Grandes. Salinas Monjita lives in the last strip of vegetation right at the edge of the salt flat. After checking in at the hotel we had a short rest and then drove to our traditional spot. On our first stop we found Crested Hornero, Suiriri Flycatcher, Grey-crowned Tyrannulet (a recently described species), and the very handsome Black-crested Finch. After some time we heard a Black-legged Seriema, which showed up very well in the open after a patient scanning of the underbrush of the Chaco forest. We continued towards the Salinas but soon stopped when we spotted a Brushland Tinamou with a chick on a side of the road. There were also White-banded Mockingbird, Red-crested Finch and Chaco Puffbird. When we got to the salty area we found Patagonian Mockingbird, Lesser Shrike Tyrant and Sharp-billed Canastero but no luck with the Salinas Monjita that day. However, the sunset in the Salinas was just beautiful, which we all enjoyed.

It was already dark when we started our drive back to the hotel. On our way, we found our last bird of the day: A male Scissor-tailed Nightjar, displaying just above our heads.

On our last day we had several more interesting birds: Dark-billed Cuckoo, Aplomado Falcon, and our main target, the Salinas Monjita. Two birds showed very well, and we added an unusual sight of a very handsome Tawny-throated Dotterel. Afterwards we drove back to town for a nice lunch before driving back to the airport.

It was a pleasant trip with lots of good birds (since we saw all the endemics and almost all the specialties of central Argentina), something to keep in mind when little time is available to take a longer bird trip.

Thanks Adrian and Kate for the good time, I hope to see them again and enjoy another birding trip together.

Below is a list of all the bird species (a total of 145 species) that we saw during the whole trip (three and a half days).

i = INTRODUCED

e = ENDEMIC SPECIES

eb = ENDEMIC BREEDER

ne = NEAR ENDEMIC (90% or more of their distribution is in one country)

Global threat categories by BirdLife international:

CR = CRITICAL

EN = ENDANGERED

VU = VULNERABLE

NT = NEAR THREATENED

NUM	REF	ENGLISH NAME	LATIN NAME
Family Tinamidae (Tinamous)			
1		Tataupa Tinamou	<i>Crypturellus tataupa</i>
2		Brushland Tinamou	<i>Nothoprocta cinerascens</i>
3		Darwin's Nothura	<i>Nothura darwinii</i>
4		Spotted Nothura	<i>Nothura maculosa</i>
Family Anatidae (Ducks, Geese, Swans)			
5		Speckled Teal	<i>Anas flavirostris</i>
6		White-cheeked Pintail	<i>Anas bahamensis</i>
Family Podicipedidae (Grebes)			
7		White-tufted Grebe	<i>Rollandia rolland</i>
8		Least Grebe	<i>Tachybaptus dominicus</i>
9		Pied-billed Grebe	<i>Podilymbus podiceps</i>
10		Great Grebe	<i>Podiceps major</i>
Family Phoenicopteridae (Flamingos)			
11	NT	Chilean Flamingo	<i>Phoenicopus chilensis</i>
Family Phalacrocoracidae (Cormorants, Cormorants)			
12		Neotropic Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax brasilianus</i>
Family Ardeidae (Herons, Egrets, Bitterns)			
13		Black-crowned Night-Heron	<i>Nycticorax nycticorax</i>
14		Striated Heron	<i>Butorides striata</i>
15		Snowy Egret	<i>Egretta thula</i>
Family Cathartidae (Vultures)			
16		Turkey Vulture	<i>Cathartes aura</i>
17		Black Vulture	<i>Coragyps atratus</i>
18	NT	Andean Condor	<i>Vultur gryphus</i>
Family Accipitridae (Hawks, Kites, Eagles)			
19		Sharp-shinned Hawk	<i>Accipiter striatus</i>
20		Black-chested Buzzard-Eagle	<i>Geranoaetus melanoleucus</i>
21		Red-backed Hawk	<i>Buteo polyosoma</i>
Family Falconidae (Caracaras, Falcons)			
22		Spot-winged Falconet	<i>Spizapteryx circumcincta</i>
23		Southern Caracara	<i>Caracara plancus</i>
24		Chimango Caracara	<i>Milvago chimango</i>
25		American Kestrel	<i>Falco sparverius</i>
26		Aplomado Falcon	<i>Falco femoralis</i>
Family Rallidae (Crakes, Rails, Coots)			
27		Plumbeous Rail	<i>Pardirallus sanguinolentus</i>
28		White-winged Coot	<i>Fulica leucoptera</i>
29		Red-gartered Coot	<i>Fulica armillata</i>
30		Red-fronted Coot	<i>Fulica rufifrons</i>
Family Cariamidae (Seriemas)			
31		Red-legged Seriema	<i>Cariama cristata</i>
Family Charadriidae (Plovers, Lapwings)			
32		Southern Lapwing	<i>Vanellus chilensis</i>
33		Tawny-throated Dotterel	<i>Oreopholus ruficollis</i>
Family Scolopacidae (Snipe, Sandpipers)			
34		Greater Yellowlegs	<i>Tringa melanoleuca</i>
Family Jacanidae (Jacanas)			
35		Wattled Jacana	<i>Jacana jacana</i>
Family Columbidae (Pigeons, Doves)			
36		Picui Ground-Dove	<i>Columbina picui</i>
37	I	Rock Pigeon	<i>Columba livia</i>
38		Picazuro Pigeon	<i>Patagioenas picazuro</i>
39		Spot-winged Pigeon	<i>Patagioenas maculosa</i>
40		Eared Dove	<i>Zenaida auriculata</i>
41		White-tipped Dove	<i>Leptotila verreauxi</i>
Family Psittacidae (Parrots)			
42		Blue-crowned Parakeet	<i>Aratinga acuticaudata</i>
43		Monk Parakeet	<i>Myiopsitta monachus</i>
44		Grey-hooded Parakeet	<i>Psilopsiagon aymara</i>

Family Cuculidae (Cuckoos, Anis)		
45		Dark-billed Cuckoo <i>Coccyzus melacoryphus</i>
46		Guira Cuckoo <i>Guira guira</i>
47		Striped Cuckoo <i>Tapera naevia</i>
Family Strigidae (Owls)		
48		Burrowing Owl <i>Athene cunicularia</i>
Family Caprimulgidae (Nighthawks, Nightjars)		
49		Band-winged Nightjar <i>Caprimulgus longirostris</i>
50		Scissor-tailed Nightjar <i>Hydropsalis torquata</i>
Family Apodidae (Swifts)		
51		White-collared Swift <i>Streptoprocne zonaris</i>
52		Andean Swift <i>Aeronautes andecolus</i>
Family Trochilidae (Hummingbirds)		
53		Blue-tufted Starthroat <i>Helioaster furcifer</i>
54		Glittering-bellied Emerald <i>Chlorostilbon aureoventris</i>
Family Alcedinidae (Kingfishers)		
55		Amazon Kingfisher <i>Chloroceryle amazona</i>
Family Picidae (Woodpeckers)		
56		White-barred Piculet <i>Picumnus cirratus</i>
57		White-fronted Woodpecker <i>Melanerpes cactorum</i>
58		Green-barred Woodpecker <i>Colaptes melanochloros</i>
59		Campo Flicker <i>Colaptes campestris</i>
60	NT	Black-bodied Woodpecker <i>Dryocopus schulzi</i>
Family Furnariidae (Ovenbirds)		
61		Rufous-banded Miner <i>Geositta rufipennis</i>
62	e	Córdoba Cinclodes <i>Cinclodes comechingonus</i>
63		Olrog's Cinclodes <i>Cinclodes olrogi</i>
64		Rufous Hornero <i>Furnarius rufus</i>
65		Crested Hornero <i>Furnarius cristatus</i>
66		Wren-like Rushbird <i>Phleocryptes melanops</i>
67		Sooty-fronted Spinetail <i>Synallaxis frontalis</i>
68		Pale-breasted Spinetail <i>Synallaxis albescens</i>
69		Stripe-crowned Spinetail <i>Cranioleuca pyrrhophia</i>
70		Sharp-billed Canastero <i>Asthenes pyrrholeuca</i>
71		Short-billed Canastero <i>Asthenes baeri</i>
72		Puna Canastero <i>Asthenes sclateri</i>
73		Little Thornbird <i>Phacellodomus sibilatrix</i>
74		Firewood-gatherer <i>Anumbius annumbi</i>
75		Lark-like Brushrunner <i>Coryphistera alaudina</i>
76		Brown Cacholote <i>Pseudoseisura lophotes</i>
77		Chaco Earthcreeper <i>Tarphonomus certhioides</i>
78		Scimitar-billed Woodcreeper <i>Drymornis bridgesii</i>
Family Thamnophilidae (Typical Antbirds)		
79		Great Antshrike <i>Taraba major</i>
80		Variable Antshrike <i>Thamnophilus caerulescens</i>
Family Rhinocryptidae (Tapaculos)		
81		Crested Gallito <i>Rhinocrypta lanceolata</i>
Family Melanopareiidae (Crescentchests)		
82		Olive-crowned Crescentchest <i>Melanopareia maximiliani</i>
Family Tyrannidae (Tyrant-Flycatchers)		
83		Small-billed Elaenia <i>Elaenia parvirostris</i>
84		White-crested Elaenia <i>Elaenia albiceps</i>
85		Suiriri Flycatcher <i>Suiriri suiriri</i>
86		Sooty Tyrannulet <i>Serpophaga nigricans</i>
87	eb	Grey-crowned Tyrannulet <i>Serpophaga griseicapilla</i>
88		White-bellied Tyrannulet <i>Serpophaga munda</i>
89		Subtropical Doradito <i>Pseudocolopteryx acutipennis</i>
90		Greater Wagtail-Tyrant <i>Stigmatura budyoides</i>
91		Pearly-vented Tody-Tyrant <i>Hemitriccus margaritaceiventer</i>
92		Bran-colored Flycatcher <i>Myiophobus fasciatus</i>
93		Vermilion Flycatcher <i>Pyrocephalus rubinus</i>
94		Spectacled Tyrant <i>Hymenops perspicillatus</i>
95	eb	Lesser Shrike-Tyrant <i>Agriornis murinus</i>
96		White Monjita <i>Xolmis irupero</i>

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97	e-NT	Salinas Monjita	<i>Xolmis salinarum</i>
98		Cattle Tyrant	<i>Machetornis rixosa</i>
99		Great Kiskadee	<i>Pitangus sulphuratus</i>
100		Streaked Flycatcher	<i>Myiodynastes maculatus</i>
101		Crowned Slaty-Flycatcher	<i>Empidonomus aurantioatrocristatus</i>
102		Fork-tailed Flycatcher	<i>Tyrannus savana</i>
103		Tropical Kingbird	<i>Tyrannus melancholicus</i>
104		Swainson's Flycatcher	<i>Myiarchus swainsoni</i>
Family Cotingidae (Plantcutters, Cotingas)			
105		White-tipped Plantcutter	<i>Phytotoma rutila</i>
Family Vireonidae (Vireos, Greenlets)			
106		Rufous-browed Peppershrike	<i>Cyclarhis gujanensis</i>
107		Red-eyed Vireo	<i>Vireo olivaceus</i>
Family Hirundinidae (Swallows)			
108		Blue-and-white Swallow	<i>Pygochelidon cyanoleuca</i>
109		Tawny-headed Swallow	<i>Alopochelidon fucata</i>
110		Southern Martin	<i>Progne elegans</i>
111		Brown-chested Martin	<i>Progne tapera</i>
112		White-rumped Swallow	<i>Tachycineta leucorrhoa</i>
Family Troglodytidae (Wrens)			
113		House Wren	<i>Troglodytes aedon</i>
Family Polioptilidae (Gnatcatchers)			
114		Masked Gnatcatcher	<i>Polioptila dumicola</i>
Family Turdidae (Thrushes)			
115		Chiguanco Thrush	<i>Turdus chiguanco</i>
116		Creamy-bellied Thrush	<i>Turdus amaurochalinus</i>
Family Mimidae (Mockingbirds)			
117		Chalk-browed Mockingbird	<i>Mimus saturninus</i>
118	ne	Patagonian Mockingbird	<i>Mimus patagonicus</i>
119	eb	White-banded Mockingbird	<i>Mimus triurus</i>
Family Motacillidae (Pipits)			
120		Hellmayr's Pipit	<i>Anthus hellmayri</i>
Family Thraupidae (Tanagers)			
121		Blue-and-yellow Tanager	<i>Thraupis bonariensis</i>
Incertae sedis (Bush tanagers, Grassquits, etc)			
122		Golden-billed Saltator	<i>Saltator aurantirostris</i>
123		Many-colored Chaco-Finch	<i>Saltatricula multicolor</i>
Family Emberizidae (Emberizid Finches)			
124		Rufous-collared Sparrow	<i>Zonotrichia capensis</i>
125		Grassland Sparrow	<i>Ammodramus humeralis</i>
126	ne	Stripe-capped Sparrow	<i>Aimophila strigiceps</i>
127		Plumbeous Sierra-Finch	<i>Phrygilus unicolor</i>
128		Band-tailed Sierra-Finch	<i>Phrygilus alaudinus</i>
129		Black-crested Finch	<i>Lophospingus pusillus</i>
130		Black-and-chestnut Warbling-Finch	<i>Poospiza whittii</i>
131		Black-capped Warbling-Finch	<i>Poospiza melanoleuca</i>
132		Saffron Finch	<i>Sicalis flaveola</i>
133		Grassland Yellow-Finch	<i>Sicalis luteola</i>
134		Great Pampa-Finch	<i>Embernagra platensis</i>
135		Double-collared Seedeater	<i>Sporophila caerulea</i>
136		Band-tailed Seedeater	<i>Catamenia analis</i>
137		Red-crested Finch	<i>Coryphospingus cucullatus</i>
Family Parulidae (New World Warblers)			
138		Masked Yellowthroat	<i>Geothlypis aequinoctialis</i>
Family Icteridae (Orioles, Blackbirds)			
139		Bay-wing Cowbird	<i>Agelaioides badius</i>
140		Screaming Cowbird	<i>Molothrus rufoaxillaris</i>
141		Shiny Cowbird	<i>Molothrus bonariensis</i>
142		White-browed Blackbird	<i>Sturnella supercilialis</i>
143		Long-tailed Meadowlark	<i>Sturnella loyca</i>
Family Fringillidae (Cardueline Finches)			
144		Hooded Siskin	<i>Carduelis magellanica</i>
Family Passeridae (Sparrows)			
145	i	House Sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>