



**Albatross Birding**  
**North of Chile: Lauca National Park and North Chile Specialties**  
**October 29<sup>th</sup> - November 2<sup>nd</sup> 2017**



Andean Flicker (*Colaptes rupicola*) Photo: Eduardo Navarro.

**Guide:** Eduardo Navarro

**Participant:** Karen Wiebe

This trip report covers 5 days in the north of Chile. From the calm waters to the Ocean Pacific, through the fertile valleys to the high Andean plateau with high volcanoes and lagoons full of coots and flamingos.

#### **DAY 1: 29<sup>th</sup> October**

We flew from Santiago to Chacalluta Airport north from Arica city and we went straight to the Lluta's river mouth. This wetland is the largest one in Chilean first region and congregates numerous resident and migratory birds

Large flocks of seagulls and terns, among them the Little Tern and a good selection of shorebirds that included Least and Baird's sandpiper, as well as the Snowy and Semipalmated Plover and Killdeer, marked the starting point of our trip.

With Karen we decided to move quickly towards south to Camarones ravine. Much better preserved than the other two ravines (Lluta and Azapa), where we looked for Pied-crested Tityrant and Chilean Woodstar in the tamarugo forests. In the same sector we found several Chilean-Woodstar nests, which hold some hope for this threatened bird.



Chilean Woodstar (*Eulidia yarrellii*) Photo: Eduardo Navarro.

We continued entering the valley until reaching the alfalfa fields in search for species described for Chile, just in August 2016, the Raimondi's yellow finch, which fed on large flocks.

But along with this Passeriformes a small group of Arica hummingbirds was feeding on the alfalfa flowers, giving us excellent views of males and females that were flying around us.

We ended up looking for the Tamarugo Conebill and visiting the newly discovered colony of Markham's Storm-Petrel which have been occupying some of the most absolute desert to reproduce and no one knew!

## **DAY 2: 30<sup>th</sup> October**

The quiet sea of Arica gave us pleasant trip in its warm waters. Departing early from Arica dock several common species of the Humboldt Current began to appear: Peruvian Pelican and Booby and Inca tern went out to feed on the sea. Soon after sailing several hundred Sooty Shearwater began to fly near to us and the small flutterings of the Peruvian Diving-Petrel and Elliot's storm petrel were noticed before the passage of our boat.



Peruvian Diving Petrel (*Pelecanoides garnotii*) Photo: Eduardo Navarro.

It was not only the birds we were able to enjoy. A large group of dusky dolphins accompanied us for a long portion of the trip and some South American Sea Lion provided the other mammals of the trip.

Large flocks of Red-legged and Guanay Cormorant livened up our return to the port to enjoy the coastal cuisine of Arica.

The rest of the day was spent traveling up into the Andes at Putre with the main bird sighting on the way up: Bran-coloured Flycatcher, Blue-black grasquit, Vermilion flycatcher, Groove billed ani and Andean swift.



Creamy-breasted canastero (*Asthenes dorbignyi*) Photo: Eduardo Navarro.

With the last light of the day we stopped in Putre to see: Andean Hillstar, hooded siskin, creamy-breasted canastero and the huge spotted wing pigeon.

### **DAY 3: 31<sup>st</sup> October**

Putre is a small village located at 3500 metres above the sea level and is a hotspot for birdwatchers.

With our final destination being the road up to Lake Chungará, we decided to start driving early to Putre. Along the way we stopped to see some specialties of this area: Ornate Tinamou, streaked tit spinetail, yellow-billed tit-tyrant and plain-breasted earthcreeper.





Ornate Tinamou (*Nothoprocta ornata*) Photo: Eduardo Navarro.

In addition, we found White-winged Diuca-finch, and the sparsely distributed White-throated Sierra-finch, Puna Ground-tyrant, grey-breasted seedsnipe and a pair of the spectacular Diademed Sandpiper-plover were some of the findings of the Las Cuevas sector.

We kept moving up to check a big flock of flamingos. We identify the 3 species with the scope: chilean, andean and puna flamingo.

Finally, we arrived at Lake Chungará (4500m) at the base of the Pomerapy and Parinacota volcanoes which was the scene to find: Giant Coot, Puna Plover, Andean Lapwing, Andean Avocet and Puna Teal.



Andean Lapwing (*Vanellus resplendens*) Photo: Eduardo Navarro.

Our last stop of the day were surroundings of Parinacota. Where is a colony of Andean Flickers nesting in the nearby ravines and a fertile wetland housed of giant and slate- colored coot.

Near to Putre we checked a small creek. We were looking for the beautiful torrent duck, to finish a wonderful day at Altiplano.

#### **DAY 4: 1<sup>st</sup> November**

The next day we started observing birds walking from our hotel and ending in the depths of the creek bed, with very good morning sightings, we completed the specialties for the Putre area: Cayon canastero, white-throated and straight billed earthcreeper, black-throated flowerpiercer and band tailed seedeater.

On our route back to Arica we deviated from the path looking for the last forests of Polylepis, one of the trees that grows at the highest altitudes, in conditions of extreme aridity, strong winds and intense solar radiation. This was the scenario to find the D'Orbigny's Chat-tyrant and a very rare Rufous webbed bush tyrant.



Rufous webbed bush tyrant (*Polioptila rufipennis*) Photo: Eduardo Navarro.

We moved down, looking unsuccessfully for the peruvian thick-knee, so we visited Hummingbird Sanctuary, where we had good views and took great photos of Oasis Hummingbird and the beautiful Peruvian Sheartail.

## DAY 5: 2<sup>nd</sup> November

We used the last morning to search for some shorebirds in the rocks close to our hotel, big flocks of willet, ruddy turnstone and surfbird were found it.

Then, we tried again to look for the Peruvian thick-knee, and we found it in an unusual site that gave us more than 20 individuals of this nocturnal species, cryptic and difficult to observe.



Peruvian thick-knee (*Burhinus superciliaris*) Photo: Eduardo Navarro.

With all the Karen`s wish list in the pocket we went back to Santiago after, 5 wonderful birding days in the North of Chile.