
Birding Northern Argentina

A bird watching adventure covering most natural habitats of northern Argentina

August 28 – September 16, 2017

Main Tour August 28 – September 10

Northeast Extension September 10 - 16



Yellow Cardinal © Luis Segura

Northwestern Argentina is a land full of spectacular landscapes and with a vast cultural heritage. Remnants of buildings and roads from the "Great Inca Empire of the Sun" can still be found everywhere here, and many cultural events and pre-Hispanic rituals, such as that in honor of the "Pacha Mama" (Mother Earth), are still celebrated by the locals. Andean music is heard everywhere, and people still play their traditional instruments. This incredibly varied region has a great diversity of natural habitats, ranging from Yungas Cloudforest to dry Chaco Woodlands. The three provinces in the north-westernmost part of Argentina, Jujuy, Salta and Tucuman, host some pristine representatives of these habitats, all worth visiting for birders to find both diversity and good numbers of native species.

During the first part of our journey we'll explore some wonderful montane and pre-montane habitats, including the Monte at the Calchaqui Valleys, and the mountains of the Aconquija. The latter is home to several specialities including White-browed Tapaculo, White-winged Cinclodes, Black-billed Shrike-Tyrant, Buff-breasted Earthcreeper, Cordilleran and Puna Canasteros, Gray-hooded Parakeet, Slender-billed Miner, and even three endemics: Tucuman Mountain Finch, Yellow-striped Brush Finch and Moreno's Ground-Dove.

We will also have our first contact with the Yungas Cloudforest in the Province of Tucumán. Forming a wedge along the southern Andean chains of Bolivia and northwestern Argentina, the Yungas Cloudforest supports one of the greatest biological diversities in the Neotropics. It harbors a wide variety of forests and woodlands, each hosting its own and unique community of flora and fauna, all varying with altitude. Wildlife is abundant in this humid environment. Ferns, bromeliads and other epiphytic plants are particularly stunning here, and they cover every single corner of the forest. This biological treasure is well protected within the boundaries of several national parks and nature reserves, and we plan to explore it thoroughly in different areas.

We will then continue northward, leaving behind the provinces of Tucumán and Salta, to enter Jujuy, the north-westernmost province of Argentina, where we'll spend a few days exploring the area of Humahuaca Valley. Just south the Humahuaca Valley lies the small village of Yala and the Yala River, which is bordered by lush Yungas cloudforest. Exploring this area is a must for birders, since it is here where chances are high to find such unique species as Rufous-throated Dipper, Torrent Duck, Red-faced Guan and Lyre-tailed Nightjar. A local reserve just above Yala protects a good stand of pure Alder forest, offering great chances to visit yet another habitat, with its particular wildlife. Continuing north, and up to higher elevations, we will leave behind the Yungas and the Alder forest, to enter the pre-Puna. The Andes in this part of Argentina are very dry, but they are crossed by a series of humid valleys, with Humahuaca standing out for its unique setting. Nestled amidst spectacular rock formations of the most incredible and diverse colors, this is the heart of one of the richest cacti flora on Earth and home to a wide array of birds, mammals and other wildlife. Lake Pozuelos Natural Monument, a mountain-ringed basin with shallow brackish water, lies some 90 km. north of Abra Pampa, in the heart of the Puna. It harbors thousands of Andean, Chilean and Puna Flamingoes so we hope to witness the spectacle of large concentrations of these creatures amidst the solitude and grandeur of High Andean landscape.

After visiting the Humahuaca Valley area, we will drive back into the Province of Salta, where we plan to explore the Chaco habitats. The Chaco is a very particular ecosystem, mainly a thorny woodland, which covers most of the northernmost part of Argentina. It is well divided into a dry, a montane and a wet area, and each area hosts different flora and fauna. We will spend three days exploring the Chaco, searching for its unique birds.

No birding tour to northwestern Argentina would be complete without visiting the Andean habitats of the famous Cachi Road, an area well-reputed among birders the world over for the quantity and quality of bird species present here. We will follow this road on our way to los Cardones National Park, looking for birds like Aplomado Falcon, Andean Flicker, Rock Earthcreeper, White-tipped Plantcutter, Brown-capped Tit-Spinetail, Yellow-billed Tit-Tyrant, White-winged Black-Tyrant, Black Siskin, Rufous-sided Warbling-Finch and the localized Rufous-bellied Saltator.

After two weeks of exploring northwestern Argentina, we will fly from Salta to Iguazú, and drive from there to yet another spectacular wildlife area: Iberá Marshes.

Northeastern Argentina is a land of extensive marshlands, grasslands and rainforests. Iguazú National Park is perhaps the most well-known protected area in this region, but it is certainly not the only one. The two north-easternmost provinces of Argentina host the highest concentration of bird diversity in our country: these are Corrientes and Misiones. Driving from Iguazú to Iberá marshes, we will make several birding stops to look for birds of the “Campos”, a restricted area of savannas in smooth hills with patches of forests. The wide diversity and vast numbers of Finches, Tyrants, Furnarids, Storks, Herons, Ducks and other wetland species are overwhelming in this part of the country. This is the habitat where the endangered Saffron-cowled Blackbird and the gorgeous Streamer-tailed Tyrant live. The last few days will be spent exploring Iberá Marshes, the largest wetland in Argentina. Here we’ll have our best chances to find birds with highly restricted distribution ranges in Argentina, such as Strange-tailed Tyrant, Ochre-breasted Pipit and White-tailed Goldenthrout.



Andean Avocet © Luis Segura

Your tour itinerary in a glimpse

Day	Itinerary
1	Arrival to Tucumán and drive to Tafi del Valle – Overnight Tafi
2	Full day birding Tafi del Valle – Overnight Tafi
3	Tafi del Valle to Cafayate – Overnight Cafayate
4	Cafayate to Cabra Corral – Overnight Cabra Corral
5	Full day Cachi Road – Overnight Cabra Corral
6	Cabra Corral to San Lorenzo via dry Chaco – Overnight San Lorenzo
7	San Lorenzo to Purmamarca via Yungas – O/N Purmamarca
8	Full day birding Purmamarca area – Overnight Purmamarca
9	Purmamarca to Abra Pampa – Overnight Abra Pampa
10	Full day Pozuelos and Lagunillas – Overnight Abra Pampa
11	Abra Pampa to Yavi – Overnight Yavi
12	Yavi to Yala – Overnight Yala
13	Full day birding Yala – Overnight Yala
14	Yala to Salta and flight to Iguazú – Overnight Iguazú
15	Full day Iguazú National Park – Overnight Iguazú
16	Iguazú to Ituzaingó birding en0route – Overnight Ituzaingó
17	Ituzaingó to Iberá Marshes – Overnight Iberá Marshes
18	Full day birding Iberá – Overnight Iberá Marshes
19	Full day birding Iberá – Overnight Iberá Marshes
20	Iberá Marshes to Posadas and flight to Buenos Aires and home
21	Some people may opt to spend the night in Buenos Aires and fly home today

Your detailed tour itinerary

DAY 1, Aug. 28: Morning arrival to Tucumán Airport. Meet your tour leaders and guide at the airport and drive to Tafi del Valle, where we'll spend the following 2 nights. On the way to Tafi, there will be time to stop and do some birding. We will first drive through some wet low-altitude grasslands and wetlands, and then start climbing to higher altitudes. The road from Tucumán to Tafi follows the River Los Sosa, which runs from 2,000 meters in Tafi, to around 500 meters above sea level near Tucumán. Chances are good here for Rufous-throated Dipper bobbing on rocks amid the fast flowing roadside river and also for Torrent Duck.



BrownCapped Whitestart © Luis Segura

(D)

DAY 2, Aug. 29: We'll spend the day birding different habitats around Tafí del Valle looking for birds like Yungas Dove, Rothschild's Swift, the endemic Yellow-striped Brush Finch and White-browed Tapaculo among others. (BLD)

DAY 3, Aug. 30: We'll leave Tafí del Valle after breakfast, and drive north towards Cafayate, a world reputed wine location, famous for the quality of its Torrontes, Malbec and Tannat varieties. On our way there, we will climb to higher altitudes to finally



reach El Infiernillo mountain Pass, at 3,042 meters above sea level. On our way there, we'll look for specialties like White-browed Tapaculo, Black-billed Shrike-Tyrant, White-winged Cinclodes, Slender-billed Miner, Paramo Pipit, Cordilleran Canastero, Puna Canastero, Buff-breasted Earthcreeper, Gray-hooded Parakeet and some endemics like Tucuman Mountain Finch, Yellow-striped Brush Finch and Moreno's Ground-Dove. After crossing El Infiernillo, we will descend down to the Province of Salta, and start exploring a

slightly different habitat of dry thorny scrubland with rocky cliffs and sandy soil, known as Monte of the Calchaqui Valleys. Despite being dry, this habitat is quite different from what we saw near Tafí, and it's full of new birds, including some endemics like White-throated Cacholote and Sandy Gallito. Other highlights for today include flocks of Burrowing Parrot (northern race), Chaco Earthcreeper, Spot-winged Pigeon, Blue-and-yellow Tanager, Black-crested Finch, White-banded Mockingbird, White-crested Tyrannulet, and the attractive White-fronted Woodpecker. We'll spend the night in Cafayate. (BLD)

DAY 4, Aug. 31: We'll leave Cafayate this morning and continue north to Cabra Corral, where we'll spend the following two nights. On our way there, we'll cross some of the most spectacular rock formations in NW Argentina at Quebrada de las Conchas, where besides enjoying the spectacular scenery, we'll have our first chances for the elusive Black-legged Seriema. (BLD)

DAY 5, Sept. 1: Full day excursion to Los Cardones National Park, following the famous Cachi Road. The unpaved winding road climbs all the way up to Cuesta del Obispo (the Bishop's Raise) at 3,500 meters. Variable Hawk, Aplomado Falcon, Andean Flicker and Rock Earthcreeper are all possible here. We'll explore the gullies looking for White-tipped Plantcutter, Brown-capped Tit-Spinetail, Yellow-billed Tit-Tyrant, White-winged Black-Tyrant, Black Siskin, Rufous-sided Warbling-Finch and the localized Rufous-bellied Saltator. We will also spend some time at lower altitudes, looking for Subtropical Doradito and Streak-throated Bush Tyrant. Flowering tobacco bushes attract hummingbirds like Giant Hummingbird and the striking Red-tailed Comet, and the

dry slopes along the way are home to Andean Tinamou. Driving back to our hotel in the afternoon, we will search for other Andean specialties such as Zimmer's Tapaculo and the endemic Steinbach's Canastero. **(BLD)**



Andean Flicker © Luis Segura

Day 6, Sept. 2: We will leave Cabra Corral after breakfast, and drive all the way to San Lorenzo. To get there, we'll take a back road following the course of the Juramento River,

which crosses a narrow section of Chaco Serrano Forest, a habitat characterized by taller mesquite-type trees and Pampas Grass carpeting the edges of the ravines. Impressive geological formations give way to the deep canyon of the Juramento River. Andean Condors are commonly seen soaring around, Dusky-legged Guan is possible along the edge of the water, and White-collared Swifts fly over the cliffs. We will also spend some time birding the area of Palomitas, where some remnants of dry Chaco forest in good shape still stand, offering excellent chances to try for any birds that we might have missed before leaving this habitat. Time permitting, we'll spend some more time birding around San Lorenzo looking for birds like Red-legged Seriema which is likely to be found next to our hotel. We'll spend one night in San Lorenzo. **(BLD)**

Day 7, Sept. 3: We will leave San Lorenzo after breakfast and continue north, birding en route, to finally reach Santa Laura mountain pass. On our way there, we'll cross some transitional forests and wetlands, offering great chances for birds like Golden-Olive Woodpecker, Whistling Heron, Band-tailed Seedeater, White Monjita, Fork-tailed Flycatcher, Rufous-browed Peppershrike, Purple-throated Euphonia, Rusty-browed Warbling Finch, Spot-breasted Thornbird and Slaty Elaenia to name but a few. Some prominent and easy to spot birds like the spectacular Crested Oropendola and the inquisitive Plush-crested Jay are also possible sightings along the way. Raptors are a bit unpredictable, but Barred Forest Falcon, Short-tailed Hawk and King Vulture are all present here, especially as we get deeper into the Yungas, which we'll cross en route to our next destination: the small village of Purmamarca, where we'll spend two nights.

(BLD)

Day 8, Sept. 4: We will spend the morning birding the area of Pucará de Tilcara, an old pre-Incan citadel. Afternoon birding west of Purmamarca, looking for specialties of the dry Andean foothills. **(BLD)**

Day 9, Sept. 5: Today we will continue north, to finally enter the Puna region. This will be a day of fascinating contrasts as we gradually move to higher elevations along the

Humahuaca Canyon. We'll look here for birds like Andean Swift, Andean Lapwing, Rufous-banded and Puna Miners, Andean Negrito, Rusty-vented Canastero, Streak-fronted Thornbird, Mourning and Band-tailed Sierra Finches, Puna Yellow Finch and the localized Brown-backed Mockingbird. The attractive geological formations and the varied colors of the mountains give an adequate frame to ancient adobe villages and old churches of Cuzco influence that make Humahuaca Canyon such a spectacular place, worthy of UNESCO's designation as a World Heritage Site. We will end the day at Abra Pampa, the capital city of Argentine Puna, located 3,500 meters above sea level. We'll spend two nights in Abra Pampa. **(BLD)**

DAY 10, Sept. 6: We'll spend the day birding the Puna, especially Lake Pozuelos Natural Monument, a mountain-ringed basin with shallow brackish water located roughly 90 kilometers north of Abra Pampa. This area hosts a huge population of Andean,



Ornate Tinamou © Luis Segura

Wilson's Phalarope. We will also explore the surrounding grasslands in search of Tawny-throated Dotterel, American Golden Plover and Least Seedsnipe. Other local birds possibly seen today include Andean Gull, Mountain Caracara, Andean Flicker, Golden-spotted Ground Dove and Ornate Tinamou. Your day in Pozuelos will also provide excellent chances for the local race of Lesser Rhea –called Puna Rhea in some books, and to see some mammals, like Vicuña, a delicate wild cousin of the Llama. We will return to Abra Pampa in the evening, to spend our second night here. **(BLD)**

Chilean and Puna Flamingoes so large concentrations of these creatures can be seen amidst the solitude and grandeur of this unique high Andean landscape. Depending on the water level variation, chances are also high here or in the surroundings for other Puna specialties, like Andean Goose, Andean Avocet, Crested Duck, Puna Teal, Andean, Horned and Giant Coots, Puna Plover and a number of North American migrants such as Baird's and Pectoral Sandpipers and

DAY 11, Sept. 7: After having breakfast, we will continue north to the northernmost tip of Argentina, near the border with Bolivia. Today we will explore different habitats, searching for Wedge-tailed Hillstar, Giant Hummingbird, Red-backed Sierra Finch, Brown-capped Tit-Spinetail, Brown-backed Mockingbird, Citron-headed Finch, Bare-faced Ground-Dove, Black-Winged Ground-Dove, Rufous-naped Ground Tyrant, Streak-fronted Thornbird and Bolivian Warbling Finch. We will spend the night in the ancient Village of Yavi. **(BLD)**

DAY 12, Sept. 8: We'll spend the morning birding high Puna habitats above Yavi, driving through the higher Altiplano, searching for birds like Variable Hawk, Straight-billed Earthcreeper, Plain-breasted Earthcreeper, Grey-bellied Shrike-Tyrant,

D'Orgigny's Cha-0Tyrant, and Black Siskin to name but a few local specialties. After lunch in Yavi, we'll start our way back to the south, all the way to the village of Yala, where we'll spend the following two nights. Tonight we will take a short tour to a birding spot very close to our hotel, to try for one crepuscular specialty: Lyre-tailed Nightjar. **(BLD)**

Day 13, Sept. 9: We will spend the day birding the area of Yala. The cordilleran streams around Yala provide good chances for the striking Torrent Duck and the scarce Rufous-throated Dipper in case we missed them before. We will also explore a local reserve in the area looking for specialties of the Alder forest, including the scarce and elusive Red-faced Guan. **(BLD)**

Day 14, Sept. 10: After enjoying an early breakfast surrounded by the beautiful landscape of blue mountains and deep valleys, we will spend a couple of hours searching for local specialties possibly missed the day before. After this quick birding excursion, we will drive back to Salta, where we'll take an evening flight to Iguazú. **(BD – please note that lunch is self-paid this day)**

PEOPLE WHO ARE TAKING ONLY THE MAIN TOUR WILL DEPART FOR HOME ON DAY 14.

NORTHEASTERN ARGENTINA EXTENSION IGUAZU FALLS & IBERA MARSHES

PEOPLE WHO ARE TAKING ONLY THE NORTHEASTERN ARGENTINA EXTENSION SHOULD ARRIVE IN IGUAZU FALLS ON SEPTEMBER 10. HOTEL AND **DINNER FOR SEPTEMBER 10 ARE INCLUDED IN THE TOUR PRICE.**

Day 15, Sept. 11: We will spend the day birding Iguazú National Park, exploring different trails, enjoying the falls, and looking for specialties that you might have missed on a previous visit. **(BLD)**

Day 16, Sept. 12: Today we will drive from Iguazú to Ituzaingó, in the Province of Corrientes. There are several good birding spots along the way, so we will stop frequently to look for specialties of the Campos of Misiones. We'll spend the night in Ituzaingó. **(BLD)**

Day 17, Sept. 13: We will spend the morning birding the surroundings of Ituzaingó and Rincón de Santa María, looking for wet grassland specialties, and then proceed south to Iberá Marshes, where we'll spend the following three nights. **(BLD)**

DAYS 18 & 19, Sept. 14-15: We'll spend two days birding Iberá Marshes. Birding in this part of the country is particularly spectacular. One of the days we will take a boat tour to search for species that may include Stripe-backed Bittern, Rufous-sided Crane, Black-capped Donacobius, Long-tailed Reed Finch, Yellow-rumped Marshbird, Yellow-headed Caracara and eight species of heron! This is also a great opportunity to view mammals such as Marsh Deer, Capybara and Southern River Otter as well as

a few reptiles including Spectacled Caiman and Yellow Anaconda.

The local grasslands can also produce some really special birds, including Strange-tailed Tyrant, Lesser Grass Finch and Marsh Seedeater. An afternoon walk through the forest will give us a chance for Striped Cuckoo, Narrow-billed Woodcreeper, Rufous-browed Peppershrike and Purple-throated Euphonia among many others. Some further mammal species are likely to include Black-and-gold Howler Monkey and Grey Brocket Deer. We will also explore the Espinal, a thorny woodland where we will try to find one of the rarest birds of Argentina, the Yellow Cardinal. **(BLD)**

Day 20, Sept. 16: Today we will drive from Iberá marshes to Posadas, where we will take an internal flight to Buenos Aires. Your tour ends at the airport in Posadas, where you'll bid farewell to your Argentinian bird guide. Cheepers! tour leaders Jim and Cindy Beckman will travel with you to Buenos Aires, where you will either catch a late flight for the US or spend the night to stage for a morning flight home. (Note: hotel for this night is not included in the tour price) **(BL)**

IMPORTANT: Depending on your flight schedule, you might want to spend the night of day 20 in Buenos Aires to try and avoid any possible inconvenience with connecting flights. Our ground agent will be pleased to book accommodations and transfers for you in that city.



Yellow-striped Brush Finch © Luis Segura