Argentine Patagonia

Naturetrek Tour Report

3rd - 21st October 2025



Roseate Spoonbill



Upland Geese



Andean Condor



Southern Right Whale

Tour report by Gail Baxter Photos by Steven Baxter



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Tour participants: Ricardo Clark (leader) with 11 Naturetrek clients

Day 1 Friday 3rd October

London (Heathrow) - Rio de Janeiro - Buenos Aires

Ten clients left London on a British Airways evening flight, bound for Buenos Aires via Rio de Janeiro.

Day 2

Rio de Janeiro – Buenos Aires

Saturday 4th October

A brief stop at Rio de Janeiro for refuelling and a crew change felt rather odd, as most passengers disembarked, but Buenos Aires-bound passengers remained on the plane while the cleaning team swept through the cabin. On take off, those seated on the right-hand side of the plane were afforded great views of the iconic Sugarloaf Mountain, and statue of Christ the Redeemer.

We arrived in Buenos Aires mid-morning to clear skies and a very pleasant 24°C. We were collected at the airport and whisked off to our hotel, Cyan Americas, where we met our leader and the final member of the group, who had flown in earlier to spend some time exploring Buenos Aires.

After a quick wash and brush-up, we were taken to a park near the Costanaera Sur Nature Reserve for a bite to eat, and an introduction to the local bird life. The skies remained clear as the temperature climbed to 27°C and the humidity increased accordingly.

The reserve served up a great range birds and other wildlife, including Coypu and a Spotted Tupinambis lizard. A total of 57 birds was noted, ranging from the diminutive Glittering-bellied Emerald hummingbird to a large Limpkin, which obligingly flew in to forage just below the observation platform we were using. A very cooperative Rufous Hornero, Argentina's national bird, perched looking out from its oven-shaped nest long enough for us to get some good views. Other highlights of the afternoon included a Narrow-billed Woodcreeper and Black-and-rufous Warbling Finch.

Dinner was at a restaurant just around the corner from the hotel, and we completed the daily bird list afterwards.

Day 3 Sunday 5th October

Buenos Aires – Trelew – Puerto Madryn

The overnight thunderstorms had cleared before we left the hotel at 8.30am for the first of our internal flights, a short two-hour hop south to Trelew and into Patagonia. On arrival, display cases at airport alerted us to the fact that the area is renowned for its fossils, including the *Argentinosaurus*, a dinosaur from the Late Cretaceous period which grew up to forty metres long.

We met our driver and headed off toward Puerto Madryn, via lunch and some local lagoons. The weather was a pleasant 13°C, with intermittent light cloud and sunny intervals. The terrain appeared much drier than Buenos Aires, with large sandy areas of low scrub.

Just outside Trelew, we turned off the main road onto a track towards a small lagoon, which yielded a surprising number of good sightings. We were all delighted to see a small group of Chilean Flamingo, as well as White-faced Ibis and good close views of a Black-necked Stilt. Both Coscoroba and Black-necked Swans were also present. Perhaps the highlight of this stop was the White Monjita (or White Nun) which showed particularly well.

We continued along the track on to Laguna Negra, where we were astonished to see vast flocks of Chilean Flamingo: Ricardo estimated around 3,000! Apparently, they gather here to feed in the waters 'enriched' by the sewage outfall at the far end of the lagoon.

Eventually, we returned to the main road to continue our journey. On the outskirts of Puerto Madryn, we made an unscheduled stop for a good look at a group of Burrowing Parrots which were busily feeding on a roundabout, quite oblivious to the passing traffic

Having settled into Hotel Gran Madryn, we walked a short distance to a seafront restaurant, with excellent fresh fish and plenty of pasta and salads for our vegetarians.

Day 4

Monday 6th October

Puerto Madryn - Valdes Peninsula - Puerto Madryn

After breakfast, we met our local guide, Ana, and headed towards Punta Norte, the northern tip of the Valdes Peninsula. When we woke the temperature had been a measly 7°C, with the wind making it feel much colder. Although still windy, the weather improved, and our stops en route gave our first good sightings of Guanacos and Maras, as well as Lesser Rheas. Bird highlights of the journey were a Scale-throated Earthcreeper and Snowy Sheathbill.

The target species for the day were Elephant Seals, and we were certainly not disappointed. Gigantic bulls were resting on the beaches with their harems of cows, and calves of various ages. A pair of Southern Sea Lions were also hauled out, with the male occasionally raising himself, showing off his mane. Our lunch stop, at Parador La Elvira, produced more Elephant Seals, Elegant Crested Tinamou, and a brief sighting of a Hairy Armadillo as it scuttled across the road.

We then travelled south to Puerto Piramides on the Golfo Nuevo. The bay is used as both a nursery and courtship area by Southern Right Whales. Once we were all suitably kitted out with lifejackets, we boarded our whalewatching boat on the beach and were smoothly launched by tractor. The captain motored gently out into the middle of the bay and cut the engines at a very respectful distance from a number of groups of whales. Flippers, blows and the tops of heads gradually came closer to the boat, until those of us on the lower deck were getting the mist from their blows on our faces. As one group moved off, another slowly approached the boat, appearing to be truly inquisitive about what we were. It was an astounding and slightly surreal experience with these gentle giants. Eventually, as the sun lowered towards the horizon, they all moved off and we returned to harbour, a very happy

group. We returned to the same restaurant as the previous evening, which allowed a wider sampling of their excellent menu.

Day 5

Tuesday 7th October

Puerto Madryn - Punta Tombo - Trelew

A cool morning turned into a warm and sunny afternoon. Today was one of our longer drives; we left Puerto Madryn southwards towards Punta Tombo and the Magellanic Penguin colony. The journey was punctuated with regular birding stops in a good variety of habitats. Sightings ranged from Yellow-billed Pintail to Long-tailed Meadowlark, with Plain-mantled Tit-Spinetail and Greater Wagtail-Tyrant being other highlights.

After enjoying the exhibits and information in the visitor centre, we walked into the Punta Tombo reserve. The 'Give Way To Penguins' notice was our first clue as to how close our encounters were likely to be. With a reported 180,000 pairs in the colony, there were occupied burrows on open ground and under almost every bush, with their density increasing as we moved towards the sea. Penguins were sleeping, courting, standing guard, sitting on eggs, bathing in the sea and, in some cases, braying loudly. It was an outstanding experience. Southern Giant Petrel, Chubut Steamer Duck, an extremely well-camouflaged Blackish Oystercatcher and a Chimango Caracara with its supper were bonus sightings.

We stayed at Hotel Libertador, in Trelew, where the daily checklist was completed in the bar before we ate in the hotel restaurant. Most of us retired early in preparation for a fairly early flight to El Calafate the next morning.



Cinereous Harrier



Culpeo

Day 6

Wednesday 8th October

Trelew - El Calafate

Our 8.00am flight saw us land at El Calafate by 10.00am, to a chilly 7°Cwith wind making it feel a good deal colder. To everyone's delight, a Black-chested Buzzard-Eagle was spotted on our short journey from the airport to El Calafate. On arrival at our hotel, we were treated to a fly-past by a group of Black-faced Ibises, calling loudly. After an early lunch in town, we headed out to the local lagoons for a spot of birding. At our first stop, we enjoyed good views of pairs of Upland Geese, and were very pleased to see Magellanic Plover. The bright colours of the Chilean Flamingos seemed rather incongruous in the icy rain that descended very briefly.

We then moved on to the Laguna Nimes Reserve, where better weather provided excellent sightings, including Crested Duck, Red-gartered Coot, more Magellanic Plovers and Two-banded Plover. A Plumbeous Rail showed remarkably well, as did a Magellanic Snipe, and a Cinereous Harrier gave an excellent aerial display. The weather deteriorated as we made our way back to the Visitor Centre, and we were happy to spend a short while enjoying the log fire while our driver brought the bus to pick us up.

The checklist was followed by dinner at the Poste Sur Hosteria in El Calafate, our hotel for three nights.

Day 7

Thursday 9th October

El Calafate – Los Glaciares National Park – El Calafate

When we set off it was 2°C, with a fresh dusting of snow on the mountains of the Southern Patagonia ice field, which contains over fifty glaciers. We were heading towards the western end of Lago Argentino, and the ice wall at the end of Glaciar Perito Moreno. Our sharp-eyed driver, and excellent spotter, stopped for us to see three Andean Condors roosting high on a rock face, and when two more flew above this proved an excellent start to the day, and a trip highlight for many.

A visit to a lagoon produced a Dark-faced Ground Tyrant, Yellow-billed Teal and another highlight: a Buff-winged Cinclodes. A Black-chested Buzzard-Eagle perched in a tree gave cause for a further pause, and we had the bonus of an Austral Pygmy Owl showing well on the opposite side of the road. We took a brief woodland walk in the hope of seeing woodpeckers, but without success. However, it did introduce the three forms of Southern Beech that grow in the area. The Deciduous, Evergreen and Antarctic Beeches were all festooned with False Mistletoe and/or Spanish Moss, a sure sign of high rainfall in the area.

We enjoyed a picnic lunch at the Glacier Visitor Centre, and a few of us were fortunate to see a Culpeo (Red Fox) in the vicinity. Suitably refreshed, we set off along the walkway to the various glacier viewing platforms. Glaciar Perito Moreno is a spectacular sight: 4.4km wide, 70m high at the centre of the face, and 40m high towards the edges. The 'crack' and 'boom' that accompanied calving events were highly distinctive and unlikely to be forgotten!

We were treated to another highlight when a Spectacled Duck was spotted, shortly after we left the glacier. A brief pause in El Calafate town, for the Post Office, afforded the opportunity to admire a group of Black-faced Ibises at close quarters.

After a chilly day in the field, the hotel's underfloor heat was particularly welcome. Dinner was a short walk away at a local restaurant, where the speciality was lamb cooked over a coal fire.

Day 8

Friday 10th October

El Calafate – Mount Fitz Roy view – El Calafate

A leisurely start at 8.00am saw us setting off for a day on the road. We would be travelling east and then north, towards the Mount Fitz Roy viewpoint, birding and exploring the steppe, and enjoying the scenery along the way.

Our first stop was beside the Santa Cruz river, the outflow of Lago Argentino. Despite the chill winds, we enjoyed good views of Least Seedsnipe, Grey-hooded Sierra Finches and a Chocolate-vented Tyrant.

Our lunch stop, at a restaurant, was something of a surprise, as there had been so little sign of habitation on our route today. A post-lunch walk in the restaurant's environs produced good numbers of Chilean Swallows. Other birding delights included Cinnamon-bellied Ground Tyrant, Hooded Siskin, Patagonian Yellow Finch and a Cinereous Harrier.

Even from a distance the iconic peaks of Mount Fitz Roy are spectacular, reaching 3200m and towering above the surrounding landscape. With a strong, cold, westerly wind buffeting us, we didn't stay long at the viewpoint, and set off back towards El Calafate. We did see a good group of Darwin's (Lesser) Rhea on our return journey but for the most part the unseasonably cold weather coupled with the strong wind kept most birds tucked down out of sight. Dinner was at a local restaurant with the checklist completed afterwards.

Day 9

Saturday 11th October

El Calafate - Ushuaia - Tolhuin

Today brought a change of scenery, as our intrepid driver headed upwards towards the ski-lift. Along the way, we were delighted to find Short-billed Miner, Black-billed Shrike-Tyrant, Austral Canastero and Rufous-tailed Plantcutter. We were enthralled by low-flying Andean Condors, and more than a little surprised that a white Scale-throated Earthcreeper, near the ski-lift café, had eluded the local cats. Back at a slightly lower elevation, good numbers of Upland Geese were accompanied by a large flock of Ashy-headed Geese.

After lunch, in El Calafate, we headed to the airport for our afternoon flight to Ushuaia, and said our goodbyes to our driver, who had also proved to be an excellent spotter.

Reasonably clear skies meant that we were treated to views of the Beagle Channel as we came into land at Ushuaia, the world's most southerly city. At 9°C on arrival, the weather seemed positively balmy after the chill of El Calafate! We made a brief stop at supermarket for those who wished to shop, while the rest took in the vistas of the Beagle Channel, good close views of Kelp and Dolphin Gulls, and at least seventeen Southern Giant Petrels milling around a fishing boat.

We then embarked on an hour's journey through beech forests and around Lago Fagnano to Hosteria Kaiken, near Tolhuin, where we stayed in delightful cabins overlooking Lago Fagnano. Dinner in the hotel at 8.30am was followed by completing the list.

Day 10

Sunday 12th October

Tolhuin area

We had a leisurely (if rather grey) start to the day, with breakfast at 8.00am. On hearing that parts of the walk might be steep and/or slippery, two less agile members of the group decided to enjoy a rest day in the hotel environs,

and were well entertained by the local Grey Fox dodging the hotel dogs. For the rest of us, a short drive on the main road was followed by a couple of miles on dirt track, before we disembarked and continued on foot.

As we went up through the forest (and the path was indeed steep in places), it seemed remarkably warm as we were sheltered from the wind and dressed for the moorland to come. Birds were sadly lacking in the forest, so we continued uphill. Toward the top of the forest, we encountered some patches of snow, which then gave way to open moorland. We pressed on again, until we came to the snow line, where our search began in earnest.

We were delighted to encounter all four target species: Yellow-bridled Finch, Ochre-naped Ground Tyrant, Rufous-chested Dotterel and the spectacularly well-camouflaged White-bellied Seedsnipe. The close encounters with the seedsnipes, with which we paused for our packed lunches, were particularly special. We descended to the bus and returned to the hotel to change out of wet, muddy, gear and prepare for a short walk at lower levels.

Our search for the Magellanic Woodpecker took us through a local woodland and down to a wetland area on the edge of Lago Fagnano. Unfortunately, a sunny Sunday afternoon meant that lots of local families were enjoying the area, and the woodpecker eluded us. At the wetlands, we were more successful, with sightings of Great Grebe, Neotropic Cormorant and Chiloe Wigeon. Dinner at Hosteria Kaiken was followed by completing the list and starting to pack ready for a change of hotel.

Day 11

Monday 13th October

Tolhuin - Ushuaia - Beagle Chanel - Ushuaia

We made several brief pauses for birding on our way to Ushuaia, with highlights of a Crested Caracara and Fireeyed Duicon, and much evidence of Beaver damage. Trees and stumps dripping with lichen evidenced the wonderfully clean air. We enjoyed a short walk in old growth beech woods, but sadly our hopes of a Magellanic Woodpecker were again unfulfilled. Once again, unseasonably cold weather meant there was very little bird activity in the forests. Despite the cold, so far it had been a remarkably dry trip, with any rain falling overnight or early morning, and clearing before we began walking.

After checking in to our hotel, and ensuring that we had our warmest waterproof clothing with us, we enjoyed lunch at a restaurant in Ushuaia. A short walk to the harbour saw us boarding our Beagle Channel cruise boat in perfect conditions: 10°C, calm seas and little wind. Our catamaran was the only large boat on the water that day, with a few much smaller tourist vessels and some local fishing boats dotted about.

We motored smoothly along the Channel to a small pair of islands, one of which is home to 'The Lighthouse at the End of the World' (as per the novel by Jules Verne). The boat manoeuvred around the islands, providing everyone onboard with excellent views of Southern Sea Lions, Southern Fur Seals, Dolphin Gulls, Imperial and Rock Shags, and a Turkey Vulture. From here we moved further east, seeing South Polar Skua, Southern Giant Petrel and Pintado (Cape) Petrel.





Southern Giant Petrel

Magellanic Snipe

After moving into Chilean waters, we arrived at the Magellanic Penguin colony, where everyone enjoyed good views of penguins on the pebble beach and in the sea, with many more by their burrows on slightly higher ground. Much to our delight, closer inspection of those on the beach revealed both King Penguins and a number of Gentoo Penguins. A Chilean Skua on the beach was an unexpected bonus, as was a Blackish Cinclodes which landed on the boat!

We returned up the Channel to Ushuaia, with Chile on our left and Argentina to our right; it was a most enjoyable experience and very productive on the birding front, with Wilson's Storm Petrel, Snowy Sheathbill, Black-browed Albatross and Southern Fulmar added to our ever-growing list of sightings. We returned to Hotel Tolkeyen for dinner and a very interesting checklist.

Day 12

Tuesday 14th October

Ushuaia - Tierra del Fuego National Park - Ushuaia

Ricardo and some of the group enjoyed a spot of birding on the foreshore before breakfast. Several of us were delighted to find that a Southern Lapwing had settled down to nest just metres from our windows, with her mate standing guard nearby.

It was 5°C and sunny as we entered Tierra del Fuego National Park. Our first stop was for a walk around an area of tidal lagoons, where the water is brackish; the tide was high, filling the surrounding wetlands. Towering above the rest of the landscape was Mount Condor, where the border with Chile goes over the top of the mountain.

The Upland Geese here have very different markings to those we had seen around El Calafate. This was especially noticeable on the males, with bars all the way up their front rather than having white upper chests. This was a delightful walk in glorious scenery, with the bonus of Grey-headed Goose, Crested Duck and Yellow-billed Teal showing well; but *still* the Magellanic Woodpecker eluded us.

Our driver met us at the end of the trail and took us further into the Park; we crossed the Rio Ovando and parked up for a circular walk. The wind had got up a bit, but it was sunny with a little light cloud. Unfortunately, we were unable to go as far as we had hoped, as part of the trail was closed. However, we did get good views of a Tufted Tit-Tyrant and a Southern House Wren collecting nest material, as well as a flightless Fuegian Steamer Duck, and Imperial Shag. In addition, we were treated to the spectacle of Southern Sea Lions swimming at speed and chasing fish, potentially salmon.

We moved on to the southern shores of Lago Roca. By now it had clouded over, and the wind had got up a little, but we were sheltered in among the trees. Good views were had of two Thorn-tailed Rayaditos and a White-throated Treerunner. Finally, we were rewarded with excellent views of a Magellanic Woodpecker and the photographers in the group captured some brilliant images. As we headed back towards the minibus we were surprised by a fly past by Austral Parakeets.

An excellent picnic lunch was followed by quick break at the visitor centre, before we drove on to a coastal area of the Park. A Crested Carcara was showing well on the ground, while a pair of Upland Geese with full chest bars ignored us from a lightly fenced area. A pair of Kelp Geese also showed well on the rocky foreshore. A short foray up the wooded stream was pleasant but unproductive on the bird front and we returned to our hotel.

As we were preparing to go to dinner, an intruding bird disturbed the Southern Lapwings, which both went to see it off; a long lens inspection from the back of a room revealed that the female had been sitting on a clutch of four eggs. The female quickly returned to the nest and curtains were drawn, to ensure that she was not disturbed by us. We regrouped in the lobby to complete the list at 7.00pm, and had a refreshingly early dinner at 7.30pm.

Day 13th

Wednesday 15th October

Ushuaia to Buenos Aires

Our last day in Patagonia dawned mostly clear and sunny: 6°C with a light breeze. After breakfast, we loaded our luggage and set off for a morning of birding at various spots around Ushuaia. As we approached the local rubbish tip, we could see hundreds of birds circling: they were mostly Kelp Gulls. The highlight here was a White-throated Caracara enjoying its breakfast, facing into the sun and giving spectacularly clear views.

We followed the river down to the beach, which provided a good array of sightings including an American Kestrel, a large mixed flock of Kelp and Dolphin Gulls, and a couple of Chilean Skuas flying low to the water. There were good, close, views of Crested Duck, and more distant sightings of Chiloe Wigeon

Next, we moved on to Reserva Natural Urbana Bahia Encerrada, with its spectacular backdrop of Ushuaia and its surrounding snow-capped mountains. The pools here rewarded us with a good number of sightings, including Red Shoveler, a juvenile Black-crowned Night Heron and a swimming Muskrat.

We then headed west, out of the city, to an area of woodland; it was mostly Deciduous Southern Beech, but included some large specimens of Evergreen Southern Beech. We were surprised to learn that Deciduous Beech leaves have pleasant scent when crushed, and were once used in soap production. It was a pleasant 8°C but with no breeze it felt much warmer. A juvenile Andean Red Fox (Culpeo) crossed the path ahead of us, skirted around us in the bushes, and went on his way. A Grey-flanked Cinclodes and Tufted Tit-Tyrant were the standout birds for this location.

After a hearty lunch, we headed further west and descended a steeply wooded slope to Playa Susana, where we were told about the protected archaeological site comprising ancient middens of the indigenous inhabitants of the area. The highlight here was a Fuegian Steamer Duck on the rocks at the beach. It remained sunny, and the temperature had risen to 10°C making the walk back up to the minibus rather warm work.

We then made our way to the airport for our flight back to Buenos Aires. The departure time of our flight having been pushed back to 7.30pm, we knew it would be a late supper that evening. We eventually took off shortly after 8.00pm and touched down in Buenos Aires at 11.15pm, in balmy 21°C temperatures. We finally reached Hotel Cyan Americas just after midnight, and although restaurants were still open no-one felt like going out to eat, much less like completing the daily checklist!

Day 14

Thursday 16th October

Buenos Aires - San Clemente

After breakfast, we said goodbye to the five of our group who were not staying for the Pampas Extension. Email addresses were exchanged, so that photos of the birds seen on the extension could be shared. It was 20°C with clear skies and a pleasant breeze as the Extension group drove off along the wide boulevards, out of the and city south-east towards San Clemente del Tuyu. Gradually, the grand city buildings were left behind and lush agricultural land took over, yielding our first new bird of the day: a Maguari Stork.

By 11.00am, the temperature had climbed to 25°C, with light cloud cover, and numerous raptors were observed patrolling the fields. A brief stop was made when a pair of juvenile black-morph Maguari Storks was spotted. In the same area were a Brown-and-yellow Marshbird and Spectacled Tyrant. A Freckle-breasted Thornbird was calling but didn't show for us. It was here that several of us regretted having not applied liberal amounts of insect repellent, a lesson to be heeded on subsequent days!

Our lunch stop, at a small roadside restaurant, proved to also be a good birding opportunity. A Whistling Heron posed helpfully on a lamp in a tree in the carpark. There was also a huge communal nest being used by Monk Parakeets. Swallows and martins were swooping into every nook and cranny around the buildings, and Ricardo pointed out the White-rumped Swallows and Grey-breasted Martins among, them. We were permitted to go for a walk in the gardens and fields behind the restaurant where we were delighted to find Paraguayan Snipe. Frogs were calling loudly from the ponds, and an Argentina Toad was noted in the lush grass. A very brief stop was made when we saw our first Snail Kite, perched most obligingly on a fencepost by a lagoon.

We turned off the main road for a walk along a rather rutted, and in places muddy track. The pools and open grassy fields were alive with birds, and we had good views of a female Spectacled Tyrant, Grassland Yellow Finch, Short-billed Pipit, Yellow-browed Tyrant and a Bearded Tachuri. To our amusement, a Long-winged Harrier was being seen-off by a Yellow-winged Blackbird, and we were delighted to see two female Greater Rheas.

Sadly, our minibus got stuck in the mud. and despite the best efforts of our guide and most of the group. it wouldn't budge. Eventually, we admitted defeat, and walked back to the main road and completed what little was left of our journey to San Clemente in taxis. Our driver waited with the bus for professional help to arrive! Having checked in to Hotel Morales, we enjoyed a simple, but excellent, supper at a local pizza restaurant, and postponed completing the checklist until the next evening.

Day 15

Friday 17th October

San Clemente – Punta Rasa – San Clemente

It was 16°C, overcast and breezy as we headed north, in search of Olrog's Gull at Punta Rasa, where the Rio de la Plata meets the Atlantic Ocean. The road to the beach had become impassable to all but 4x4 vehicles, so we continued on foot, being rewarded with additional sightings along the way including American Oystercatcher, Yellow-billed Pintail, a Long-tailed Reed Finch and Pampa Finches (the largest finches in world).

From a hide, we were astonished to see a flock of around 140 Black Skimmers at the edge of the water. As we continued toward the beach we enjoyed good views of Lesser Yellowlegs, Warbling Doradito, and both Baird's and Stilt Sandpipers. In due course we reached the beach and entered the Reserva National Rincon de Ajo. A line of Chilean Flamingoes formed an attractive backdrop as we scanned the shoreline for terns and gulls. Cabot's, Common, Royal and Snowy-crowned Terns were all present, as was our quarry: Olrog's Gulls.

Returning the way we had come revealed new sightings, including Hudsonian Godwit and a very obliging Fork-tailed Flycatcher, which showed off its magnificent tail very well as it moved around an open bush. We were entertained to discover that we had seen more plovers than we had realised, listing American Golden, Black-bellied, Collared, Semipalmated and Two-banded.

Our delightful lunch stop provided the opportunity for those so inclined to sample the local Lisa fish. This was followed by a short walk along the harbour foreshore, which revealed Maguari Storks, Great Egrets and a host of Kelp Gulls scavenging around the fishing boats for discarded scraps. Violinist Crabs were making the most of any tiny morsels that came their way.

We returned to our hotel for a brief rest, before catching up on three days' (!) of checklists. Dinner was at local restaurant, where most items on the menu were meant for two people. Although steak and lamb were the specialities, the vegetarians among us were well catered for too.

Day 16

Saturday 18th October

San Clemente – inland Pampas and Iagoons – San Clemente

Today we travelled inland for a day among open pastures and fresh-water lagoons, setting off in 14°C, with mostly blue skies punctuated by light scattered cloud. Wetland pools brought an interesting mix of species, including Pectoral Sandpiper, Wren-like Rushbird, Sooty Tyrannulet and the glorious Many-colored Rush Tyrant, the last a spectacular little bird and a highlight of the day. Other pools revealed Coscoroba and Black-necked Swans with cygnets, several varieties of coot, Plumbous Rail and a Hellmayr's Pipit. A Roseate Spoonbill flying past provided a great photo opportunity, its wing feathers backlit against the sun.

Open areas of grassland were no less productive than the wetlands, turning up Grassland Yellow Finch, a Brownand-yellow Marshbird looking olivaceous in the light, and a delightfully blue Shiny Cowbird. Multiple pairs of Southern Screamers mingled with grazing cattle and sheep. Southern Lapwings were busy protecting their territory and nest sites.





Snail Kite

Many-colored Rush Tyrant

Lunch was at one of the excellent service stations, this one having the bonus of some good birding on site. There were two large, busy Monk Parakeet nests, a Great Kiskadee was noticed entering its nest, and a Green-barred Woodpecker was coming and going to and from its own. The highlight here was perhaps a Campo Flicker.

As we moved on to try our luck in drier areas with more tree/bush cover, the temperature had risen to 17°C with a light breeze. Our first stop produced a Black-and-rufous Warbling Finch on a fence post, a Firewood Gatherer on the top of a bush, and a showy Guira Cuckoo. A pair of Chalk-browed Mockingbirds appeared to be acting very strangely, and closer inspection showed that they were attacking a Green Grass Snake. Other delights of the day included Brown-chested Martin, Tropical Kingbird, Spotted Nothura and at least twenty Buff-breasted Sandpipers. One of the most physically unusual birds we saw were the pair of very territorial Scarlet-headed Blackbirds; they have conical bills with a flattened tip.

The checklist was done at the hotel, before we headed out to the same restaurant that we had enjoyed the previous evening.

Day 17

Sunday 19th October

San Clemente - Buenos Aires

A beautiful morning greeted us as we departed from San Clemente. We had bright sunny skies and a temperature of 13°C, which felt a little cooler due to a stiff breeze. We had a full day of travel and lots of birding ahead of us; we packed our cases into the minibus and set off at 7.30am for Buenos Aires via the backroads.

Our target for the day was Hudson's Canastero, and our first stop produced spectacular views of this special but elusive little bird. Our next stop was a fenced-off pond which proved to be a real gem. Our sightings included Spot-flanked Gallinule, Pied-billed and White-tufted Grebes and White-faced Whistling Duck. A Black-crowned Night Heron patrolled the far end of the pond, with Southern Rough-winged Swallow swooping overhead. Large,

empty, shells around the bottoms of the fence posts offered plenty of evidence that this pond was a favourite with Snail Kites.

After a brief stop for coffee and lunch supplies, we turned off the metalled road and onto gravel ones, where we made regular, productive, halts in a range of habitats. Scanning wayside bushes revealed a White-crested Tyrannulet, Guira Cuckoo, Hepatic Tanager, and a Southern Yellowthroat perched helpfully on the top of a bush. A pause by a small pond surprised us with Giant Wood Rail, both running and flying, a Rosy-billed Pochard on a grassy bank, and Silver Teal moving between clumps of reeds. We took our picnic lunch beside another pond which offered up a selection of birds including Green Kingfisher, Brazilian Duck and Variable Oriole. A bathroom break, and a short walk in woodlands, resulted in sightings of Small-billed Elaenia and, more unexpectedly, Mottlecheeked Tyrannulet and Rufous-browed Peppershrike.

We finally reached Buenos Aires, and again stayed at Hotel Cyan Americas; we enjoyed a splendid farewell dinner at the restaurant around the corner.

Day 18

Monday 20th October

Buenos Aires - Rio de Janeiro

After a hearty breakfast, we said our goodbyes to Ricardo. Two of our party were heading to the internal airport and travelling westward to Mendoza, to visit the La Boca and Recolleta areas for vineyard tours and wine tasting. The remaining four headed for the international airport and our flight home.

We barely felt we had begun our journey home when we made the two-hour stop at Rio de Janeiro for refuelling, cleaning and a crew change. Sadly, the weather not clear enough for good views of the surrounding landscape, although we were impressed by the 13.29km-long Ponte Presidente Costa e Silva bridge, which connects Rio to Niteroi on the other side of the bay.

Day 19

Tuesday 21st October

Arrive London (Heathrow)

After farewells around the baggage carousel, we went our separate ways, with memories that will last a lifetime, and in one case a serious number of photographs to be sorted!

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Species lists

Birds (H = Heard only)

E = endemic, N = near- endemic, I =	introduced							C	Octob	er 202	25						
Common name	Scientific name	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19
Greater Rhea	Rhea americana													✓		✓	✓
Lesser Rhea	Rhea pennata			✓				✓	✓								
Spotted Nothura	Nothura maculosa															✓	√
Elegant Crested Tinamou - N	Eudromia elegans			✓	✓												
Southern Screamer	Chauna torquata	✓												✓		✓	✓
White-faced Whistling Duck	Dendrocygna viduata	✓															√
Fulvous Whistling Duck	Dendrocygna bicolor													✓			
Coscoroba Swan	Coscoroba coscoroba	✓	✓				✓									√	√
Black-necked Swan	Cygnus melancoryphus	✓	√					√								√	
Flying Steamer Duck	Tachyeres patachonicus									√							
Fuegian Steamer Duck - N	Tachyeres pteneres										✓	✓	✓				
Chubut Steamer Duck - E	Tachyeres leucocephalus				✓												
Upland Goose	Chloephaga picta					✓	√	√	√	✓	√	✓	√				
Kelp Goose	Chloephaga hybrida										✓	✓	✓				
Ashy-headed Goose - N	Chloephaga poliocephala								✓		✓	✓	✓				
Brazilian Teal	Amazonetta brasiliensis	✓															√
Crested Duck	Lophonetta specularioides		✓	✓		✓	✓					✓	✓				
Bronze-winged Duck - N	Speculanas specularis						√										
Silver Teal	Spatula versicolor	√												✓	✓	✓	✓
Red Shoveler	Spatula platalea												✓				
Cinnamon Teal	Spatula cyanoptera		✓										✓		√		
Chiloe Wigeon - N	Mareca sibilatrix		√		✓	✓	√			✓							√
Yellow-billed Pintail	Anas georgica		√		✓	✓	✓			√				✓	✓	✓	✓
Yellow-billed Teal	Anas flavirostris	✓			√	√	√			√		✓	√	√	√	√	√
Rosy-billed Pochard	Netta peposaca	✓	✓											√		√	√
Andean Duck	Oxyura ferruginea					✓											
Lake Duck - N	Oxyura vittata		√		√	√										√	
Glittering-bellied Emerald	Chlorostilbon lucidus	√												√			✓
Guira Cuckoo	Guira guira													√		√	✓

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Common name	Scientific name	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19
Feral Rock Dove - I	Columba livia	✓	✓	✓	✓				✓					✓		✓	✓
Picazuro Pigeon	Patagioenas picazuro	✓												✓	✓	✓	✓
Spot-winged Pigeon	Patagioenas maculosa													✓		✓	✓
Picui Ground Dove	Columbina picui				✓										✓		✓
White-tipped Dove	Leptotila verreauxi																✓
Eared Dove	Zenaida auriculata	✓	✓	✓	✓				✓					✓	✓	✓	✓
Plumbeous Rail	Pardirallus sanguinolentus	Н				✓										✓	
Giant Wood Rail	Aramides ypecaha																✓
Spot-flanked Gallinule	Porphyriops melanops																✓
Common Gallinule	Gallinula galeata	✓	✓			✓											✓
Red-fronted Coot	Fulica rufifrons					✓										✓	✓
Red-gartered Coot	Fulica armillata					✓										✓	✓
White-winged Coot	Fulica leucoptera		✓			✓	✓							✓			
Limpkin	Aramus guarauna	✓												✓			✓
Pied-billed Grebe	Podilymbus podiceps																✓
White-tufted Grebe	Rollandia rolland	✓														✓	✓
Great Grebe	Podiceps major	✓		√	✓					✓		✓	√			✓	✓
Silvery Grebe	Podiceps occipitalis		√														
Chilean Flamingo	Phoenicopterus chilensis		√			√	√						√		✓	√	✓
Magellanic Plover - N	Pluvianellus socialis					√											
Snowy Sheathbill	Chionis albus			√							✓		✓				
Magellanic Oystercatcher	Haematopus leucopodus			√			✓		✓		✓	✓	✓				
Blackish Oystercatcher	Haematopus ater				✓							√	√				
American Oystercatcher	Haematopus palliatus		✓												✓		
White-backed Stilt	Himantopus melanurus		√												√		√
Grey Plover	Pluvialis squatarola														√		
American Golden Plover	Pluvialis dominica														√	√	√
Rufous-chested Dotterel	Zonibyx modestus									√							
Southern Lapwing	Vanellus chilensis	✓	✓		✓	√	√	√	✓	√	√	✓	√	✓	✓	√	√
Collared Plover	Anarhynchus collaris														✓		
Two-banded Plover - N	Anarhynchus falklandicus					√									√		
Wattled Jacana	Jacana jacana	✓												√			

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White-bellied Seedsnipe - N	Attagis malouinus									✓							
Least Seedsnipe	Thinocorus rumicivorus							✓	✓								
Hudsonian Godwit	Limosa haemastica														✓		
Magellanic Snipe	Gallinago magellanica					✓				✓			✓				
Pantanal (Paraguayan) Snipe	Gallinago paraguaiae													✓			
Lesser Yellowlegs	Tringa flavipes														✓	✓	✓
Greater Yellowlegs	Tringa melanoleuca														✓	✓	
Red Knot	Calidris canutus														✓		
Stilt Sandpiper	Calidris himantopus														✓		
Buff-breasted Sandpiper	Calidris subruficollis															✓	
Baird's Sandpiper	Calidris bairdii		✓	✓		✓				✓					✓		
White-rumped Sandpiper	Calidris fuscicollis					✓									✓		
Pectoral Sandpiper	Calidris melanotos															√	√
Black Skimmer	Rynchops niger														√		
Snowy-crowned Tern	Sterna trudeaui														✓	✓	√
Common Tern	Sterna hirundo														✓		
Cabot's Tern	Thalasseus acuflavidus														✓		
Royal Tern	Thalasseus maximus														√		
Brown-hooded Gull	Chroicocephalus maculipennis		√		√	✓	√										
Grey-headed Gull	Chroicocephalus cirrocephalus		√														
Dolphin Gull - N	Leucophaeus scoresbii								✓		✓	√	✓				
Olrog's Gull - N	Larus atlanticus														✓		
Kelp Gull	Larus dominicanus		√	✓	√	✓	√		√								
Chilean Skua	Stercorarius chilensis										√		√				
South Polar Skua	Stercorarius maccormicki										√						
King Penguin	Aptenodytes patagonicus										√						
Gentoo Penguin	Pygoscelis papua										√						
Magellanic Penguin	Spheniscus magellanicus				√						√						
Wilson's Storm Petrel	Oceanites oceanicus										√						
Black-browed Albatross	Thalassarche melanophris										√		√				
Southern Giant Petrel	Macronectes giganteus			√	√				√		√		√				
Southern Fulmar	Fulmarus glacialoides										√	√	√				

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Pintado Petrel	Daption capense										✓						
Maguari Stork	Ciconia maguari													✓	✓	✓	✓
Neotropic Cormorant	Nannopterum brasilianum	✓	✓	✓	✓				✓	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Rock Shag - N	Leucocarbo magellanicus								✓		✓	✓	✓				
Imperial Shag	Leucocarbo atriceps			✓					✓		✓	✓	✓				
Black-faced Ibis	Theristicus melanopis					✓	✓		✓		✓	✓	✓				
White-faced Ibis	Plegadis chihi		✓														
Roseate Spoonbill	Platalea ajaja														✓	✓	
Rufescent Tiger Heron	Tigrisoma lineatum	✓															
Black-crowned Night Heron	Nycticorax nycticorax	✓											✓				✓
Whistling Heron	Syrigma sibilatrix													✓		✓	✓
Snowy Egret	Egretta thula	✓	✓											✓	✓	✓	✓
Striated Heron	Butorides striata																✓
Great Egret	Ardea alba	✓		√										√	√	√	✓
Cocoi Heron	Ardea cocoi	✓													✓	✓	
Andean Condor	Vultur gryphus						✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓					
Turkey Vulture	Cathartes aura			√	√				√		√	√	✓		√		
Cinereous Harrier	Circus cinereus					√		√	√						√	√	
Long-winged Harrier	Circus buffoni													√	√	√	✓
Snail Kite	Rostrhamus sociabilis													√		√	✓
Roadside Hawk	Rupornis magnirostris													√			√
Harris's Hawk	Parabuteo unicinctus	✓															
Variable Hawk - N	Geranoaetus polyosoma			√	√												
Black-chested Buzzard-Eagle	Geranoaetus melanoleucus					√	√		√				√				
Burrowing Owl	Athene cunicularia			√	√											√	√
Austral Pygmy Owl - N	Glaucidium nana						√										
Green Kingfisher	Chloroceryle americana																✓
Checkered Woodpecker	Veniliornis mixtus	✓															
Green-barred Woodpecker	Colaptes melanochloros	✓														√	
Campo Flicker	Colaptes campestris															√	√
Magellanic Woodpecker - N	Campephilus magellanicus											√					
Crested Caracara	Caracara plancus					√	1	1	√	√	1						

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Common name	Scientific name	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19
Chimango Caracara - N	Milvago chimango		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
White-throated Caracara - N	Phalcoboenus albogularis								✓	✓			✓				
American Kestrel	Falco sparverius				✓		✓		✓		✓		✓				✓
Aplomado Falcon	Falco femoralis						✓										
Monk Parakeet	Myiopsitta monachus	✓			✓									✓	✓	✓	✓
Austral Parakeet - N	Enicognathus ferrugineus						✓					✓					
Burrowing Parrot - N	Cyanoliseus patagonus		✓														
Nanday Parakeet	Aratinga nenday	✓															
Short-billed Miner - N	Geositta antarctica								✓								
Narrow-billed Woodcreeper	Lepidocolaptes angustirostris	✓															
White-throated Treerunner - N	Pygarrhichas albogularis								✓								
Rufous Hornero	Furnarius rufus	✓	✓		✓									✓	✓	✓	✓
Wren-like Rushbird	Phleocryptes melanops															√	
Scale-throated Earthcreeper	Upucerthia dumetaria			✓					√								
Blackish Cinclodes - N	Cinclodes antarcticus										✓						
Buff-winged Cinclodes	Cinclodes fuscus						✓		✓		✓						
Grey-flanked Cinclodes - N	Cinclodes oustaleti												✓				
Dark-bellied Cinclodes - N	Cinclodes patagonicus						√										
Thorn-tailed Rayadito - N	Aphrastura spinicauda									√	√	√	√				
Plain-mantled Tit-Spinetail	Leptasthenura aegithaloides				✓												
Freckle-breasted Thornbird	Phacellodomus striaticollis													√			
Firewood-gatherer	Anumbius annumbi															✓	
Hudson's Canastero	Asthenes hudsoni																✓
Austral Canastero - N	Asthenes anthoides								√								
Cordilleran Canastero	Asthenes modesta								√								
Sharp-billed Canastero	Asthenes pyrrholeuca		√		✓												
Sulphur-bearded Reedhaunter	Limnoctites sulphuriferus														✓		
Patagonian Canastero - E	Pseudasthenes patagonica				√												
Bay-capped Wren-Spinetail	Spartonoica maluroides													√			
Yellow-chinned Spinetail	Certhiaxis cinnamomeus	✓															
Sooty-fronted Spinetail	Synallaxis frontalis	✓															
Southern Beardless Tyrannulet	Camptostoma obsoletum																√

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Common name	Scientific name	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19
Tufted Tit-Tyrant	Anairetes parulus											✓	✓				
Sooty Tyrannulet	Serpophaga nigricans															✓	✓
White-crested Tyrannulet	Serpophaga subcristata															✓	✓
Straneck's Tyrannulet	Serpophaga griseicapilla	✓															
Bearded Tachuri	Polystictus pectoralis														✓		
Warbling Doradito	Pseudocolopteryx flaviventris														✓	✓	
Greater Wagtail-Tyrant	Stigmatura budytoides				✓												
Mottle-cheeked Tyrannulet	Phylloscartes ventralis																✓
Bran-colored Flycatcher	Myiophobus fasciatus															✓	
Many-colored Rush Tyrant	Tachuris rubrigastra															√	
Scarlet Flycatcher	Pyrocephalus rubinus	✓												√		√	√
Yellow-browed Tyrant	Satrapa icterophrys	✓												√		√	√
Ochre-naped Ground Tyrant	Muscisaxicola flavinucha									√							
Dark-faced Ground Tyrant - N	Muscisaxicola maclovianus						√			√							
Cinnamon-bellied Ground Tyrant	Muscisaxicola capistratus							√	√								
Austral Negrito	Lessonia rufa		√		✓	√	√	√	√			√	√				
Spectacled Tyrant	Hymenops perspicillatus		√	√		√	√							√	✓	√	✓
White Monjita	Xolmis irupero		√														
Fire-eyed Diucon - N	Pyrope pyrope						√			√	√	√	√				
Chocolate-vented Tyrant	Neoxolmis rufiventris				√			√	√								
Black-billed Shrike-Tyrant	Agriornis montanus								√								
Cattle Tyrant	Machetornis rixosa	√													√		✓
Great Kiskadee	Pitangus sulphuratus	✓	√		√									√	√	√	✓
Tropical Kingbird	Tyrannus melancholicus	√														√	✓
Fork-tailed Flycatcher	Tyrannus savana	√												√	√	√	√
Rufous-tailed Plantcutter - N	Phytotoma rara								√								
Rufous-browed Peppershrike	Cyclarhis gujanensis																✓
White-rumped Swallow	Tachycineta leucorrhoa				√									√		√	√
Chilean Swallow - N	Tachycineta leucopyga		√	√		√	✓	√	√			√					
Brown-chested Martin	Progne tapera															√	
Southern Martin	Progne elegans			√	√	√											
Grey-breasted Martin	Progne chalybea	√												1			/

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Common name	Scientific name	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19
Southern Rough-winged Swallow	Stelgidopteryx ruficollis																✓
Blue-and-white Swallow	Pygochelidon cyanoleuca				✓												✓
Barn Swallow	Hirundo rustica	✓	✓	✓	✓									✓	✓	✓	✓
Grass Wren	Cistothorus platensis					✓									✓		
Southern House Wren	Troglodytes musculus	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓		✓	✓	✓	✓
Masked Gnatcatcher	Polioptila dumicola	✓															✓
Chalk-browed Mockingbird	Mimus saturninus	✓												✓	✓	✓	✓
Patagonian Mockingbird - N	Mimus patagonicus		✓	✓	✓		✓										
White-banded Mockingbird	Mimus triurus			✓													
Common Starling - I	Sturnus vulgaris	✓												✓		✓	
Chiguanco Thrush	Turdus chiguanco					✓											
Austral Thrush	Turdus falcklandii					√	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓				
Creamy-bellied Thrush	Turdus amaurochalinus	√															
Rufous-bellied Thrush	Turdus rufiventris	✓													√		✓
House Sparrow - I	Passer domesticus	✓	√	✓	✓	√	√	√	√	✓		√		√	✓	√	✓
Correndera Pipit	Anthus correndera		✓			✓				✓							
Hellmayr's Pipit	Anthus hellmayri															√	
Black-chinned Siskin - N	Spinus barbatus						√		√	√	√	√	√				
Hooded Siskin	Spinus magellanicus	√				Н		√			√					√	√
Rufous-collared Sparrow	Zonotrichia capensis	√		√		√	√	√	√	√	√						
White-browed Blackbird	Leistes superciliaris													√		√	
Long-tailed Meadowlark - N	Leistes loyca		√														
Variable Oriole	Icterus pyrrhopterus																√
Screaming Cowbird	Molothrus rufoaxillaris														√		
Shiny Cowbird	Molothrus bonariensis	√	√		√									√		√	√
Austral Blackbird - N	Curaeus curaeus										√						
Scarlet-headed Blackbird	Amblyramphus holosericeus															√	√
Greyish Baywing	Agelaioides badius	✓												√			√
Yellow-winged Blackbird	Agelasticus thilius		√		√									√	√	√	√
Brown-and-yellow Marshbird	Pseudoleistes virescens													✓	✓	✓	√
Southern Yellowthroat	Geothlypis velata	✓															√
Hepatic Tanager	Piranga hepatica																1

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Pampa Finch	Embernagra platensis													✓	✓		
Mourning Sierra Finch	Rhopospina fruticeti			✓	✓												
Black-and-rufous Warbling Finch	Poospiza nigrorufa		✓													✓	
Long-tailed Reed Finch	Donacospiza albifrons														✓		
Black-capped Warbling Finch	Microspingus melanoleucus	✓															
Grassland Yellow Finch	Sicalis luteola													✓		✓	✓
Patagonian Yellow Finch - N	Sicalis lebruni				✓	✓	✓						✓				
Grey-hooded Sierra Finch - N	Phrygilus gayi					✓	✓		✓								
Patagonian Sierra Finch - N	Phrygilus patagonicus					✓				✓	✓	✓					
Diuca Finch	Diuca diuca			✓	✓												
Red-crested Cardinal	Paroaria coronata	✓															✓
Sayaca Tanager	Thraupis sayaca	✓															

Mammals

I = introduced								C	ctob	er 202	25						
Common name	Scientific name	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19
Large Hairy Armadillo	Chaetophractus villosus			√													
Pichi (Patagonian Armadillo)	Zaedyus pichiy				✓												
European Hare - I	Lepus europaeus				✓		✓	√	✓							✓	
Brazilian Guinea Pig (Pampas Cavy)	Cavia aperea														✓	✓	
Southern Mountain (Lesser) Cavy	Microcavia australis			√													
Mara	Dolichotis patagonum			√	√												
Patagonian Tuco-tuco	Ctenomys haigi								✓								
Coypu	Myocastor coypus	✓															√
North American Beaver - I	Castor canadensis											√					
Common Muskrat - I	Ondatra zibethicus										✓						
Patagonian Weasel	Lyncodon patagonicus				√												
South American Fur Seal	Arctocephalus australis										√						
South American Sea Lion	Otaria flavescens			√							✓	√					
Southern Elephant Seal	Mirounga leonina			√													
Culpeo	Lycalopex culpaeus						√						✓				
South American Gray Fox	Lycalopex grisea							√	√	√							√

I = introduced								C	ctob	er 202	25						
Common name	Scientific name	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19
Guanaco	Lama guanicoe			✓	✓			✓	✓								
Southern Right Whale	Eubalaena australis			✓													

Amphibians & reptiles

Common name
Sand Toad
Water Turtle
Spotted Tupinambis
Green Grass Snake