

# Bird & Mammal Trip Report

Central Chile (Oct-Nov 2021 / Dec 2023)



*Rob Jansen*  
photography

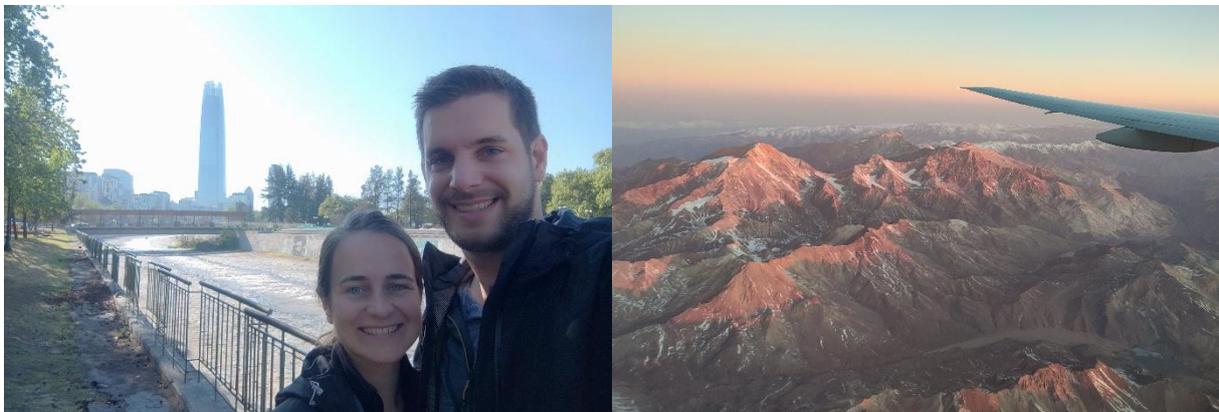
# Introduction

## About us

We are two enthusiastic nature lovers who travel the world together to search for stunning birds, fascinating mammals and incredible nature. Our world travel started in October 2021 in Chile, where we bought a car to drive through South-America in search of birds and mammals for about 2 years.

**Rob Jansen** is a biologist and wildlife photographer, and thus has a lot of knowledge about species and ecology. He's enthusiastic about all that's in nature, but mainly photographs birds and mammals.

**Romy Jansen-Houtzager** is a marketing professional. Our social media accounts, the look and feel of this report and the website are her work. In the field, she is an excellent spotter and very patient (give me some of her patience ...and hurry!).



**Rob and Romy** happy in Santiago (yes, in a city!) after their mandatory quarantine ended (left) and the view from the airplane just before landing in Santiago (right)

## Information and how to use this trip report

This trip report covers the region of Central Chile, most places mentioned are within 1.5-2 hours from the capital Santiago (except for RN Las Chinchillas). For all photos of our central Chile trip, comments, compliments, any specific questions, visit and/or contact us via our website:



[www.robjansenphotography.com/chile](http://www.robjansenphotography.com/chile)



[www.instagram.com/robjansenphotography](https://www.instagram.com/robjansenphotography)

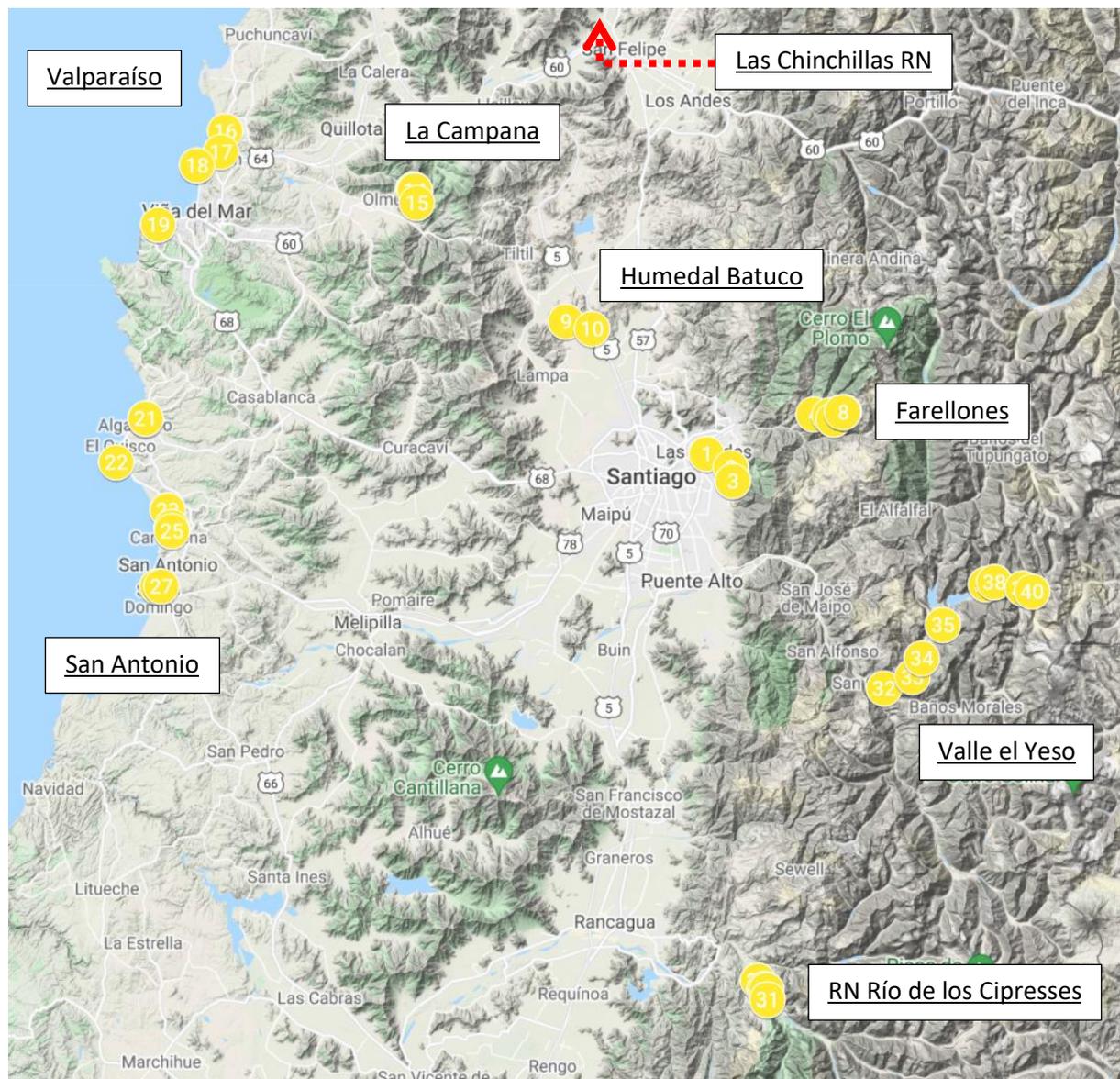
Species are highlighted in this trip report: **blue for birds**, **red for mammals** and **green for herpetofauna**. Target species which we missed on a specific spot are written in *italic*. This gives you an idea which species to pay extra attention to. All observations made by us in this central Chile can be found on Observation.org. We observed a total of 153 bird species and (only) 8 mammal species (of which 2 introduced species) in the central region around Santiago, Chile. Click here for the 2021 [bird list](#), [mammal list](#) or [the total species list](#). Here you can find the lists for 2023: [bird list](#), [mammal list](#) or [total species list](#).

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## Map and specific locations

As we had to arrange quite some things in Santiago and therefor did a lot of daytrips going up and down on the same day, our route wouldn't be the best example (see dates). A good route would be something like the one presented in the table below. This is also the order in which we presented this trip report.

NR.	PLACE	RECOMMENDED DAYS	QUICK/SHORT ON TIME
1	Farellones	1-2	-
2	Humedal de Batuco	0.5 (on route)	0.5 (on route)
3	La Campana	2-3	1.5-2
4	Valparaíso region	2 (incl. 1 morning pelagic)	1.5
5	San Antonio region	1	1
6	RN Río de los Cipreses	1-2	1
7	Valle de Yeso	2	1
8	Las Chinchillas RN	2	1.5



We made a [map in Google My Maps](#) with pointers of interesting trails and places and specific bird and mammal locations. You can view this map, download the points and add them to your own map (click on the three dots above the legend and download the KML file and drag this to your own map), or add them in the app 'Maps.me'. Maps.me has most walking trails on it and is usable offline. Route navigation by car doesn't always work great and it's better to use Google Maps for that purpose.

## Weather and timing

We visited central Chile as part of our world travel from the 10<sup>th</sup> of October till the 2<sup>nd</sup> of November 2021. This seems a pretty good time to visit, as its spring and days are cool in the early mornings and not too hot yet in the middle of the day (which they are in summer). We visited this region again shortly at the end of our travels in December 2023.

## Transportation

Tickets were booked with KLM as this gave us a direct 14-hour flight from Amsterdam, The Netherlands to Santiago, Chile. The total ticket cost for two persons (one way, including checked in luggage and CO2-compensation) was €1338 (US\$ 1555).

We had to do mandatory quarantine for the first 5 days. After that we spend some time in Santiago to arrange a lot of stuff to get our 90-day visa (blood samples were needed due to COVID-measures) and to buy a car. In between all that we hired a car from West A Rent (Av. Manquehue Sur 652, Las Condes, Región Metropolitana), which was great, as they upgraded our sedan to a 4Runner for the same price (868 USD for 11 days, unlimited km, all risk insurance, including toll). That came in handy as some of the roads weren't the best (the one towards Humedal de Batuco for example). Although every place in this report could have been visited with a normal sedan in dry season, we were happy with our decent 4Runner. In any circumstance we would recommend to rent one directly from the airport once the quarantine is not mandatory anymore (from November 2021 on). Because it is way easier to arrange and there are more cars available at the airport than in the city.



Quarantine birding



Our rented 4Runner

## Literature

We used the following books and apps:

- Birds of Chile, Helm Field Guides, 1<sup>st</sup> edition, 2021, Daniel Martínez Piña & Gonzalo Gonzáles Cifuentes. *The English version of the guide for birders in Chile. Drawings are good, especially the extra*

*drawings of birds in flights and specific details. ID Descriptions are not the best, as they don't always describe what you want to know. Also they don't mention the months of occurrence in Chile for migratory birds.*

- Mammals of the Southern Cone, Argentina, Chile, Paraguay, Uruguay, 2020, 1<sup>st</sup> edition, Lynx. *Happy that Lynx decided to make mammals guides. This book is small and easy to take along and has all the mammals in there! For naturalists who are interested in the bigger fauna (not being bats, mice etc) this guide should suffice.*
- REPTILES DEL CENTRO SUR DE CHILE. *Spanish digital guide, [available for free here](#).*
- Anfibios de los Bosques de la Zona Centro Sur y Patagonia de Chile *Anfibios de los Bosques de la Zona Centro Sur y Patagonia de Chile. Spanish digital guide, [available for free here](#).*
- Merlin app for the birds sound. *Just amazing that the app is free. We didn't miss any sounds.*
- BirdNet app for recording the bird sounds. If you don't know all the bird sounds, BirdNet can help you record the sound and give a possible ID. It helped us a few times when we were frustratingly searching for a bird we heard deep inside the shrubs and couldn't find. A sure ID of a more common bird from BirdNet saved us some time here and there ;)
- iOverlander app for camping places. This app gives nice information on where to camp or buy stuff.

## Equipment

**Photography:** Sony A9 II + 200-600mm + 1.4x converter + Sony 24-105mm, GoPro Hero 9

**Binoculars and telescope:** Swarovski EL 8x32 WB, Eden 8x32 XP, Swarovski 65HD + 25-50mm

**Heat scope/Thermal imager:** Lahoux Spotter Elite 35V ([lahouxbirding.com](http://lahouxbirding.com)). A great heat scope from a company in The Netherlands. I owned other brands, but we are super happy with the sharpness, modes and light weight of this heat scope! More here: [robjansenphotography.com/lahouxbirding](http://robjansenphotography.com/lahouxbirding)

**Spotlighting:** Fenix HT18 Long Distance Flashlight (powerful, very focussed and my preferred choice for open areas), Fenix TK35 2018-edition (less powerful and focussed than the HT18, but still very strong and nice for spotlighting), Fenix FD41 Focus Flashlight.

## Use of cell phones in Chile

Due to a law in Chile all cell phones have to be registered officially in order to function with a Chilean SIM. Sometimes phones work without registration, but if you don't register within 30 days after arrival, it might get blocked. Probably the whole idea is to prevent stolen phones to be used in Chile. Registration can already be done when you are home. We did it for free via this website: <https://service.dekra.cl/insc-admin/en/ex-paso01.html>. They need some info on your phone, and it takes about 1-2 days to register officially (you will receive an email). Our phones could not automatically select a Chilean provider. We had to adjust the following settings: turn the international roaming on and select the only 3G mobile network. Then our provider in the Netherlands did a SIM reset. This took 15 minutes while our phone was turned off and the SIM card was removed from our mobile. After that we turned on our phones and were able to select the mobile network 'Entel Network'.

A bit of a hassle, but nothing to worry if you do this back home already. A good local provider is WOM, and you can go to any WOM-store and ask for a 'chip' and they should give you one for free with already some Mb on it as well. They can help you activating it. Recharging can be done via the app with a credit card (Recargar -> Prepago) or at the counters of supermarkets and sometimes pharmacies as well. WOM mostly has unlimited usage of WhatsApp after you recharge it.

## Cash / ATM's

We have two different debit cards and two credit cards with us when we travel. As the debit cards are the cheapest to use (1.0% respectively 1.2% foreign transaction fee), we try those debit cards (Maestro) most of the time. Getting cash at an ATM gives the same transaction fees, so as long as the local bank doesn't charge us for the withdrawal, it's better to pay in cash than credit cards for us. The maximum amount of Chilean Pesos (CLP/\$) which can be obtained is 200.000CLP per withdrawal. We only found Scotia Bank to charge nothing for a withdrawal, with most other banks charging between 5.000-7.500CLP per withdrawal. It might differ depending on your own bank, but for us Scotia Bank saved us a lot of fees.

## 19% TAX

There is a local law which states that Chileans and foreign people that live in Chile have to pay 19% tax (mostly at hotels). You don't have to pay this as a foreigner, as long as you pay in USD! So make sure they charge the hotel on your credit card in USD. Once you pay in CLP (cash or card) you are charged the 19% tax as well.

## Water-to-Go

To reduce plastic usage on our travels we bought Water-to-Go water bottles. Read about our experience with Water-to-Go on our website: [www.robjansenphotography.com/water-to-go](http://www.robjansenphotography.com/water-to-go). The bottle and filters are not too expensive, and you will have your investment back within one holiday. If you order with the voucher **RJANSEN15** you will get **15% discount** as well! Check the website here: [www.watertogousa.com](http://www.watertogousa.com) (United States of America, Canada), [www.watertogo.eu](http://www.watertogo.eu) (United Kingdom) or [www.watertogo.shop](http://www.watertogo.shop) (most countries in the EU).



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# Visited sites

## Farellones

[-33.34455, -70.29969](#)

**Visited dates:** 17 October 2021

**Accommodation:** We drove up and down one day from Santiago. If possible we would advise to stay for one night in Farellones to make it more relaxed, as the drive up and down can be tiresome. But, if short on time, it's definitely possible to visit just for one day.

**How to get there:** It's quite easy from Santiago, as you just follow the Cam. a Farellones, and it's well signposted. It involves many hairpin-turns and it can be busy in weekends if you are not driving up early in the morning.

Driving up the road to Farellones (Camino a Farellones) you can see the first **Moustached Turcas** (e) foraging along the roadside. We had them while driving up the first hairpin turns early morning (we left Santiago around 06.00). Driving up, there are a couple of places of interest here:

### Cam. a Farellones – Crag Chilia stakeout

[-33.34943, -70.32628](#)

There is a small parking spot in the hairpin turn of the road. This is a good place to try for the endemic **Crag Chilia** (e). We only found it there in the afternoon. We also had **Moustached Turca**, **White-sided Hillstar** (on the bushes down in the valley) and **Mourning Sierra Finch** here.

### Cam. a Farellones – Condor lookout

[-33.35628, -70.31938](#)

This is a good place to scan for **Andean Condor**. In the early morning they should be resting on the mountain sides across the valley. In the afternoon we spotted several flying by, sometimes pretty close! We also observed **Black-green Tree Iguana** (*Liolaemus nigroviridis*) here.



Lookout at Camino a Farellones



Andean Condor

## Farellones

[-33.34455, -70.29969](#)

Right at this pointer is a daytime roost of **Magellanic Horned Owl** (or **Lesser Horned Owl**). You can see the individual on Google Street View already, but in a different tree. As there are not too many trees, it shouldn't be too hard to locate, even if it changes trees from time to time.

Northwest from here on the other side of the road is a good spot for **Common Mountain Viscacha** ([-33.34431, -70.30154](#)), which unfortunately we only heard of after we came back in Santiago.

South of the owl roost is a good hillside with lots of birds, especially Ground-tyrants, Miners and Cinclodes. We failed to locate **Creamy-rumped Miner** here, although it should be a good place for this species. Birds you will most likely also encounter are **Buff-winged Cinclodes**, **Spot-billed Ground-tyrant**, **Rufous-naped Ground-tyrant**, **White-browed Ground-tyrant**, **Rufous-banded Miner**, **Scale-throated Earthcreeper**, **Band-tailed Sierra Finch** and **Greater Yellow Finch**.

We drove all the way up to La Parva Alta (the mountain above La Parva) and found **Black-fronted Ground-tyrant** on the hillside and **White-sided Hillstar** in a tree in La Parva itself.



Rufous-banded Miner



Scale-throated Earthcreeper



Magellanic Horned Owl

## Humedal de Batuco

[-33.19599, -70.8372](#)

**Visited date:** 16 October 2021 (beware: they are closed on Mondays!)

**Accommodation:** No accommodations available at the Humedal. We visited this place from Santiago. If possible we would advise to visit this place on your way to La Campana. Visiting in the afternoon gives the best light for photography.

**How to get there:** From the Panamericana Norte it's advised to use Google Maps or Maps.me to get to the place. The last few kilometres are a bit rough for a normal car, but slow driving will get you there. See this site for information: [www.fsancarlos.cl/visita-humedal-batuco](http://www.fsancarlos.cl/visita-humedal-batuco)

A few hours should be enough to bird this site. It's a good place to get many duck and grebe species! We had **Black-headed Duck** close by, a couple of **Rosy-billed Pochards**, and some beautiful **Lake**

**Ducks** with their blue bills. Grebe species here include **Great Grebe**, **Pied-billed Grebe** and **White-tufted Grebe**. The reed beds are good for the amazing little colourful **Many-coloured Rush-tyrants** and **Wren-like Rush-birds**. Also pay attention to **Cinereous Harriers** above the reeds.



Black-headed Duck

Pied-billed Grebe

## La Campana National Park

[-32.98202, -71.13277](#)

**Visited dates:** 20 – 21 October 2021

**Accommodation:** We wanted to camp inside the National Park, but the camping was closed due to Covid-19. Because of a lack of tourists all other camping sites and lots of hotels were closed in town, but we think from the end of 2021 these will open up again when more tourists are visiting. We stayed in Hotel Piemonte (CLP 45k p.n., including breakfast). It was a good back-up option for us. The hotel has free parking space that is locked during the night and the room was spacious enough. Breakfast is from 09.00, but they agreed to have it earlier so we could be at the park at 09.00.

**General information:** Because the camping was closed, they close the gate after openings hours (Tuesday – Sunday 9:00-17:30). Because of this it is impossible to enter the NP outside opening hours at the moment, contrary to other reports which state that you can walk in before opening hours and pay on your way out. Be sure to check the night before if you plan on getting up early. On our second day, we were lucky enough to meet a friendly guard who let us stay inside the park till 20.30. The entrance fee is CLP 6.200 p.p. Your ticket will be valid for the whole day and for both entrances. See this site for more information: [conaf.cl/parques/parque-nacional-la-campana](http://conaf.cl/parques/parque-nacional-la-campana)

### Sector Granizo – Main Gate

[-32.98202, -71.13277](#)

We arrived in the afternoon around 15:30 at the main gate. We still got 2 hours for birding, because the park closes after 17:30.

We knew from recent sightings we had to search for **Rufous-legged Owl** within a few hundred meters from the entrance ([-32.98169, -71.1303](#)). This owl is uncommon and more often heard than seen. But luck was on our side when we played the sound at the end of the day. He flew through the forest (coming from the right hand side of the road) and landed in a tree next to the road. We were

able to observe it and make pictures before it flew away again. When the camping and park are open in the evenings again, it apparently hangs out on the mountain ridge above the parking area according to the guard. After this incredible sighting, we walked further up the road and decided to walk up Sendero La Canasta till the lookout platform. During this walk we were amazed by the smell of the forest, it smelled like we were in a big sauna with lots of herbs. We had our first snake, a **Chilean Green Racer *Philodryas chamissonis***, right on the path of the loop-trail 'Sendero La Canasta', and saw **Austral Pygmy Owl** on this trail as well once we tracked down the call ([-32.9807, -71.1319](#)). We were not the only ones that had found it, because many birds were trying to chase this little owl away. This is how we added **Green-backed Firecrown** and **White-throated Treerunner** to our list.

We heard another target on the right side of the main gravel road. We tried to access the low shrub/cacti habitat on the north-exposed hillsides via the Mirador Mina Nueva trail ([-32.98258, -71.12951](#)). We heard two **White-throated Tapaculos** (e), but couldn't see them. We also tried walking up the road east of the Mina Nueva trail, but that didn't really lead to any accessible habitat within the first few kilometres.

According to the guard there is a tame **South-American Grey Fox** which hangs out around the main entrance and the picnic area. He was even surprised we didn't see it, so apparently it's a common occurrence. The park also hosts the really colourful blue-and-green endemic **Thin Tree Iguana** (*Liolaemus tenuis*).



Rufous-legged Owl

Austral Pygmy-owl

## Sector Granizo – South Gate

[-33.00304, -71.12635](#)

The next morning we walked the El Arenal Area all the way till the Plateaux. The hike takes about 2-2.5 hours total. We weren't impressed by the 'plateaux', so if we could do it again we would just focus on the lower parts of the trails. These were good for **Striped Woodpecker**, **Chilean Pigeon** (ne) and on a part with shrubs and cacti we found our first endemic **Dusky-tailed Canastero** (e).

## Valparaíso

[-33.03738, -71.62733](#)

**Visited dates:** 22 – 25 October 2021

**Accommodation:** We stayed in a cheap hostel (Maki Hostel, just ok and what you expect from a hostel) near the harbour so we wouldn't have to do any driving the morning of the pelagic. Parking in the garage below the harbour is recommended, even if you stay in a hostel up the hills. See Estero Mantague below for a great place for camping outside of the busy city.

### Estero Mantagua – Posada del Parque

[-32.88439, -71.49836](#)

A nice place to bird the river and estuary. The Posada is easily accessed from the main road, where there is a gate which opens after 09.00. They told us we are welcome to bird in the early morning and that we had to use the code (4015) to open the gate. There is one trail from the Posada towards the ocean, trailing alongside the river. There are several good places to observe waders, and we saw **Lesser Yellowlegs**, **Magellanic (South-American) Snipe**, **Baird's Sandpiper** and two **Collared Plovers**. We failed (again) to find **Black Rail**, but did find two **Stripe-backed Bitterns** in the reeds. We also had an obliging **Spot-flanked Gallinule**. Half way the trail you have to cross the river over something that passes for a bridge. The gate in front of this 'bridge' is locked and can be opened with a code too (9863). Near the ocean we found **Great Shrike-tyrant** on one of the shrubs.



Great Shrike-tyrant



Spot-flanked Gallinule

### Concón – Acongagua

[-32.91818, -71.5052](#)

A nice estuary with a few viewing platforms from which you can observe waterfowl resting on the sand banks (telescope recommended). Common species here are **South-American Tern**, **Black Skimmer** and we also observed **Hudsonian Godwits**. Between the **Red-gartered Coots** and **Coscoroba Swans** was one **White-winged Coot**. The entrance is free and there is ample parking. Come here in the morning for the best light.



Great Grebe



Red-gartered Coot

## Roca Oceanica

[-32.94136, -71.5533](#)

A small rocky outcrop, which forms a nice place to look at some **Inca Terns** which breed on the north and south side of the outcrop. Not much else to see, and don't go here in the weekend as it takes forever to get anywhere by car along the coast.



Inca Tern



Baird's Sandpiper

## Pelagic Bird Trip

We did a pelagic on Saturday the 23rd of October with [Albatross Birding](#). Francisco and Fernando both responded very quickly by WhatsApp and email, in perfect English and answered any questions we had. Because there was a lot of wind and therefore high waves they send us an update on Thursday and again on Friday to confirm the trip.

We arrived at the harbour at 06.45 and our guide Fernando arrived just before 07.00 to check if everyone was there and to get us on the boat. The boat can hold up to a 100 people, but the maximum for the pelagic is 20. It took about 1 hour of sailing before we saw our first **Black-browed Albatross**, and not much after we also observed **Salvin's Albatross**. **Pink-footed Shearwaters** were common all around us. We had one sighting of **Peruvian Diving-petrel** flying quickly alongside the boat. After an hour they started chumming and lots of birds arrived, in order of abundance: **Kelp Gull**, **Pink-footed Shearwater**, **Peruvian Pelican**, **Black-browed Albatross**, **Salvin's Albatross**, **Peruvian Booby** and a few **White-chinned Petrel**. One **South-American Sea Lion** joined the feeding frenzy as well. Once you get used to the abundance of birds and recognise the species in an instant, it

gets easier to photograph them. The waves of about 3-4m made it a bit of a challenge, but holding on to the railing, a shutter speed of 1/2000 of a second, f/13 and a good stabilizer did the trick.



**Black-browed Albatross**



**The boat for the pelagic**

We had two distant sightings of Royal Albatross, and because I managed to get a photo we were able to ID it as being **Northern Royal Albatross**. Looking in the distance for more royals I noticed a blow of about 3-4m high and shortly after I saw a greyish back with a sharp fin, which (given what we saw, the geographic and most common occurrence) was most likely **Sei Whale**.

As many people had to sit down to ease the stomach a bit, we were practically alone at the back of the boat together. Another albatross flew towards the chum and that turned out to be the first and only **Buller's Albatross** of the trip (and the first of the season).



**Black-browed Albatross**

**Salvin's Albatross**

Albatross Birding keeps sailing the whole time, and after 2.5 hours they stopped for about 5 minutes. This was actually the best time for photography because now you only had the (more or less predictable) waves to account for, without the boat moving forward as well. Unfortunately they turn around and go sailing back almost right away. The guy throwing the chum overboard was quite enthusiastic, and after about 3-3.5 hours they ran out of chum. Some albatrosses still followed the boat, but after this it was more distant and not good for photography anymore. A distant **Northern Giant Petrel** gave a total of 18 species of birds during this pelagic. Lots of the more common birds (**Cape Petrel** for example) are absent this time of year. Also we didn't have any of the rarer targets like **Masatierra Petrel** or **Westland Petrel**. Still a very good trip and highly recommended to go with

Albatross Birding! Be sure to book up front, as they only have a few trips a month from Valparaíso, and even without foreign tourists this tripped was booked up full about a week before.



White-chinned Petrel



Pink-footed Shearwater

## San Antonio Coastal Region

[-33.62629, -71.63204](#)

Visited dates: 19 October 2021

**Accommodation:** We drove up and down one day from Santiago. Again, if possible we would advise to combine this with the coastal region around Valparaíso to make the route more efficient.

**How to get there:** There are several spots around the coast that are of interest, and all of them can be easily navigated to on normal roads with Google Maps or Maps.me.

### Estero San Jerónimo - Desembocadura

[-33.35484, -71.65319](#)

You can park at the southern side of the bridge ([-33.35525, -71.6527](#)) and walk up the bridge. When we were there the gate at the north side of the river was closed. Rob crawled underneath it, Romy stayed on the bridge. The target bird here is **Stripe-backed Bittern**. It took some time, but thanks to our Lahoux Spotter heat scope we were able to find a bird crawling through the reeds. After that we were both able to observe it for a while. It should be perfectly possible to observe this bird species from the bridge alone, without crawling underneath the gate.



Heat scope image of the Stripe-backed Bittern



Stripe-backed Bittern

## Caleta los Lances

[-33.36384, -71.68223](#)

I got a tip from someone who followed our blog that he had observed *Marine Otters* twice in this bay. As we had only seen them swimming shortly in the north of Chile we decided to get better views of this species here. As we again didn't plan this well we arrived on a Sunday afternoon and fishermen, jet skis and surfers dominated the bay. It still looks like an interesting place, but definitely don't try during the weekends. We did see **Chilean Seaside Cinclodes** and **Humboldt Penguin**.



Whimbrel

(Chilean) Seaside Cinclodes

## Punta De Tralca

[-33.42462, -71.70948](#)

A very nice place to visit, even if your travel companions aren't into birds that much. It is a rocky peninsula covered in low vegetation, which reminds a bit of the Cape in South-Africa. You can park directly at the peninsula, where you pay about 15 CLP per minute to the guard there on your way out. This place is good for the endemic **Chilean Seaside Cinclodes**.



Punta De Tralca

It's also a great place to watch seabirds passing by in the evening. **Peruvian Booby**, **Peruvian Pelican**,

**Red-legged Cormorant**, **Guanay Cormorant** are all common. Further up sea (scope needed) you can see many passing **Sooty Shearwaters**.

## Laguna El Peral

[-33.50346, -71.61037](#)

This very nice place is closed on Monday, and opened the rest of the week from 09.00 – 12.00, and from 14.00 – 16.00. The place has lots of hides from which you can scan the lake and adjoining reeds. It's a good place for the endemic **Dusky Tapaculo**, and we had several calling from the shrubs and managed to see two of them. **Ticking Doradito** should be here as well, but it probably didn't return to its breeding grounds yet. **Black Rail** has been observed here, but again we couldn't connect with species. The place is full of ducks and grebes, of which **Black-headed Duck** is probably the best species. We also had at least a hundred **Southern Silvery Grebes**.

## Laguna Cartagena

[-33.53454, -71.60225](#)

We tried to visit this place, but didn't know the opening times, and found out it was closed during the afternoon. There is no way of entering this place outside opening hours. It should be a nice place for common species. If short on time, skip this one. Opening hours:

**March – November:** Monday – Friday 9:00-13:30 // 15:00-17:00; Saturday and Sunday 9:00-17:00.

**December – February:** every day 09.00 – 19.00.

## Parque Humedal

[-33.62629, -71.63204](#)

We started birding the San Antonio region from the south and Parque Humedal is a great place to start the day. It's officially open from 09.00 in the morning, but we didn't have any problems going in earlier. The gate might be closed at the entrance of the road, but there is a parking spot near the beach as well. You can access the place by walking along the beach too.

The main entrance to Parque Humedal is at [-33.62797, -71.62985](#) from where you can drive to the entrance. A boardwalk passes first reeds and then shrubby vegetation before ending up on the beach. The shrubby part and further towards the beach are good for **Black Rail** and **Ticking Doradito** (both of which we missed in 2021, but found in December 2023) and other more common reed birds.

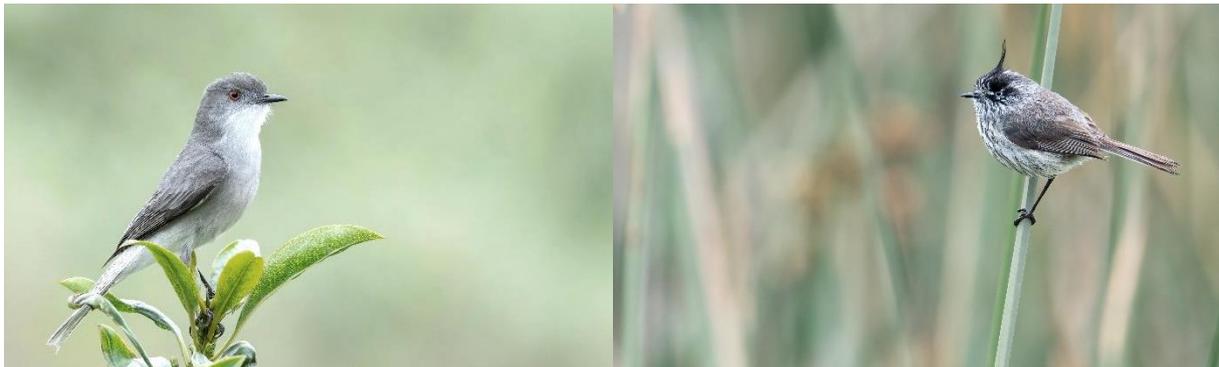


Ticking Doradito

Ticking Doradito

Along the boardwalk is a bird watching tower from which you can scan some sand banks. We saw amongst others **Snowy-crowned Tern**, **Black Skimmer** and **Blackish Oystercatcher**. The shrubs around the hide were good for **Rufous-tailed Plantcutter**, an obliging **Fire-eyed Diucon** and **Plain-mantled Tit-spinetail**.

The beach is a great place for waders, with **Sanderling**, **Baird's Sandpiper**, **Whimbrel** and **American Oystercatcher** being common. Here you can also get your gulls and terns.



**Fire-eyed Diucon**

**Tufted Tit-tyrant**

We drove into a road east to the main entrance and parked before the gate. There were some recent reports of **Black Rail** at [-33.62656, -71.62179](#), which we failed to locate in 2021 (too early in the season), but found in December 2023. Here we had our first mammal, but unfortunately they were introduced **European Rabbits**.

## RN Río de los Cipreses

[-34.26575, -70.46544](#)

**Visited dates:** 1-2 November 2021

**Accommodation:** We rented a campervan and slept next to a quiet road in the villages (the small gravel road on your right passed the school, after coming from the reserve).

**Information:** The entrance fee is CLP 6.200 p.p. The camping was closed due to Covid when we were there. More information on <https://www.conaf.cl/parques/reserva-nacional-rio-los-cipreses/>

This reserve is not too big, and makes for a nice getaway from the more busy places and parks mentioned in this report. The main target is very easy to see: **Burrowing Parrot**. They fly over your head constantly, especially early morning and late afternoon. A perfect place to photograph this species in flight is from the viewpoint on the Sendero Las Arpas ([-34.28194, -70.44895](#)). While waiting here for flocks of Parrots to fly by we also heard the endemic **Chilean Tinamou**. It took a while, but we also managed to see one!

**Burrowing Parrot****Chilean Tinamou**

While trying to photograph some Burrowing Parrots in a tree, Romy spotted a big bird from the car. Walking up it turned out to be a **Magellanic Horned Owl**, our second already! It was roosting on a branch about 6m high ([-34.28023, -70.45307](#)).

**Burrowing Parrot****Magellanic Horned Owl****Sendero Las Arpas**

There is a nice short trail 'Sendero Tricahue' which leads to a lookout point where you can see 1000's of burrows of the Burrowing Parrots ([-34.2971, -70.44707](#)). The area where you park your car is good for **Moustached Turca** (e).

The camping area is a nice place to rest during the hot hours of the day and observe birds like **Striped Woodpecker** and **Common Diuca Finch**.

**Common Diuca Finch****Picui Dove**

## Valle el Yeso

[-33.79279, -70.22162](#)

**Visited dates:** 29-31 October 2021

**Accommodation:** We rented a campervan and slept at random places in the valley. Many locals pitched a tent next to the car as well.

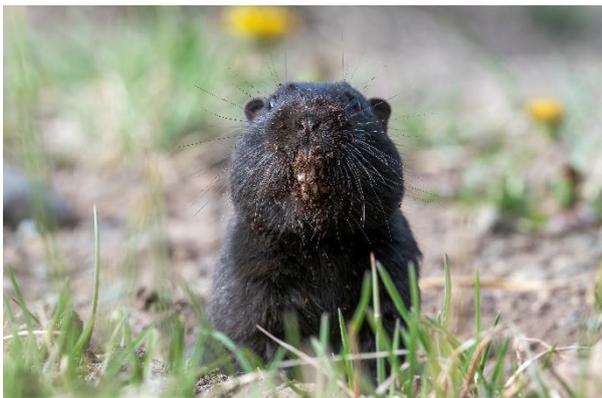


Small pond around the marsh area



Grey-breasted Seedsnipe

This valley offers more or less the same species as Farellones, but one species occurs here that tips the balance scales right away if you only have time for one of the two places; *Diademed Sandpiper-plover*. Early morning on the 30<sup>th</sup> of October we went to the place where this species is most often searched for and seen ([-33.62453, -70.0246](#)). To get to this place you have to have a 4x4 or you have to walk and cross some of the streams. Waterproof boots are recommended! If you drive than try to get as far along this road as possible ([-33.62082, -70.00757](#)). We walked the whole bog, every stream, the whole morning and couldn't find our target. We did find many **Grey-breasted Seedsnipe**, **Magellanic (South-American) Snipe**, **Andean Goose** and **Crested Duck**. A flushed sandpiper turned out to be **Baird's Sandpiper**. No luck this morning for the *Diademed Sandpiper-plover* or *Creamy-rumped Miners*.



Coruro



Coruro

While searching with our Lahoux heat scope early morning, Romy found a colony of the endemic **Coruro** ([-33.61987, -70.00898](#)). These mammals were busy digging their burrows and popped their heads out like a game of Whack-a-mole. There were signs of these burrows all over the valley. These

colonies are nomadic, so don't be surprised if you find an abandoned colony. Judging by the amount of burrows they seem abundant in the valley, but we only saw them coming out of their burrows between 08.00 – 10.30.

After a relaxing afternoon we went searching for our targets in Valle el Yeso proper. Just after passing the KM40 sign, I spotted **Diademed Sandpiper-plover** in the bog on the right side of the road ([-33.63071, -69.95346](#)). Luckily the sun just hadn't set behind the mountains yet.



**Diademed Sandpiper-plover bog seen from the hill**



**Diademed Sandpiper-plover**

The next morning we went back to this bog, but couldn't find them. We walked the road a bit further in search of other marshes. We found another marsh, but there we only found **Ochre-naped Ground-tyrant**. We scanned some bogs further east and found **Upland Goose** and many (introduced) **European Hares**. On the way back we suddenly saw two **Creamy-rumped Miners** near the marsh ([33.63519, -69.9359](#)).

Walking back happily that we had our two main targets of this valley we glared one more time at the bog around km40. This revealed not one, but two **Diademed Sandpiper-plovers**! Laying down at the edge of the bog for another photo I noticed something small foraging near the plovers; it turned out that there were two chicks! So four Diademed Sandpiper-plovers in total, wow!



**Diademed Sandpiper-plover**



**Diademed Sandpiper-plover**

Having all our targets we decided to head out of the valley. We birded a little grassland next to a small farm ([-33.68943, -70.10736](#)) where we found **Mountain Parakeet** and many Ground-tyrants.

Some had *Creamy-rumped Miner* here as well. We also birded the shrub-covered hills at km10 ([-33.74337, -70.14852](#)), but only heard **Moustached Turca** in the heat of the afternoon.

We had more success at our last spot at km4 ([-33.77328, -70.1679](#)). You can park your car across the street. They just put up fences, but the rocky habitat that you want is still reachable manoeuvring along the fence and over the rocks. Soon after we played the tape **Crag Chilia** (e) came down the hills. Another great endemic species!



Crag Chilia spot seen from across the road



Crag Chilia

## Las Chinchillas NR

[-31.50889, -71.10614](#)

**Visited dates:** 14-16 December 2023

**Accommodation:** we slept in our motorhome, and pitching a tent is possible in the surroundings (see iOverlander). Otherwise Illapel is the closest town with accommodation.

**Information:** the reserve is normally open from 09.00-18.00, entrance fee 10k CLP p.p. for foreigners.

As we had not seen any Degu yet, nor did we succeed in seeing Chilean Chinchilla (see trip report north Chile) we decided to go to Reserva Nacional Las Chinchillas. We camped somewhere in the neighbourhood where two people had said they observed Chinchillas. However, the habitat wasn't suitable and most likely they had seen Degus.

The following day we went to the reserve ([-31.50890, -71.10614](#)). When we arrived they told us it was closed because of some issues, which we certainly didn't read on the website. Nothing more but a shrug and 'bad luck', he advised us to write a note to the CONAF overseeing the parks. Of course that was not going to help us there, and luckily after lots of pleading we were allowed in for 5 minutes to see the *Nocturama*. This is a small exhibit of nocturnal animals that live in the park, including a wild Chinchilla. Once in we also got a chance to see the **Myotis arscens**, a recently described species from this park. While we were on it; "are those Degus easy to see?". Not much later we sat at the small waterhole and observed **Common Degu** going there from a hole beneath the shrubs. Besides this awesome animal we also observed **Chilean Tinamou**, **Common Diuca-finch** and even **White-throated Tapaculo** at the waterhole.

**Common Degu****Common Degu**

But the main reason we came here was of course the Chinchillas. It's important to know that they do occur in the park, but not anywhere near the visitor centre. The signs on the road indicating that fauna crosses the road has a Chinchilla, but it's very unlikely they will cross the road there. The habitat is steep north-facing slopes (the sunny sides on the southern hemisphere), with cacti and other plants adapted to these slopes. After lots of research I found a place where actually seeing these fur balls seemed very plausible. As it was outside the national reserve and on private land we drove up to the gate and went to the house to ask the friendly lady *Elsa* if we were allowed in. Already when nearing she asked "Chinchillas?" That seemed promising and luckily we were allowed in. She showed us the place where her daughter had even seen one during the afternoon. Scouring the rocks we found lots of traces of Chinchillas, including what seemed little highways, dirt-bathing spots and places where they dug away some dirt to reach cacti roots (food that is available also when the leaves of shrubs already dried out).

**Chilean Chinchilla habitat****Chinchilla dust bath spot**

Romy had found an article on behaviour of wild Chinchillas and they stated that they mostly came out between 23.00-02.00<sup>1</sup>, with shifts in activity depending on the moon and the orientation of the valley. We were in luck as there was almost no moon (and it disappeared behind the mountains after 22.30). Sunset was around 21.00, so we went searching around 21.30. Shining around with my flashlight I didn't get any eyeshine. Then I shone around with the flashlight parallel to the binoculars;

<sup>1</sup> Deane, Amy & Deane, Sahara & Deane, Serengeti & Lansdale, Chase. (2020). Observations on behaviors exhibited by wild chinchillas (*Chinchilla lanigera*).

this trick has worked well for finding eyeshine from frogs already from 100m away. Sure enough while watching through my binoculars I got eyeshine on some rocky wall. Not long after we could clearly see a wild **Chilean Chinchilla** *Chinchilla lanigera*! Interestingly enough the thermal camera didn't work well to find this species. The rocks are quite warm and Chinchillas are known for their very dense fur. Even up close practically the only heat escaping came from around the eyes.



Chilean Chinchilla



Chilean Chinchilla

Throughout the next 3 hours we observed at least 13 different individuals, which is a conservative estimate. They were pretty skittish and walking the gritty ground with lots of cacti it was almost impossible to not make noise. Luckily one of them came back from the hole it disappeared in, allowing for some nice photos.

## You made it! Thank you for reading 😊

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All observations made by us in this central Chile can be found on [Observation.org](https://www.observations.org). We observed a total of 151 bird species and (only) 8 mammal species (of which 2 introduced species) in the central region around Santiago, Chile. Click here for the 2021 [bird list](#), [mammal list](#) or [the total species list](#). Here you can find the lists for 2023: [bird list](#), [mammal list](#) or [total species list](#).

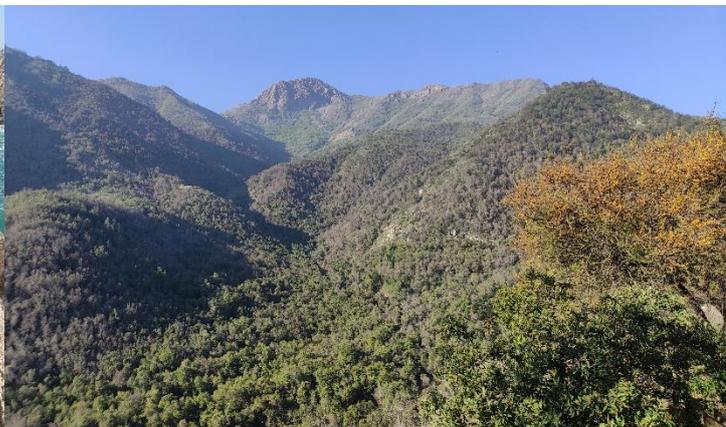
Top 5	Birds	Mammals
1	Diademed Sandpiper-plover	Chilean Chinchilla
2	Moustached Turca	Coruro
3	Buller's Albatross	Sei Whale
4	Rufous-legged Owl	Common Degu
5	Burrowing Parakeet	South-American Sea Lion

## Purchasing Photos

If you like my pictures, you are in luck: they are for sale! For publication, presswork or just as artwork in your office or at home. A great memory of those great species you've seen during that trip! We donate 10% of our profits to WWF. My photos can be used for free for conservation or educational purposes after consultation. Have a look on my website or contact us via the website for the possibilities if you are interested: [www.robjansenphotography.com/shop](http://www.robjansenphotography.com/shop)



Inca Tern photography at Roca Oceanica



La Campana NP seen from Mirador Mina Nueva trail



Camping next to the Coruro conoly



Valle el Yeso



Me photographing a Diademed Sandpiper-plover at Valle de Yeso



Thin Tree Iguana at La Campana NP



*Battus polydamas psittacus* at La Campana NP



Chilean Chinchilla



Ticking Doradito