



**CAT EXPEDITIONS**

## Pumas of Patagonia Photo Tour 2024 Highlights

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November 16th - 23rd, 2024



**Group:** Cindy, Chris, Amanda, Sabrina, Sue, Christie

**Trip Leaders:** Sebastian Kennerknecht  
Rachel Tobias

**Guides:\*** Javi, Miguel, Andy, and Junior [tracker]

\*This trip helped support 3 local guides, 1 puma trackers,  
and 28 local staff members

**Places Visited:** Torres del Paine National Park, Patagonia, Chile



In 2024, we led our annual pumas of Patagonia photo tours in late November. It was yet another fantastic trip filled with lots of pumas, laughs, happy tears, and delicious foods. Below are highlights, from the trip.

## Trip Highlights

**Pumas:** We spent significant time with four different pumas, including Amarga, a young adult female puma and Petaka, a six year old female, and her two almost fully grown cubs (male and female). Extreme caution is taken during puma encounters, where we as guides ensure the safety of the clients by observing behavior, stand next to the clients when the cats are close, and asking the clients to make eye contact.

**Petaka and cubs:** We first found Petaka and her two kittens snuggled up on a cliff, out of the wind. They were relaxed, sleeping during the heat of the day. We just settled in and waited, knowing they would get up sooner than later.





Once they raised from their slumber they would show each other lots of affection through nuzzling and play! They did this on all the days we spent time with them and gave us amazing looks for photos.

















One day we saw a truly unique behavior, when the male cub approached a pond to drink. However, after finishing his drink, he entered the water [cautiously] and then defecated.





**Amarga:** We spent really wonderful hours with Amarga, following her as she hunted for food. She is Petaka's daughter, from a previous litter. She can be distinguished by her gray color, and smaller stature.





Our best sighting of the trip came on the last day. We were following Amarga as she was walking through the Patagonian landscape. After a couple of kilometers she was nearing a pond.



I thought the probabilities of her drinking were low as she didn't seem to have eaten recently. In our experience the cats are most likely to drink after feeding. Amarga looked skinny and hungry. Just in case, we got our guests into position for reflection photos. She zigzagged down the hillside, playing with our emotions. Every time she took a turn towards the pond our hearts beat faster and our excitement rose. When she turned and switched directions, they sank.

She made a couple more zigs and with her last zag bee-lined it towards the pond. Was this really going to happen? The camera shutters started going off with every step she got closer to the water. Even more miraculous was the fact that there was no wind disturbing the water's surface. No wind in Patagonia is like winning the lottery, we couldn't believe our luck.

She took a few more steps towards the pond, laid down, and started to drink. It was incredible.





After quenching her thirst she continued. She kept stopping at bushes smelling them. I figured she was looking for bird eggs [I had seen Blinka do the same years ago].

*\*It's always interesting to me how different pumas have different hunting strategies. It seems that especially smaller cats, like Amarga, are more likely to go after smaller prey, like rabbits, waterfowl, and most likely even armadillos\**

She moved from bush to bush.

She did so for over an hour. All of a sudden her interest peaked. She lunged into the thickets and when she emerged, she was holding a European hare baby in her mouth. Considering how skinny she looked we were all happy she got at least a small meal.

To our surprise, instead of eating it right away, she dropped it, and chased it, playing with it for over an hour before finally consuming it. She gave us so many different chances to photograph her pursue her prey, it was incredible. Of course, once the rabbit was finally dead, there too was a sigh of relief.











## SPECIES LIST

### **Mammals**

Puma	<i>Puma concolor</i>
South American Gray Fox	<i>Lycalopex griseus</i>
Guanaco	<i>Lama guanicoe</i>
European Hare [Introduced]	<i>Lepus europaeus</i>

### **Birds**

Lesser Rhea	<i>Rhea pennata</i>
Black-necked Swan	<i>Cygnus melancoryphus</i>
Coscoroba Swan	<i>Coscoroba coscoroba</i>
Upland Goose	<i>Chloephaga picta</i>
Crested Duck	<i>Lophonetta specularioides</i>
Chiloe Wigeon	<i>Mareca sibilatrix</i>
Yellow-billed Pintail	<i>Anas georgica</i>
Yellow-billed Teal	<i>Anas flavirostris</i>
Eared Dove	<i>Zenaida auriculata</i>
Red-gartered Coot	<i>Fulica armillata</i>
Southern Lapwing	<i>Vanellus chilensis</i>
Brown-hooded Gull	<i>Chroicocephalus maculipennis</i>
Dolphin Gull	<i>Leucophaeus scoresbii</i>
Kelp Gull	<i>Larus dominicanus</i>
Black-browed Albatross	<i>Thalassarche melanophris</i>
Southern Giant-Petrel	<i>Macronectes giganteus</i>
Magellanic Cormorant	<i>Leucocarbo magellanicus</i>
Imperial Shag	<i>Phalacrocorax atriceps</i>
Andean Condor	<i>Vultur gryphus</i>
Cinereous Harrier	<i>Circus cinereus</i>
Black-chested Buzzard-Eagle	<i>Geranoaetus melanoleucus</i>
Short-eared Owl	<i>Asio flammeus</i>
Southern Caracara	<i>Caracara plancus</i>
White-throated Caracara	<i>Daptrius albogularis</i>
American Kestrel	<i>Falco sparverius</i>
Austral Parakeet	<i>Enicognathus ferrugineus</i>
Scale-throated Earthcreeper	<i>Upucerthia dumetaria</i>
Buff-winged Cinclodes	<i>Cinclodes fuscus</i>
Austral Negrito	<i>Lessonia rufa</i>
Fire-eyed Ducon	<i>Pyrope pyrope</i>
Black-billed Shrike-Tyrant	<i>Agriornis montanus</i>



Southern House Wren  
Austral Thrush  
Correndera Pipit  
Rufous-collared Sparrow  
Long-tailed Meadowlark

*Troglodytes musculus*  
*Turdus falcklandii*  
*Anthus correndera*  
*Zonotrichia capensis*  
*Leistes loyca*



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