

Bird & Mammal Trip Report
Southern Chile (Nov-Dec 2021)



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

Romy Jansen-Houtzager is a marketing professional. The marketing behind 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 on the ferry crossing towards Chiloé (left) and the erupting Volcan Chillán

Information and how to use this trip report

This trip report covers the region of Southern Chile, from 4 hours south of Santiago (Altos de Lircay) all the way to Chiloé island (the real south, Patagonia, will be covered in a next report). For all photos of our Southern Chile trip, comments, compliments, any specific questions, visit and/or contact us via our website:

 www.robjansenphotography.com/chile

 www.instagram.com/robjansenphotography

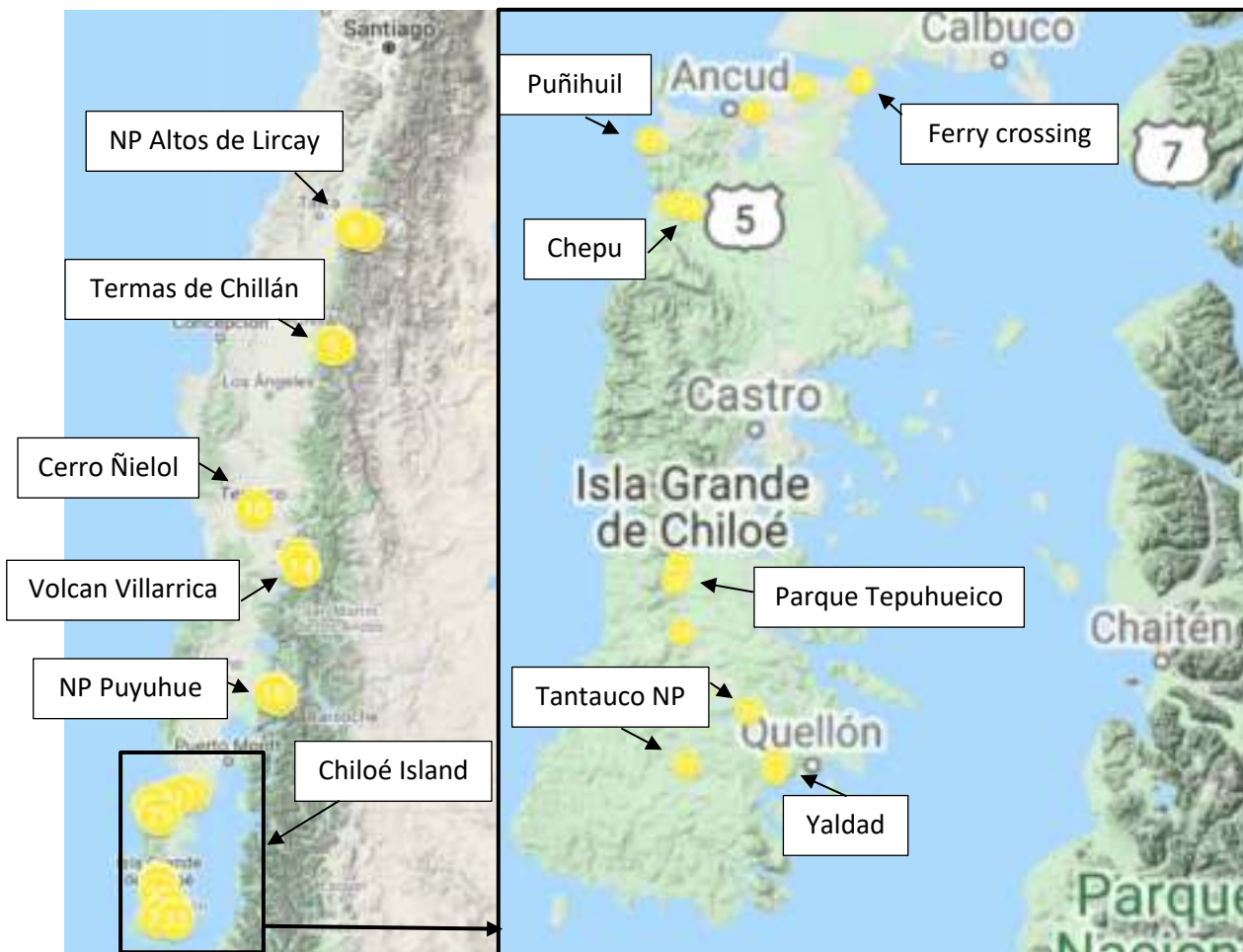
Species are highlighted in this trip report: **blue for birds**, **red for mammals** and **green for herpetofauna**. Target species which we missed on a specific spot are written in *italic*. This gives you an idea which species to pay extra attention to. All observations made by us in this part of Argentina can be found on Observation.org. We observed a total of 98 bird species and (only) 8 mammal species in the region south of Santiago to Chiloé, Chile. Click here for the: [total bird list](#), [total mammal list](#) or [the total species list](#).

For more trip reports see our website: www.robjansenphotography.com/trip-reports

Map and specific locations

After arranging our car in Santiago, we drove south. Therefore we start this trip report south of where we ended our Central Chile Trip report. In the table below is the order in which we presented this trip report.

NR.	PLACE	RECOMMENDED DAYS	QUICK/SHORT ON TIME
1	NP Altos de Lircay	1	-
2	Termas de Chillán	1	1
3	Temuco, Cerro Ñielol	0,5	-
4	Pucón/Volcán Villarrica	1	-
5	NP Puyehue	2	1-1,5
6	Northern Chiloé	1-1,5	1
7	Chepu	2	1
8	Parque Tepuhueico	2	1,5
9	Tantauco NP	3	1
10	Yaldad	0,5	0,5



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 almost all walking trails on it and you can use it offline. Route navigation by car doesn't always work great though and it's better to use google maps for that purpose.

Weather and timing

We visited Southern Chile as part of our world travel from the 19th of November till the 13th of December 2021. This seems a pretty good time to visit, as it is spring and days are cool in the early mornings and not too hot yet in the middle of the day. The weather is different from central Chile, as it's less predictable. We had some mornings and evenings that it was drizzling and that is was very foggy (especially Volcan Villarrica and Chiloé). A bit later (January-March) seems better for mammal watching on Chiloé though.

Transportation

Our transportation in this trip report was of course our Toyota 4Runner SR5 4.0 2010 (2x4) called 'Forrest' (Run Forrest, Run... and it takes us to the.. well, you get the idea). We bought this car in Santiago and got it converted by a company so that we could sleep in it as well. We would recommend renting a car with high clearance for Southern Chile, because it drives really well and it gives you that extra clearance that is needed on some roads (not too many though).



Our loyal friend Forrest at Volcan Villarrica

Tent and awning attached to the 4Runner

Literature

We used the following books and apps:

- Birds of Chile, Helm Field Guides, 1st 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, 1st 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 (Rob), GoPro Hero 9 (Romy)

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

Heat scope/Thermal imager: Lahoux Spotter Elite 35V (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: www.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 (comparable to the LedLenser), LedLenser P7R (can be focussed☺)

Use of cell phones in Chile

Due to a law here in Chile all cell phones have to be registered officially in order to function here. Sometimes they work without registration, but if you don't register within 30 days after arrival, it might get blocked as well. The whole idea probably 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 was removed from our mobile. After that we turned on our phones and could 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 (0,5% 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 200.000\$ per withdrawal. We only found Scotia Bank to charge nothing for a withdrawal, with most other banks charging between 5.000-7.500\$ 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.

WaterToGo

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. 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 (United States of America, Canada), www.watertogo.eu (United Kingdom) or www.watertogo.shop (most countries in the EU)

Visited sites

Altos de Lircay National Park [-35.60417, -71.07189](#)

Visited dates: 20 - 21 November 2021

Accommodation: The camping in the NP was closed, so we used the app 'iOverlander' to find a nice spot outside the NP. If you have a campervan/tent, this would be a nice place ([-35.56228, -71.20211](#)).

General information: You can start birding the access road from the first gate ([-35.60359, -71.06895](#)) towards the National Park before openings hours (Tuesday – Sunday 08:30-20:30, closed on Mondays). You can park your car just before the first gate or at the end of the paved road when driving up there. The first gate has a small opening in it for pedestrians so you can always enter by foot. The second entrance opens at 08.30, but there was no big gate that could be locked for pedestrians either. After 08.30 you can drive up to this gate and park behind it. It will save you a walk of about 2,0km/0,5 hour up with an elevation rise of about 170m. The entrance fee is CLP 6.400 p.p.

Main Entrance Road (gate 1 to gate 2) [-35.60359, -71.06895](#)

The walk was nice and because the road is quite broad it is easier to see birds higher up in the trees as well. We had **Chilean Flicker** in a tree, **White-throated Treerunners** and **Thorn-tailed Rayaditos** flying from tree to tree and we saw **Austral Parakeets** flying over. Not much else, except for butterflies like the Western Painted Lady. At the second gate we had a Tarantula crossing the road! Most likely the endemic *Euathlus manicata*.



Tarantula crossing the road



Chilean Flicker

Sendero Aliwenmahuida [-35.60295, -71.04962](#)

This easy walking, 900 meter interpretive trail takes officially 1 hour. The forest is beautiful and the lookouts are amazing. This should be a great place to search for the (near-)endemic **Chestnut-throated Huet-huet**. The best tactic is just walking really slowly and quietly and listen for the birds scratching the leaves on the forest floor. We saw quite some evidence of them being on this trail, but only heard one calling shortly. However, we saw many **White-throated Treerunners** on the trail and we saw

Austral Parakeets flying from the lookout. After all, this trail took as 2,5 hours, including long photography stops for some birds and at the lookout. Sendero Aliwenmahuida will end at the main gravel road, where you go left to the camping area.



Panorama view at Sendero Aliwenmahuida

Sendero Los Concones

[-35.59946, -71.04444](#)

Once you arrive at the camping area you will see a staff building and the bathrooms (baños). Behind the baños you will find the camping area (closed due to Covid when we were there) and that's the place where the Sendero Los Concones starts. The trail is easy walking (small steeper parts) and is about 600m long and takes about 0,5 hours walking (longer for birding of course). The forest at the camping area is good for **Striped Woodpecker**. We also had **Northern Painted Lizard** *Liolaemus septentrionalis* here. A bit further you enter forest with huge trees again, and that is where we found our first Carpintero Negro: a female **Magellanic Woodpecker**. From the first lookout we heard multiple **Chucao Tapaculos** in the valley below (look up the beautiful sound and you will recognise it immediately). Just after the second lookout we heard some scratching again between the entanglement of bamboo and shrubs. We sat on the ground for about 1,5 hours and only Romy got to see the **Chestnut-throated Huet-huet** for about 2 seconds. We heard them calling twice. Not a very fulfilling sighting, but exciting nonetheless.



Western Painted Lady



Striped Woodpecker

Sendero Rio

[-35.5998, -71.04387](#)

The Sendero Rio follows the main paved road (passing the camping on your left). Besides some nice iguanas and a heard-only **Chucao Tapaculo** we didn't see or hear much on this 1,2km/0,5h trail with an elevation loss of about 130m. The trail is steep on some parts and there are lots of loose stones. The river itself it a nice tranquil place, and we did see our first **Patagonian Sierra-finch** here. Overall we don't recommend this trail for birding. We did however see quite some lizards on this part like **Schroeder's Lizard** *Liolaemus schroederi* and an orange-coloured male **Buerger's lizard** *Liolaemus buergeri*.

Termas de Chillán

[-36.91586, -71.45829](#)

Visited date: 22-24 November 2021

Accommodation: We stayed at a beautiful wild camping place (thanks again iOverlander), next to a river and with a view of the smoking and erupting volcano!

General information: Birding this area is free, as it is no reserve or national park.

This place started out well, as we arrived at night and saw a **Culpeo** crossing the road right at our camping site ([-36.91668, -71.44247](#)). **Band-winged Nightjars** were flying above the camping spot as well and an **Austral Pygmy Owl** was calling from the nearby trees. At the small road leading from the big flat area towards the above camping spot we had **Patagonian Forest Earthcreepers** 2 out of 3 mornings we were there! The camping spot is highly recommended if you have a 4x4 or 2x4 with high clearance. It is right next to a river, with lots of firewood to make a fire (be sure to throw lots of water on it afterwards, as the surrounding forest is so dry it will burn quickly). You will have a view of the volcano, which is one of the more active volcanos in Chile and it erupted when we were there! Check this website to see how active it is now: www.volcanodiscovery.com/nevados_de_chillan.html



Camping place at Termas de Chillán



Erupting Volcano Chillán

We had a drawing from an older report of a trail going south 500 meters past the police office ([-36.91391, -71.46906](#)). We found all the reference points like the big tree stump, but couldn't find a

trail south. There are however lots of openings between the bamboo patches and looking on google maps we followed the most open 'path' going through the bamboo. We heard several **Chucao Tapaculos**, and after staking out the bamboo patch it was coming from we managed to see two of them (but they are way more common further south). We heard **Chestnut-throated Huet-huets** further south near the river, but even though we tried all morning, we couldn't find a trail leading there from the coordinates mentioned above. From the same coordinates there is a trail going north, but we only saw common birds on it. Conclusion: if you found the same map; forget about it and try the trail below.

We tried a trail close to the river the next morning (but quite late as we watched the erupting volcano till late). You can park your car on the parking area next to the river ([-36.91586, -71.45829](#)). This path goes through some good forest, and we heard at least 5-6 Huet-huets. Waiting at one patch of bamboo delivered us a quick sighting of a **Chestnut-throated Huet-huet**. At this same spot there was a small trail leading towards the river. There we heard and eventually saw a **Magellanic Tapaculo**.

Walking the main path further added another female **Magellanic Woodpecker** to the list. After a few hundred meters the path will exit the beautiful forest and from there on it's not worth continuing any further (there will be a fence after 1km anyways).

On our last morning we went to this same trail again, but now earlier (around 07.00) and immediately after parking the car we saw two **Chestnut-throated Huet-huets** at the beginning of the trail. They were busy turning over leaves with their gigantic feet and ran across the path. Waiting at the side of the trail for about 0,5h finally gave us stupendous views of a juvenile bird! Afterwards we heard **Chucao Tapaculo** and again the **Magellanic Tapaculo** on the same spot as the day before.



Chestnut-throated Huet-huet

Chestnut-throated Huet-huet

Temuco, Cerro Ñielol

[-38.72902, -72.58788](#)

Visited dates: 25 November 2021

Accommodation: There will be plenty of accommodations in the city. We slept in our car at a Copec gas station and went here on route to the next place.

General Information: open on Tuesday – Sunday 08:00-16:00, closed on Mondays and between 13:00-14:00

A nice forested park with chances of some good species, especially *Rufous-tailed Hawk*. We had a really quiet walk here and saw commoner species like *Black-faced Ibis*, *Chilean Pigeon* and *Green-backed Firecrown*. We did see a *Chucao Tapaculo* and *Magellanic Tapaculo* at a small stream. We also had *Slender-billed Parakeets* flying over our heads. Unfortunately we didn't see *Des Murs's Wiretail*, *Black-throated Huet-huet* or *Ochre-flanked Tapaculo* here.

Pucón/Volcán Villarrica

[-39.27807, -71.97851](#)

Visited dates: 25-28 November 2021

Accommodation: Again iOverlander helped us to a great camping spot at the foot of the volcano, with great views of the lake on the other side ([-39.37815, -71.94657](#)). You need a 2x4 with high clearance to get to this point, there is no running water and it can get cold at night, so be prepared:)

This is not the typical birding stop, but it will be a great location to include. Especially if you or your travel companions don't want to be birding the whole holiday this is a scenic place. Pucón is a nice little town with all the necessities you might need, but still small enough to have that nice vibe. On the north side of town there is a public beach where you can swim in the lake. The parks in the village are the best place to see *Slender-billed Parakeets* in the trees, and you will see them flying by multiple times when in town.



Volcan Villarrica at daytime



Volcan Villarrica at night

A nice trail to bird if you are here is Sendero los Crateres. It starts more or less where we camped ([-39.37788, -71.94606](#)). You will leave the good forest and enter low vegetation. Birding-wise there is no reason to continue any further than this. If you want to see a beautiful view, then walk up to the first viewpoint though. The second viewpoint shows some old small lava tunnels and air bubbles that escaped from it. Nice geological formations, but not worth the walk in our opinion.

On the way back it got dark when we went out of the forest. Right at the first open patch we heard and eventually saw two Rufous-legged Owls.

The first part takes you through open lava fields with great close up views from the volcano. We found **White-browed Ground-tyrant**, **Dark-faced Ground-tyrant** and **Yellow-bridled Finch** here. We also had a dark morph **Variable Hawk** flying by, which looked like but wasn't the hoped for Rufous-tailed Hawk. After 700m this moderate trail enters really beautiful forest. The forest exists of old trees, full of holes and overgrown with moss. The forest floor is covered with bamboo. Birding was slow, but we had good species here. We had multiple sightings of **Magellanic Woodpecker** (pay attention to the amazing sound if they fly by! :o). Suddenly, at one of the ditches we had to cross, a **Black-throated Huet-huet** jumped on an overhanging bamboo stick and started calling. It went on for about 10-15 seconds. In the hope of it returning we waited, and then a **Chucoa Tapaculo** hopped by underneath the bushes. To finish the show a **Magellanic Tapaculo** showed up and started calling as well at this very same spot! ([-39.3772, -71.934](#)). We also had **Thintree lizard** *Liolaemus tenuis* again in the forest.

Walking further will get you to a small stream, which is another good place for **Chucoa Tapaculo**. It is even signposted with an information board. Soon after this stream you will leave the good forest and enter low vegetation. Birding-wise there is no reason to continue any further than this. If you want to see a beautiful view, then walk up to the first viewpoint though. The second viewpoint shows some old small lava tunnels and air bubbles that escaped from it. Nice geological formations, but not worth the walk in our opinion, unless you also want to see **Volcán Villarrica lizard** *Liolaemus villaricensis*.

On the way back it got dark when we went out of the forest. Right at the first open patch we heard and eventually saw two **Rufous-legged Owls**.

If you camp up here as well you might hear **Rufous-legged Owls** from both forested sides and **Band-winged Nightjars** down the valley at night, as well as **Black-throated Huet-huets** in the morning.

Spotlighting the main road one night yielded 2 **South-American Grey Foxes** and many introduced **European Hares** and **European Rabbits**.



Magellanic Woodpecker

Black-throated Huet-huet

Puyehue National Park

[-40.73697, -72.31008](#)

Visited dates: 29-30 November 2021

Accommodation: There is a hotel and a camping in the NP. We slept in our car on one of the small parking lots higher up on the road, which was not very busy with cars (outside of the weekend and main tourist season probably).

General information: The NP and trails around Aguas Calientes are free. Officially you have to register with CONAF (the corporation overseeing the NP's) if you walk one of the trails, but no one really seemed to care.

El Recodo

[-40.73661, -72.3071](#)

This is a small, easy walking, interpretive trail. We parked right at the entrance alongside the road and walked in from there. We were the only ones in the morning around 08.00. We had multiple **Chucao Tapaculos** near more open patches of bamboo about 50m from the entrance. Because this part is more open this is a good place to actually see instead of just hearing them. Before the bridge (to the main entrance) we had two **Black-throated Huet-huets** foraging on the side of the path. At the picnic area there are some natural pools next to the river, which range from cold to really hot! They are free and a lovely place to hang out in the evening (and way better than the paid pool on the other side of the river). Right from these natural tubs we saw **Dark-bellied Cinclodes** foraging along the river, and we heard **Chucao Tapaculo** and **Magellanic Tapaculo**. We even had a **Ringed Kingfisher** and **Slender-billed Parakeets** flying by!

The rest of the trail is a loop and was not really rewarding for us. There is one lookout at the river which has a small rapid, which is potentially a good place for **Torrent Ducks**. I just hope the ducks know this as well.



Thermal baths next to the river

Chucao Tapaculo

Mirador Laguna el Espejo

[-40.74175, -72.32528](#)

Driving up the main road you will pass two lakes, which are a great places for coffee. There are some sightings of *Ochre-flanked Tapaculo* alongside the lakes, but we had no luck tapping at every stream and waterbody with a bamboo patch we passed.

We also spotlighted the main road from Aguas Calientes up to Sendero La Paraiso. We had eyeshine about 4-5m high up in a bamboo patch, but we failed to see it properly, not even with the heat scope. There were bats flying above the lakes (*Myotis spec.* most likely) and above the road. Besides an introduced **European Rabbit** we had no luck spotting anything else. Going back down we had eyeshine in the exact same patch as on our way up, but this time it was lower. Again, we couldn't see it properly, but with 99% certainty this was a **Monito del Monte** (especially looking back on this moment after we saw one on Chiloé). We had a calling **Rufous-legged Owl** further down the main road.

Sendero La Paraiso

[-40.77629, -72.26306](#)

After you pass Lago Toro there is a small parking spot on the right hand side of the road with a sign next to it. This is the start of the trail to Lago La Paraiso. We recommend just walking the first (easy) 900m of this trail ([-40.77971, -72.27205](#)), or if you are feeling optimistic the first 1,7km till the bridge crossing the stream. After this the habitat changes and birding-wise it's not really interesting anymore. The trail also gets more moderate. On our way in we stopped almost every 50m because there was a **Black-Throated Huet-huet** calling next the trail, or another **Chucao Tapaculo** (we saw like 10 of them) had crossed the path again. **Magellanic Tapaculo** was heard multiple times as well, and seen once. We also had 3 **Des Murs' Wiretails** in a bamboo patch right next to the path, while a Huet-huet was calling for attention from the tree next to it and a Chucao was 'miaowing' from the shrubs next to us.



Des Murs' Wiretail

Lake view

Chiloé – Northern side

[-41.8135, -73.49096](#)

Visited dates: 30 November – 2 December 2021

How to get there: if you follow Ruta 5 Sur, and get off at Camino Pargua you will drive into the little town called 'Pargua'. There will be people directing you towards the dock where the next ferry will leave from as soon as you drive into town. The cost of the ferry depends on the size of the car, but will

be around 13.000 CLP (16 USD). You can pay this by card or in cash on the boat itself. No need to reserve, there are multiple ferries leaving every 15-30 minutes.

Pargua – Chacao Viejo Ferry Crossing

[-41.8135, -73.49096](#)

The ferry is a good opportunity to get out of your car and spot some birds and mammals. As pedestrians can get on the ferry for free, we took it again going forth and back, leaving our car on Chiloé. We spotted 3 **Pink-footed Shearwaters**, 1 **Magellanic Diving-petrel** and several **Snowy-crowned Terns**, as well as more common species. Unfortunately we missed out on the **Pincoya Petrels**, which are sometimes seen in great numbers. We also saw multiple **South-American Sea Lions** and 3 **Peale's Dolphins**. **Chilean Dolphins** are seen from the ferry as well, but we didn't see them. We had more than 100 **Black-necked Swans** and 2 **Flightless Steamer Ducks** at the docks when we arrived. We drove towards the east coast and saw **South-American Sea Lions** and **Peale's Dolphin** from the shore as well.



Black-necked Swans on the Chiloé side of the ferry crossing

Caulin Bay

[-41.82382, -73.63756](#)

This bay has a lot of potential for observing waders. Unfortunately we arrived at low tide, and all the waders were far away. From what we could identify they were mostly **Whimbrels** and a bunch of **Hudsonian Godwits**. **Rufous-chested Dotterel** can be spotted here as well. Try to arrive a few hours before high tide (www.tides4fishing.com/cl/los-lagos/canal-de-chacao).

Estacion Asturial de Quempillen

[-41.86979, -73.76856](#)

We went here mainly to have another chance of seeing Ochre-flanked Tapaculo. You can park on the right side just before the bridge. As there is a lot of (coastal) development going on, we were afraid this place was ruined. Luckily it isn't totally (...yet). One place to try for the Tapaculo is on the southern edge of the forest patch, on the west side of the road you just passed before parking. There is a fence with a gate which was a bit open when we were there. The southern side of the forest has some large bamboo patches and seems like great habitat. We didn't get any response from the Tapaculo though.

On the other side of the street there is a small passage between the fences of the property with the green-roofed houses on the south and the new buildings on the north. The path was quite overgrown when we were there, but we took it anyways. Walking in about 100-150m we heard multiple **Ochre-flanked Tapaculos**! Squatting down and waiting for some time we were even able to observe it between the entanglement of shrubs, and we even managed to get a picture. Happy as we could be that we got our proof-picture we decided to wait a bit more. Luck was on our side as one of the two Tapaculos jumped out of the shrubs onto a branch where we were able to get awesome photos! If you have a hard time connecting with this species like we did, then this place seems like your best chance on seeing this species.



Ochre-flanked Tapaculo habitat

Ochre-flanked Tapaculo

Puñihuil

[-41.92976, -74.03273](#)

Puñihuil is nothing more than a strip of sandy beach with some restaurants and tourist companies next to it. The strip of sand actually functions as a road as well (as long as it's not very high tide), and even the smallest and lowest cars make it across. Puñihuil is an accessible spot for **Magellanic Penguins**. We spotted about 40 penguins on the rocks of the islands about 250m away just from the beach. There

are plenty tour companies eager to take you closer to these fellas if you're into that. We also had **Kelp Goose** and many vultures up close (from where they actually look pretty!)



Kelp Goose



Turkey Vulture

A mammal target here is the **Marine Otter**. However, the boatmen said it wasn't the best time because they would be staying with their young closer to their den (holt). Also, the numbers of Marine Otters have gone down here. I talked to multiple Chileans from the tour companies, and they all just saw one every now and then. Apparently there has been an algae bloom (Marea Roja) a few years ago which produces a toxin, which killed a lot of bivalves and other food of the Otters. They said the Otters were common until about 2-3 years ago, but now they are rather scarce. If you still want to give it a try, then be sure to come in January – March, which should be a bit better (but still...). I asked around at different places on the island, naturalist guides etc., but there don't seem to be any better places to try for this species on Chiloé.

Another great mammal (literally) is the **Blue Whale**. They pass by from December till March. None had been spotted when we were there the 2nd of December. We tried to spot them ourselves from the viewpoint Muelle El Caleuche, entree fee 1500CLP p.p. ([-41.92744, -74.03987](#)). In January-March they do whale tours, going 5km from the shore to spot the whales. Supposedly the whales come closer in February-March, and can even be spotted inside the bay. There is a research paper that spotted multiple Blue Whales from the viewpoint as well.

We went back another afternoon to Ancud (a bit northeast of Puñihuil) because a naturalist guide had seen a pod of **Orcas** the day before, hunting just before the beach north of Ancud. We waited and watched for blows and fins the whole afternoon, but without a positive result.

Chiloé - Chepu

[-42.04874, -73.97384](#)

Visited dates: 2-4 December 2021

Chepu is the place to search for **Southern River Otters**. As our first try we drove the road to Anguay, and asked a farmer if it was ok to use their road to get to the river. He was totally fine with it, so we

sat the whole afternoon at this spot ([-42.05659, -73.93077](#)), searching for Otters. We spotted one **Coypu** and some common birds, but no Otters.

The best way to search for this mammal is by boat. Once you drive into Chepu you will cross a wooden bridge. Directly after this bridge on your right hand side is the place of Javier, with whom most people search for the Huillin/Gato del Rio. He was not there though, and neither was his dad who lives one house further. Javier also didn't answer my phone calls and texts, so we decided to search for someone else to help us find the Otters. About 100m before the wooden bridge (uphill) is the place of Alfonso Vergara R. (+56 9 83 51 59 46). A friendly older man who was happy to take us at 06.00 in the morning to search for Otters (30.000 CLP for about 3,5 hours). We went up the Rio Puntra, and also went on a side branch of it a bit east of Anguay. The surreal landscape with dead trees along the river originates from a tsunami in 1960.



Searching for Southern River Otters

The old men hasn't seen too many Otters if I understood him right. This would also explain why he pointed fiercely at every Coypu we came across. As it was early, dark and quite misty it was a bit hard to spot any mammal. One animal looked pretty good, until I got it in my binoculars and saw it was another **Coypu**. Alfonso however was convinced this was an Otter (or 'Gato del Rio' in Spanish), because according to him Coypu don't dive underwater. After a minute I decided agreeing to disagree was better, and I was happy the next 5 Coypus proved my point that they do indeed dive underwater as well. We counted 20 Coypus on our way back (no double counts). Another try in the afternoon yielded 44 Coypus, but no River Otter. Alfonso said the Rio Butalcura, going south, was off limits, so we decided that 7 hours on the water was enough trying and we had to cut our losses.



Coypu

Coypu

Alfonzo said that he had seen the Otters in the small stream behind his house later at night one day. So we decided to wait there in the afternoon. While talking to Romy I thought I spotted something black in the corner of the river. Thinking I must have seen a branch moving I continued talking. Then again I saw a black tail going into the water. It was behind some branches, so we couldn't see it properly. Then we saw a part of a black head behind the branches. "That must be an Otter", we said! But it was way smaller and darker than we thought it would be. "Maybe it's a young?!" It didn't come back, so I decided to grab one of the kanos that was lying in the shed (if you read this, I'm sorry Alfonso :) and went on the stream to search for it. Not far around the corner I saw the blackish little tail again between some branches. I positioned the kano between some sticks to prevent it from moving and got my camera ready. It came out in the open, sitting on a tree trunk. What a sight! And I started firing my camera as fast as it could go. I thought about how these must be the best pictures of any young Southern River Otter ever. But then I saw it even clearer... small, quite hairy, blackish, and with a white patch around the chin... And then I remembered that Mink has been introduced here as well... and then I felt like the worst mammal watcher ever! What a deception. Ah, whatever, let's make the best of this moment and make sure these are the best pictures I've ever taken of an **American Mink**.



Coypu

American Mink

Chiloé – Tantauco NP

[-43.11626, -73.94378](#)

Visited dates: 4-8 December 2021

How to get there: This private park only exists since 2005. The road leading to the entrance is not very good, but in the dry season driveable with a normal sedan. Our car 'Forrest' took us to the first entrance in 45 minutes ([-43.01631, -73.78189](#)). This is the area where you can go for one day, and do some hikes from there. We continued to the camping area 'Chaiguata', another bumpy 1 hour drive. Totally worth it however! We paid 6000 CLP total per night because we had a campervan, and that includes the entrance fee, overnight stay, Wi-Fi at the reception (whole day), electricity (07.00-11.00 and 19.00-23.00) and warm showers (same times as the electricity)! These are low season prices, but even mid- and high-season prices are good (up to 15.000 CLP per night for 2). The tranquillity of this place is

amazing. You don't hear any city noises, cars or whatever and the only thing you see are lakes and forests! What a luxury!



Tantauco Camping Area

Nothing but forest, forest and more forest

We read about *Darwin's Foxes* being habituated by the park rangers at the first gate, and we were hoping such an animal would be present. None of that all, and the guard at the first gate even laughed at the idea of getting to see a Darwin's Fox there.

We didn't come to Tantauco for the birds, and neither should you. Birding is very slow around the main area and along the shorter trails that you will most likely walk if you stay here for 2-3 days: Sendero Borderlago (1km), Bosque Hundido (2km) and Los Ñirros (5km). We saw two *Des Murs' Wiretails* in front of the parking, and a *Magellanic Woodpecker* fly by. On the Bosque Hundido we only heard *Chucao Tapaculo*, and on the Los Ñirros trail we had 2 *Chilean Flickers*, one *Chucao Tapaculo* and as a surprise a flushed *Magellanic Snipe*.

The reason we came here (besides the amazingness of the place itself) are the mammals! This park lies within one of the 25 biodiversity hotspots in the world. Mammal prizes here are Kodkod, Darwin's Fox, Southern Pudu, Monito del Monte and Southern River Otter. However, finding them turned out to be way more difficult than we expected. On the first night we went spotlighting we had a male *Southern Pudu* right around the first bend in the road. As he seemed very indifferent of us, we stepped out of the car, and in the dark I fell. No pain, so all fine?! Until I lifted my binoculars and saw 2 Pudus! Turned out my binos had gotten a shock and got double vision and to be honest, that hurts! So we turned around and went emailing our insurance etc. Later that night we did give spotlighting another try from 23.30 – 01.00 and we saw a total of 4 Pudus in 1,5 hours/12km. The second night we spotlighted 2 hours from 22.00 – 00.00 and drove about 20km total. The result: 7 *Southern Pudu* sightings, most likely 6 different individuals. On the third night we spotlighted the main road again, but way slower. The vegetation seems quite dense when driving past, but if you drive very slowly (letting the 2nd gear do the work, not even touching the gas pedal so to say), you can shine towards the sides and spot mammals in between the shrubs as well. We drove a total of 8km between 22.20 – 23.50 and saw a total of 8 Pudus, but most of them in between the ferns, unnoticeable if you would drive past them a little bit faster. We also had eyeshine between shrubs further away, which seemed different from the Pudus. It turned its head differently and then turned around quickly and was never seen away. Was

this the closest we've been to a *Darwin's Fox*? We'll never know. To summarize: lots of Southern Pudu (1 for every 2km we drove, with the best part being the first 300m from the camping area). These animals seem pretty much guaranteed here, but we saw nothing else mammal-wise. **Band-winged Nightjars** were common too, we saw multiple every night drive. Looking on google maps again later after this trip we figured the first 10km from the first gate might actually be better habitat for the fox and cat than the last 10km to the camping area, but that might just be a gut feeling.



Southern Pudu



Band-winged Nightjar

To have another chance at *Southern River Otter* we decided to walk the Sendero Chaiguaca trail for one day (16km/8h). Guards said that chances were low, but that they sometimes spotted the animal in the river between the two lakes. It turned out to be a very long and quite tedious walk, without too many views of the river. Where we could we searched the river, but without any luck. We did spot a **Southern Pudu** along the riverside from far away and later on we stumbled into 2 male Pudus along the track! We did see a lot of evidence of *Darwin's Fox* being present in the form of faeces on the trail, and one of them was as fresh as they get... but unfortunately we didn't get to see the owner.

A better option would be to rent a kayak and go up the river that way, although I doubt if it's worth the effort for finding the Otter.

Driving away on the 5th day early in the morning (06.00) we hoped for a *Zorro Cholito (Darwin Fox)* crossing the road. However, the only thing we found was a (beautiful!) male **Southern Pudu**.



Southern Pudu



Southern Pudu

Chiloé – Yaldad

[-43.13033, -73.71272](#)

Visited dates: 8-9 December 2021

How to get there: Yaldad is located to the west of Quellón, the city at the end of Ruta 5 Sur. Google Maps or Maps.me will guide you on a good road (recently renewed) towards the harbour.

The bay at Yaldad is known to be good for **Chilean Dolphins**. We parked our car around 08.30 in the morning (low tide) in the harbour ([-43.1133, -73.71069](#)) and spotted a pod of 8 or more animals within seconds. They were quite far away on the left side, just in front and between the first mussel farms. We decided to try a bit further south ([-43.13033, -73.71272](#)) and also there we spotted another pod of about 5 individuals closer to the beach. We were able to observe them for about half an hour before they went away, out of sight due to the mussel farms. We drove along the coast and searched from different spots, but couldn't find any more cetaceans. We decided to stay the night at the second spot we observed the dolphins. The sea was really calm in the morning, as there was almost no wind. The afternoon however was very windy, which created a lot of waves. We didn't spot any dolphins the rest of the day anymore. The wind was quiet in the mornings and always gained power in the afternoon on Chiloé when we were there. It seems that mornings offer the best viewing conditions, also because the sun will be in your back.

The second day the sea was relatively calm again and after half an hour we observed a pod of about 8-9 **Chilean Dolphins** passing about 50m in front of us, from the south in the direction of the harbour. They hung out for a few hours, going back south and north again, so 'our' spot was the perfect observation point. A few times they even breached out of the water! What an amazing species!



Chilean Dolphins

Chilean Dolphins with the harbour in the background

Chiloé – Tepuhueico

[-42.77056, -73.97088](#)

Visited dates: 9-13 December 2021

How to get there: The condition of the road towards Tepuhueico Lodge is pretty good and also the first bridge with a 2 ton load held our car more than fine (which weighs more than 2 tons). The bridge

at the beginning of the reserve can be crossed by car as well, and you can drive into the reserve until a small parking lot halfway between the entrance and the lodge ([-42.75192, -73.96443](#)).

As we still missed our major mammal targets *Darwin's Fox (Zorro de Darwin/Zorro Cholito)* and *Kodkod* we headed over to Tepuhueico. Coming from the south we decided to first try another road south of Tepuhueico, on the other side of the lake. We drove about 20km into the forest, as far as we could on an acceptable road ([-42.86885, -73.95318](#)). This road is being used by loggers, and the road ended at a fence in front of a lumberjack house. The forest was pristine, except for the road and the roadside, as the road was created by just shoving the bushes and trees to the side. We waited till about 22.00 and spotlighted this road back till Ruta 5 Sur. We only had 4 **Southern Pudus** and a **Band-winged Nightjar** as a result.

The next day we went to Tepuhueico Lodge. When we arrived at the small parking lot halfway between the entrance and the lodge, there were two poles with a chain in between them, so we decided to walk from there to the hotel. We observed **Black-throated Huet-huet** and 2 **Des Murs' Wiretail** on the way.



Black-throated Huet-huet

Slender-billed Parakeet

Once at the lodge we spoke to the guy who maintains the lodge (I think he was called Alex, so let's call him that). They were busy rebuilding the lodge, the trails, the jetty and what not. It seems like they just let everything be for two years during Covid. I asked Alex if it was ok to spotlight at night and maybe even stay in our car at the parking lot we were at. Alex had to ask the owners, but in the end of the day it turned out they had no problem with that. We offered to pay extra money on top of the entrance fee indicated at the entrance (3000 CLP p.p. + 6000 CLP for a car), but they refused all the money. The Chilean tourists that walked the trails at the beforementioned parking lot didn't seem to pay anything either. Alex told us that the main road would yield only Pudus and that we would have to walk the trails at night. I wouldn't recommend this however, because the large trail (orange+red+blue trail) took us 2,5 hours at daytimes and involves many obstacles. Only the end part of the blue trail can be walked easily. We walked this trail from 21.00 and observed many **Slender-billed Parakeets** and a **Southern Pudu**. Then I saw two small eyes reflecting in the bamboo and I knew

instantly that we finally found our first (identifiable) **Monito del Monte**! What a small, cute fellas. We walked back and went on the main road towards the lodge but saw only Pudu. After 2 hours of walking we decided to spotlight by car to cover more distance. We spotlighted towards the T-intersection about 400m from the lodge, and then back to the entrance of the reserve, and the same another time (20km/2h). We had a total of 9 **Southern Pudu** sightings this evening, but no foxes or cats. Frustrating how easy it seems in some reports (multiple foxes crossing the road within a km of the lodge or foxes sitting at guard stations...). We were not sure if those people were just really lucky, or we were unlucky. The beginning of December might be less good because the cubs still have to get out or stay close to the den (so numbers will be higher in February/March). That said, reading the trip reports again it seems like most sightings were around the Tepuhueico lodge or in the area around the first gate at Tantauco. Maybe Covid has made the foxes less dependent on people and food, and they tend to hang out less around these areas nowadays. Alex said he hadn't seen any Zorro's around the lodge and said they tend to be more around the area of the parking lot we stayed at. He was only working here for 3 months yet, but he had seen Darwin's Foxes and Kodkod once.

**Monito del Monte****Monito del Monte**

The second day at Tepuhueico it was raining and quite windy. We went towards the West coast to see if there was any suitable habitat over there to spotlight at night. We did run into 3 different Pudu while driving, and the habitat looked promising. At night we drove back towards Tepuhueico, spotlighting the roads we explored at daytime from 21.00-22.00. Nothing to see (but it still had to get dark and it was quite windy). Then we spotlighted the road towards the lodge again forth and back. Again only Pudu sightings (4 this time). We were almost getting tired of these mammals (almost). Admittedly, they would make for a great drinking game. Every Pudu a sip.. a good way to forget about our Zorro's (pun intended). In the morning we drove the road again forth and back from 04.15 – 05.15... and guess what: 3 Pudu. We heard and saw 2 **Rufous-legged Owls** at the parking lot just before the bridge into the reserve. The third night we walked the pink trail (La Nalca/3km one way) forth and back. If well maintained this might be a good spotlighting trail, but now it was a bit overgrown with Gunnera plants. We walked it forth and back (including a small part of the blue trail) from 19.45 – 22.30. Result: 2 Pudu (nr. 50!). We spotlighted the main road towards the lodge forth and back again. Result: 3 Pudu. We spotlighted the main road again from 04.30 – 05.30. Guess what the result was?

Nothing! Not even Pudus. What a way to end our long search for Darwin's Fox and Kodkod. I do love the irony to be honest.

Chiloé – Ensenada Pullao

[-42.48984, -73.66058](#)

Visited date: 13 December 2021

As we had some extra time to spare due to a delay with the boat from Castro – Chaitén, we decided to go to a spot that looked good for cetaceans (as I got it from a research paper). We drove all the way to the beach, but we would advise you **not** to do that without a 4x4 (we got sort of stuck). Drive up to this point ([-42.48782, -73.66975](#)) and walk down to the beach. From this point we spotted 2 **Burmeister's Porpoises** with their unique dorsal fin within 10 minutes, and 8 (possibly more) **Peale's Dolphins**. We also had **Black Skimmers** feeding with their beak skimming the water (not uncommon on the island, but always beautiful to see). And besides that lots of waders, that mainly seem to concentrate in the northwest corner of the bay (Humedal de Pullao). In search of a better lookout we drove towards a small industrial harbour, which has a big parking in front of it ([-42.48984, -73.66058](#)). This is a very good lookout, close to the sea, but with a little height to give you a good view over the sea. Also from here we saw **Peale's Dolphins**, but couldn't find any more Porpoises. The road towards this place is steep, but with two bands of concrete instead of gravel on the steep parts. As long as your car has some power in it, it should make it. **Chilean Dolphins** are reported along the coast as well, but less around this point.



Rainbows at the Burmeister's spot



View from the second place (industrial harbour)

You made it! Thank you for reading 😊

For all photos of our Southern Chile trip, comments, compliments, any specific questions, visit and/or contact us via our website:

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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 part of Chile can be found on Observation.org. We observed a total of 98 bird species and (only) 8 mammal species in the region south of Santiago to Chiloé, Chile. Click here for the: [total bird list](#), [total mammal list](#) or [the total species list](#).

Top 5	Birds	Mammals
1	Black-throated Huet-huet	Southern Pudu
2	Chestnut-throated Huet-huet	Chilean Dolphin
3	Chucao Tapaculo (so cute!)	Monito del Monte
4	Slender-billed Parakeet	Peale's Dolphin
5	Magellanic Woodpecker	Burmeister's Porpoise

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On the Chepu River searching for Otters



Sleeping next to the Villarrica Volcano



Black Skimmer



Kelp Gull dropping a bivalve to break it