



**Tripreport Chile, Bolivia and Peru**  
**June 18<sup>th</sup> till September 18<sup>th</sup>**  
**2019**

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## **Tripreport Chile, Bolivia, Peru (June 18th till September 18<sup>th</sup> 2019)**

I always had the plan to go on a big trip when I would finish my studies and after much thinking and planning I decided to go to South-America. I wanted to work on my cat goals but also to work on my Spanish and see some nice birds of course. Mammalwise it was a bit ups and downs. It went very well in the first two weeks but after that things went a bit downhill. Mammalwatching.com was a big help in planning the trip. I will post more photos on my website [www.shutterednature.com](http://www.shutterednature.com) also with more background stories so for anyone who is interested, go to my website!

### **General comments**

This section might not interest people so much who already have travelled to South-America, but I just wanted to put some things out there.

#### **Language**

I wouldn't go do a trip in South-America without knowing a single word of Spanish. Honestly, it's not that hard and some words are very useful. In all the hostels I've slept in only a few of the staff spoke a reasonable amount of English. You will probably be all right, but things will be so much easier if you know just a few words. Also comes in handy when you get arrested in the middle of the night...

#### **Transport**

**Planes:** I've taken about four regular flights in Chile and then another one in Bolivia and one in Peru. I also took Cessna flights in Bolivia. In general I would recommend booking in advance, I had a flawless experience with all the companies I've flown with (LATAM and SKY in Chile, BOA in Bolivia and SKY again in Peru). My flight in Bolivia I booked at the counter just two hours before departure and that worked fine, but I've also heard from friends in Bolivia that you can get an abnormally high price at the counter. In that case it might be smart to book in advance. For me this worked because I didn't know for sure if I would be in time. I'll go into more detail about the Cessna flights in the section specifically about Bolivia.

**Buses:** A very common way of transport to travel large distances is by bus. I have travelled with them from Chile to Bolivia and then from Bolivia to Peru. I don't remember all the companies anymore but I would always recommend to go for a 'Bus Cama'. These are the more luxury buses that have seats that can recline much more than normal seats and allow for pretty good sleeping. Also I would recommend for single travellers to reserve a single seat in advance. A company I would recommend in Peru is Cruz del Sur, these buses are very luxury. You even get a complementary meal (barely edible though) and a stewardess! Sometimes it might be more effective to take a plane anyway, but you'll have to figure that out on your own.

**Taxi's:** I must say I had pretty good experiences all around with taxi's. I only took taxi's in Bolivia and Peru. In Bolivia they never tried to rip me off. In Peru I also had a pretty good experience only those guys try to charge a bit more sometimes, but not really outrageous prices. A thing I can recommend in Peru is colectivo's. These are shared minibuses that allow you to cover large distances cheaply. I took one from Cuzco (Peru) to Hydroelectrico which is a place from which you can walk to Machu Picchu.

**Self-drive:** I only did this in Chile. Roads are good, I recommend Sunnycars.com to rent your car with. They will cover any damage you might have and it will save you from having to buy extra packages over there. In Bolivia and Peru I would think a bit harder about self-drive. Depending on where you are traffic can be challenging and there is also a higher chance of getting in trouble with greedy police officers. I don't think I would do it in Bolivia, in Peru I might.

### **Apps**

In this digital world you can't go without apps, honestly 😊. I can recommend a few that came in very handy.

**Duolingo:** a free app handy for learning some Spanish, I got by with the things I learned from this app for most of my trip until I went to the language school where I learned some proper Spanish. This is more of an app for before your trip though.

**Maps.me:** Most people probably know it already but if not: you need it! A very handy app for offline navigation, also has ATMs, hostels and petrol stations in it among other things. Locations of petrol stations can be a bit out of date though, as we discovered in Chile.

**IOverlander:** a very handy app that I can recommend for finding good hostels/hotels, camping sights, shops and a lot more. The Android version will allow you to save up data offline if you have first looked at it.

**Moovit:** recommended to me for the public transport in Cuzco. I ended up using only taxi's in Peru, but I works well I think.

**Uber:** everybody probably knows this app, very much used in Bolivia. Also good for checking how much a ride approximately should cost you if you end up using a taxi.

**Merlin:** handy app for birds, I used it for Chile. It did not have Bolivia or Peru.

**Birds of Peru:** for birds in Peru 😊.

I would recommend trying to have all books digitalized, it's not worth it to bring hard copies with you as I have found.

### **Sim card**

If you are there for a longer time I would recommend buying a local sim card. I did that in Bolivia and Peru. For Bolivia I recommend going to Entel which is the largest company there and for Peru to Claro, Claro even has coverage in the Amazon! It's not hard to buy one, just go to a shop from the company and ask to buy a sim card. They will help you with that. Knowing Spanish is recommended, otherwise you are going to have to work it out with hands and feet.

### **Police**

I've had multiple run-ins with the police in Chile, so I can give much information on them from a personal perspective 😊. In general I would trust a Chilean police officer. They have a reputation that they cannot be bribed, I did not test it out but I've heard stories about people who have and it did not end well for them (you'll get heavily fined if you're lucky). I had a rather eventful experience

with them high up in the Andes. We were held up by a police car in the middle of the night in Lauca and then held at gunpoint. About six guys with long automatic rifles, some balaclava's and all a finger to the trigger. They looked pretty nervous too. It eventually turned out they were looking for Bolivian smugglers and we were let go. We had another encounter a couple of days after but these guys were much more relaxed. When we had a flat tire the police really helped us out with their satellite phone.

Police in Bolivia I have had no encounters with. I would recommend to avoid those though. From my Dutch contact in Bolivia I heard that he was held up by a police officer when he went for a long drive with his brother and was asked to pay a 200 dollars fine. He was able to negotiate it down to 200 Bolivianos, but still had to pay. I believe he had to pay the same amount to the same officer on the way back. As with all corrupt police officers, normal tricks probably apply. Just do what you think is best in such a situation, in any case I would never cough up the amount they first asked for straight away. You can probably at least get the price down. It also might work to say that you only have creditcards on you, people I know said this worked very well with corrupt police officers in multiple African countries.

Police in Peru doesn't seem to be so much out there to get you like the police in Bolivia. You will be able to get out of drunk driving probably by bribing off the officer, as I've heard someone say. I must say I did not have any encounters with Peruvian police officers so I cannot speak from experience.

## Chile

I went to Chile with the main goal of seeing four cats: Puma, Kodkod, Andean Mountain Cat and Pampa's Cat. To do that I visited Torres del Paine, Chiloé, Lauca National Park and Parque Nacional de las Vicunas, which is not Lauca but is called Lauca in other reports. I did this trip with Janco van Gelderen with whom I had already done a successful trip for Sand Cat, he has also posted a tripreport of the Chilean part so there will be a lot of overlap between these reports on this part.

Note: in some areas it can be handy to have some extra gas with you, for that you should go to the COPEC fuel stations. They have 10liter and 20liter cans, also they have hotdogs 😊.

CONAF runs the parks as described in earlier reports. With no exception their rangers were all very nice people that are more than willing to help you with information to see animals. Make sure you speak a bit of Spanish though. Especially in Lauca (Parque de las Vicunas) I would recommend talking to one of the rangers first before spotlighting, they will write down your name and then tell you that you can do pretty much whatever you like over there. In Tantauco they told us it was no problem for us to do night drives in the park.

### Tripschedule

#### June

19: Flight Amsterdam-Santiago

20: Flight Santiago-Punta Arenas, drive to Puerto Natales

21: Time spent in Torres del Paine

22: Time spent in Torres del Paine

23: Time spent in Torres del Paine

24: Morning spent in Torres del Paine, drive back to Punta Arenas

25: Ferry crossing Punta Arenas – Tierra del Fuego

26: Tierra del Fuego

27: Flight Punta Arenas – Puerto Montt, drive and ferry crossing to Chiloé (nightdrive on LaCuy)

28: Chiloé (visit Tepuhueico)

29: Chiloé (visit Tantauco)

30: Ferry back to Puerto Montt

#### July

01: Flight Puerto Montt – Santiago, drive to La Serena

02: Watch Solar Eclipse near Observatory La Silla

- 03: Drive back, visited Valparaiso
- 04: Flight Santiago – Arica, drive to Putre
- 05: Staying near Putre
- 06: Drive to Guallatiri, spotlighting at Salar de Surire
- 07: Spotlighting at Salar de Surire
- 08: Spotlighting at Salar de Surire
- 09: Spotlighting at Salar de Surire
- 10: Go back because of car trouble
- 11: Staying in Arica
- 12: Going back to Putre
- 13: Spotlighting near Lago Chungarà
- 14: Spotlighting near Lago Chungarà
- 15: Spotlighting near Lago Chungarà
- 16: Drive back to Arica
- 17: Visit Arica Harbour, bus to Bolivia in the evening.

### **Description of the areas visited**

I will describe in more detail on how to get certain species in the list of observed species.

### **Patagonia (Torres del Paine and Tierra del Fuego)**

Note that Puerto Natales is still a 2 hour drive from Torres del Paine. We camped one night in Torres, but it was quite cold because we didn't bring all the gear. I would recommend doing this as it saves you the drives back. In any case you will have to get your gas in Puerto. Driving in Torres is fine, no challenging roads. Normal car would suffice, roads can get slippery but they only rent out cars with spiked tires I believe. Note that in winter your options for operational camping sites are limited, we found one open near Lago Pehoe. The hotel near Lago Pehoe also always open, you can go for some good food there. Conditions were good when we were in the park, note that there is almost no wind in winter. I've heard that in summer the wind can be pretty tough. Of course you have less light in winter, it's light around 8.00 and around 17.30 it's dark. The benefit of going in winter would be less people, lower prices and no wind.

Tierra del Fuego can be reached from the mainland through the ferry from Punta Arenas, this one takes about two hours. It's pretty expensive and it doesn't go every day, so look up the schedule if you plan to do that. It gives you a nice opportunity to try for some whales and other seamonsters and I saw my first albatross there. The other ferry goes from Punta Delgada and is about half an hour. Interestingly we saw more mammals from this ferry so perhaps it might be worth it to take this one a couple of more times. Be aware that the nearest fuel station is in Punta Arenas! I would suggest to remember to get a full tank when you leave from Porvenir (on Tierra del Fuego). We forgot and managed to get on our last drops in Punta Arenas (cost me an opportunity to search for Magallanic Plover).

### **Chiloé**

Interesting island, the ferry to it will probably get you albatrosses and other nice seabirds. We did not see mammals as far as I can remember but sealions are certainly a big possibility there. Everyone burns wood to get the houses warm so the larger places are pretty smoggy, also because it's often misty. The countryside looks Englandlike, grassy hills and the houses reminded me of that. Note that spotlighting in the countryside might be good for Kodkod but won't give you much else, it's quite boring. The two parks you probably want to go to are Tepuhueico and Tantauco.

The last one is a great park, well-regulated and easily accessible. The road is tarred, but not great and there are some pretty steep slopes. Although it's possible to drive it with a regular car (and we did) I would recommend renting a pickup truck for this. We skipped on spotlighting at night in the park, because we were afraid we would get into car trouble. They had no problem with us doing that though, so definitely consider doing that if you want to get Darwin's Fox and Kodkod (I will go into more detail on that at the respective species).

Tepuhueico is harder to access. Nowadays it has a good steel hanging bridge, which would make it possible to access the park by foot. If you've got a 4x4 you can drive right up to the bridge, as long as a storm hasn't blown trees over the road (which was the case with us), a local farmer got rid of them and then we got a ride from someone else to the bridge. We parked our car at the farm. The farm is about 5km from the bridge. Getting into contact with the people from the park is about impossible I would say. There is a website and a Facebook page from the hotel that is located in the park but they don't reply. We went in there on our own on foot and didn't encounter anyone, Janco went back on his own another day and did encounter a van on the road in the park but they didn't give him any trouble. We did not pay anything. Note that both parks are private and not national parks.

### **Santiago, Valparaiso, La Serena**

Not much to report on that, nice for other kinds of birds but I can't remember seeing an (exciting) mammals here.

### **Arica**

There is a wetland that might be good to get you some foxes. The harbour has sealions which are very easy to see because they get fed by the fishermen. For whalewatching tours we were off season apparently. The caves (Las Cuevas and then something, you'll know it if you're there), still have their Marine Otter so that's a must-do stop I would say. You can get tanks of gas at the COPEC fuel

stations, we bought four 20 litre tanks and I would say that gives you about a week driving max. You can get fuel in Putre, but it's more expensive, at Guallatiri there is no fuel.

### **Putre and the area around it alongside the big road to Bolivia**

Putre is a small place where people go to putrify... At least that's what someone in Bolivia told me. It's probably the last place that has working Wifi and hot showers so enjoy it while you can. I can recommend hostel Pachamama, because it's cheap and has the above mentioned things. Also it's pretty nice, has a table tennis table and a nice bar. When leaving from Putre in the direction of Bolivia, right after you leave Putre there is another road that goes in the same direction. I would recommend always driving that road because it makes it far more easier to stop and it's also the place to see Taruco. We also saw some nice birds there.

Lago Chungarà is the big lake near the border with Bolivia. A bit before that there is a road that leads to the village of Parinacota. We saw huge amounts of Viscachas there. Not cat's sadly. You can drive some kind of a loop there, we had several Andean Foxes there as well. Not much else though.

### **Guallatiri and the road to Salar the Surire**

Guallatiri is the place to stay in if you want to explore this area. It has one hostel, reservation will probably not be necessary but if you want to I would recommend trying the phone number mentioned in Ben Schweinharts report or emailing to this address: [macgaete@hotmail.com](mailto:macgaete@hotmail.com) the woman answering it is called Macarena (she is not the one that has the hostel though, probably some kind of contact that has good internet access and speaks English). The people at the hostel do not speak English. Apparently there is a possibility to have a hot shower if you pay for it, but we did not explore it and I doubt it was indeed possible. The area there looks nice for the first two days (really nice rock formations) and then you are bored to death. Honestly it is so boring, barely any birds during the day and no mammals during the night. Getting a mammal here is hard work, I will go into more detail about this on the species list.

Roads are drivable with normal car, I would recommend renting a pickup truck for this though. The roads reminded me of the gravel roads in Namibia. I wasn't surprised when we go a flat tire with our Mazda 3 (which is also a car with a very low bumper), because I had so many flat tires driving the roads in Namibia. I can say it is not worth the risk, you will spend a lot of time getting all the way back to Arica with the risk that your spare tire also goes flat, which ours did. It was some kind of motorbike tire that clearly was not meant for the challenging roads we drove, we had to wait till dusk for a car to pick us up and had a lot of sorting out to do with the rental company afterwards.

By the way if you run into any kind of trouble in Arica I would recommend going to the hostel Dona Ines, the owner Roberto speaks very good English and know everybody there. He will take you with his nice cabrio to the rental company, just make sure to get him in the morning because around two pm he will open his first beer... Also if you want to give him some Pisco Sour as a thank you, be prepared to empty the bottle the same evening 😊.



## Species observed in Chile

Go to my life list on Observation.com for the exact locations:

[https://chile.observation.org/user/lifelists/47799?user=47799%2F&g=2&local\\_list=0&local\\_list=1&fam=0&jaar=0&maand=0&from=1800-01-01&to=2019-09-27&prov=0&rar=0&s%5B%5D=S&s%5B%5D=I&akt\\_g=0&method=0&met\\_absolute=0&kle\\_g=0&exo=0&esc=0&incm=0&export\\_log=0](https://chile.observation.org/user/lifelists/47799?user=47799%2F&g=2&local_list=0&local_list=1&fam=0&jaar=0&maand=0&from=1800-01-01&to=2019-09-27&prov=0&rar=0&s%5B%5D=S&s%5B%5D=I&akt_g=0&method=0&met_absolute=0&kle_g=0&exo=0&esc=0&incm=0&export_log=0). I have only included the species I've seen myself.

### 1. Southern Viscacha (*Lagidium viscacia*):

Easy to get near Parinacota, also easy to get at the ranger station near Salar de Surire which is mentioned in multiple reports. Getting this species won't prove difficult at all.

### 2. Kodkod (*Leopardus guigna*)

I was extremely lucky in getting this one I think. It was over in a flash though as Janco mentioned in his report: he missed it while walking next to me...

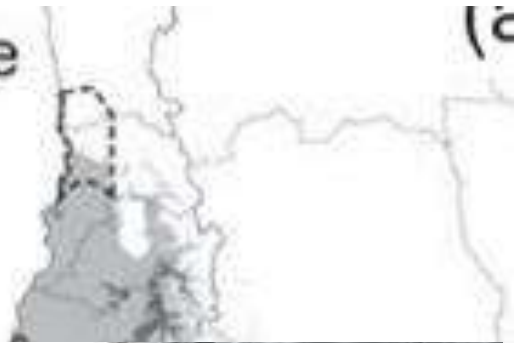
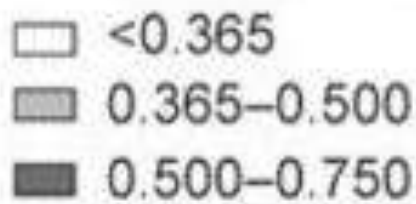
**Preparation:** I would say I did a pretty thorough preparation on this species. I owe thanks to Nayer Youakim for his advice and tips on Chiloé. Tripreports used from this site were Webb (2007), Hall (2009), Woolgar (2011), Bocquier (2014), Foley (2015), Yaouakim (2016), Silva (2017), Hall (2019). They are all mentioned on the page on Chile on Mammalwatching.com. Especially the recent ones were useful.

On top of that I can recommend two articles:

- Cuyckens, G.A.E., Morales, M.M. & Tognelli, M.F (2015) Assessing the distribution of a vulnerable felid species: threats from human land use and climate change to the kodkod *Leopardus guigna*. *Oryx* 49(4), 611-618.
- Delibes-Mateos, M., Díaz-Ruiz, F. & Ferreras, C.P. (2014) Activity patterns of the vulnerable guiña (*Leopardus guigna*) and its main prey in the Valdivian rainforest of southern Chile. *Mammalian Biology* 79, 393-397.

From Cuyckens, Morales and Tognelli I extracted the following distribution prediction of Kodkod on Chiloé:

## Probability of occurrence



### Quote from the authors:

*“To account for land use that is not suitable for the kodkod we clipped the potential distribution with the Globcover database, available at a resolution of 30 arc-seconds (ESA & UCLouvain, 2010), thereby creating an adapted model. The species clearly avoids agricultural fields, pastures and other cleared areas (Dunstone et al., 2002), although native forest fragments continue to be adequate habitat in agricultural landscapes (Gálvez et al., 2013). We considered artificial surfaces and associated areas (urban areas . 50%) and cultivated terrestrial areas as unsuitable for the kodkod but we took a conservative approach by retaining land uses such as roads, mosaic vegetation and cropland. We also excluded permanent snow and ice (Dunstone et al., 2002) and water bodies.”*

The picture on the left shows the current distribution (according to a prediction model) and the one on the right shows how they expect it to develop.

*“Our results strongly suggest that *O. guigna* prefers large tracks of native forests, then forest fragments and, lastly, pine plantations, as depicted for other carnivores like badgers, martens and wildcats (Virgo ´s et al. 2002). This differential use might account for vegetation characteristics rather than prey availability.*

*Therefore, prey availability might not be the main factor triggering the reliance of O. guigna on the continuous forest. Habitat with a high cover in the understory might provide O. guigna protection from hunters and a suitable breeding habitat, as is the case for the Iberian lynx, Lynx pardinus.”*

I found it very interesting that on this model Tantauco, which is at the bottom of Chiloé, is apparently not considered good for Kodkod. Also interesting was that the peninsula Lacuy (which can be seen as a black dot on the left corner at the top of Chiloé, apparently is supposed to have a high density. From the other study I learned that the activity patterns of Kodkod are that it's mostly active about two hours before the first light and right after sunset (also a peak around three o'clock which is weird).

This led me to believe that a good strategy might actually be to not go to Tepuhueico as some people before us have tried and instead focus our attention on Lacuy. However reality caught up on us as the spotlighting around Lacuy is so boring, and we didn't want to risk too much with our car. We got fooled by a very wild looking housecat also a few kilometres away from any houses but it was not a Kodkod. I would recommend for other people to put more time and effort in the forests on the island and also rent a good car to explore them. We decided to also explore the rest of the island and that was when sheer luck defeated all the carefully planned out things.

#### **Sighting:**

We were in Tepuhueico. This also appeared to be the park other reports have focused on. It's not so strange because it had a habituated melanistic Kodkod for a while but that was last reported in 2017. It hung out near the hotel. We were in the park for a maximum of three hours and then walked back. On the way back we noticed scat and also footprints that looked like they were from a cat. Because it had rained the night before they looked fresh and we hadn't noticed them on the way up. They might have been from a day earlier, but I'm more inclined to believe a Kodkod had walked there just after we passed. Size and shape looked right, but I'm no expert on tracks.



In any case when we had walked a bit further, suddenly I saw a cat crossing the path! It was over in about a second, just three quick leaps and it was on the other side. I immediately moved to the place where it went and heard an alarm call of a thrush about 30 meters in the vegetation, so I think the cat must have run straight on.

What I saw: stocky cat with a short tail, I would say the tail could have reached the hindlegs but would not have gone much farther than that. Short legs, very low to the ground, no visible ears. Coat looked brownish (I would say the colour of the photo of this Kodkod is spot on: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kodkod#/media/File:Leopardus\\_guigna.jpeg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kodkod#/media/File:Leopardus_guigna.jpeg). So not pale as you can see on some photos of Kodkod but certainly not a melanistic one) and clearly patterned. Since it was over so quickly I wasn't very excited at first, but in hindsight it's a very good cat of course. Since this was also still about two or three kilometres into the park and the nearest farm was 5km's away from the bridge (and the park has for a long time been closed off completely because there was no bridge), there is no doubt in my mind that I've seen a Kodkod.

It was a very lucky sighting I think. If I ever would go back I would probably just do nightdrives in Tantauco. I'm not convinced that Kodkod doesn't live there just because the rangers see them so little. They also hadn't seen Darwin's Fox in the last three months when we were there and we saw several of them on our only day there. I think nightdrives in Tantauco will get you other stuff as well. Rent a pickup truck though. It will probably be hard work, because it doesn't appear to be an easy cat to see. You will at least get the Darwin's Fox I think. People might also try their luck on other places than Chiloé, I actually think the density can be much higher in other areas, but you will need to plan that all by yourself because no one has done it before as far as I know.

### **3. Puma (Puma concolor)**

#### **Preparation:**

I owe much thanks to Jorge Cardenas who is a guide in Torres del Paine and provided me with a lot of information before I went. If you are interested in getting guaranteed sightings he is your guy, go to [wildcatexpeditions.com](http://wildcatexpeditions.com). I didn't have the money for that so I tried my luck on my own and I was not disappointed. Much has already been said about this park. I would recommend people that want to search for puma to search near Sarmiento Gate and Amarga Gate and the road and trail in between. There is a trail that can be walked that goes straight to the other gate. There is also a trail that goes from Sarmiento to lake Sarmiento. It's possible to see puma's in other areas but sightings are much more concentrated around the gates. Beyond the park the land is private, if you're willing to pay a ridiculous amount of money you can go there too. The benefit is you can walk free there while in the park you have to stay on the roads and paths.

From the forum I recently understood that the rules have apparently changed again. While I was there it was at least possible to walk all paths and roads by yourself. It's too bad it keeps changing like that. Since we had two great sightings from the car in just three days I would say that also for people with a small wallet it's still possible to have a great time with puma's in Torres del Paine. And I guess if people keep meeting the ever rising price of landowners exploiting their monopoly position, prices will continue to rise. Not a very smart thing to do in my opinion, there is a limit to what's a fair price and what is not, but that's how markets work I suppose.

## Sightings:

We saw no less than ten puma's. We saw our first one just 5 minutes after we were in the park on the trail to Lago Sarmiento. This was a big relief, it was the famous female called Hermanita. We were able to follow her for a while and at one point I had here (unplanned...) at one metre from me! She was really relaxed though.

Another good sighting happened by car a little farther away from the Sarmiento Gate, a run-in with a female called Mila. We had a very nice experience with her, 4 metres away or so...

On our last day we saw 5 puma's on the private land all rather far away, among them was a mother with two rather small cubs.

Our best sighting happened just short before we left though. We had a thrilling encounter with three almost full-grown pumacubs. One male and two females. I got me my best wildlifephoto ever and was definitely the best moment as well. Really awesome!

4. **Culpeo/Andean Fox (*Lycalopex culpaeus*):** Interestingly no certain sightings in the Salar de Surire area. We saw a mystery animal that we first identified as a cat because of the bright green eyeshine, but on the photos it looks a bit more like a fox. We saw several on the road near Parinacota and Lago Chungarà. They are much bigger than SA Grey Fox and almost wolf-like, and have a sandy colour.
5. **Darwin's Fox (*Lycalopex fulvipes*):** I was surprised by how easy this one was after reading almost everyone had missed them recently. We had a very lucky encounter I think during the day, one of which was just two meters away from me! He looked at me for a second and then disappeared. We walked a trail near the entrance of Tantauco at the time. They are really small! On our only night spotlighting near Tantauco, we saw a big male near the entrance and it also ran across the parking lot, it was a very good sighting. We had it at a few meters from the car.
6. **South American Grey Fox (*Lycalopex griseus*):** Seen while shining when we drove from Torres del Paine. A habituated couple can be seen near the ferry at Punta Delgada on the Tierra Fuegan side. We had a great encounter with a couple in Torres del Paine also.
7. **South American Sea Lion (*Otaria byronia*)** Easy in the harbour of Arica
8. **Humboldt's Hog nosed Skunk (*Conepatus humboldtii*):** Not easy, we had one crossing the road while driving back from Torres.
9. **Lesser Grison (*Galictis cuja*):** Our only mammal we were able to ID aside from the Viscachas near Salar the Surire... We had it spotlighting on the way back between Salar de Surire and Guallatiri.
10. **Marine Otter (*Lontra felina*):** The information provided by Jon and Ben is still accurate. If you go to Las Cuevas near Arica there is a counter where they give you helmets for the caves. Almost directly in front of that counter is the den of the Marine Otter. Mind you, it can stay in there quite long. We waited a couple of times, but it once took 45 minutes before it came. If it's in the water it will usually come back fairly quickly in ten minutes or so.
11. **Guanaco (*Lama guanicoe*):** Very common in Patagonia, also on Tierra del Fuego
12. **Vicuña (*Vicugna vicugna*):** Very common in the Andes near Putre and Salar de Surire pretty much everywhere

- 13. Taruca (*Hippocamelus antisensis*):** We had it on two mornings around ten or eleven o'clock. The trick with this one is to actually drive the road that starts from Putre and connects later on with the big road, later in the morning. We had about nine of them on our first night spotlighting but after that didn't see them anymore at night.
- 14. Southern Pudu (*Pudu puda*):** Surprisingly easy, we saw three of them along the highway between Huillinco and Huiladad (see Observation.org for exact locations). We also had some at night on the same highway.
- 15. Commerson's Dolphin:** Sighting from the ferry, bad sighting though.

**Unidentified whale:** From the ferry, Janco saw it better than I. I saw one vague blow. Don't know what it could have been, behaviour (one or two times up and then gone) reminded me of Minke Whale. Don't know if it's possible there.

**Information on stuff missed:**

Big misses were Andean Mountain Cat and Pampas Cat. We spotlighted both evening and morning, but had no luck. We were there for four days. We found scats near the ranger station that were from Pampas Cat according to one ranger. We used the same tactic as Ben Schweinhart but didn't get so lucky as he did. We did a combination of searching by foot and driving. We have walked the hill above the ranger station, an area a little further where one of the rangers showed us a den and then some other areas. We spotlighted always on the way back and we have also put in some hours just searching with the spotlight. I was especially surprised to miss out on Pampas Cat since the area near Guallatiri where Ben saw it as well looks so perfect for it. We had one mystery animal that we first thought was a cat because of the bright green eyeshine but on the photo's it looks a bit more like a fox, although the photos are horrible. After we had our incident with the car we did our spotlighting near Parinacota and Lago Chungarà. We saw much more Viscachas than near Salar de Surire and the ranger station but no cats.



*Your guess is as good as mine, I put my money on Culpeo now*

If you go there, please be aware that you are close to the Bolivian border so you might run into the police every once in a while. We had two run-ins with the police. The first one was a bit scary where we got stopped and held at gunpoint by about six guys armed to the teeth, bulletproof and everything, fingers on the trigger and looking pretty nervous... Luckily we were able to convince them we were innocent mammalwatchers and mentioning the name of the CONAF ranger we met helped. They spoke only Spanish, it also helps to show them some pictures of puma's. the second encounter was with two guys, also with big guns but much more relaxed. As always when someone has a gun pointed at you, stay calm act normal and make no sudden movements 😊. Also if you go there I would recommend taking a pick-up truck. Although it's possible to drive with a normal car it's just more uncomfortable and we had a flat tire as I mentioned earlier.

I can say that when I go back (and I probably will, but not next year!) I would go in December. It might be that the activities of Andean Mountain Cat are higher at night in that time of year and so far the statistics (Ben saw stuff, Jon saw stuff, both in December) speak in favour of that time of the year. Also, I would rent a pickup truck from the start and drive up there, do a week of searching then drive back to Arica, stay there for two days and drive back up again and do another week. This would partly be because I would need gas but also I would probably desperately want a break from the super boring Andes. It's no joke, I would prepare for hard work if you go there. Almost no other mammals other than Vicuñas, it's cold and dry and very few birds on top of that. Also the hostel and Guallatiri itself is very boring, there is no one else and Guallatiri is just a few houses. I would spend all my time on the part between Guallatiri and Salar de Surire and the ranger station. If anyone plans to go for the cats over there, please let me know as I might be interested in joining up.

### **Some pics**

It was probably clear from the story that the puma's were awesome so I'll kick off with those photos. For more photos and some further context visit my website:

<http://shutterednature.com/language/en/2019/09/torres-del-pumas-2/>.









*South American Grey Fox*





Culpeo below, watch how different the appearance is from the South American Grey Fox. Culpeo is more wolflike in appearance.





*Darwins Fox*



*Southern Pudu*



*Marine Otter*



*South American Sea Lion*

## **Bolivia**

I did not specifically go for mammals to Bolivia. I had some weeks that I needed to do something in and the coordinator of the Barba Azul Nature Reserve in Bolivia happened to be a Dutchman so that's where I was headed. This reserve is the most important reserve for the Blue-throated Macaw, but I also understood it was supposed to be good for Giant Anteater, Tamandua and Maned Wolf. These are all very cool mammals and were all new for me so they would be my main target. Other than that hoped to see my very first species of sloth.

### **Impressions**

I had a good time in Bolivia. Although it's apparently the second most poor country in South-America the people are nice and the taxidriviers don't try to rip you off. Santa Cruz is especially a nice city. I will return one day and that actually might be pretty soon. Nick has got a very nice operation going and I can certainly recommend him. He was most helpful with information on the areas around Santa Cruz. I did not end up traveling with him because it did not fit my three month budget, but I'll probably do that when I return. To book stuff with Nick go to: [nicksadventuresbolivia.com](http://nicksadventuresbolivia.com).

### **Schedule in Bolivia**

#### **July**

18: Arrival in Santa Cruz, visit to the Jardín Botánico

19: Visit to Curichi del Madre and Jardín Botánico

20: Travel to Trinidad

21-22: Staying in Trinidad

23-31: Staying in Barba Azul Nature Reserve, flying to La Paz in the afternoon of the 31<sup>st</sup>.

### **Areas visited in Bolivia**

#### **Jardín Botánico**

Been mentioned in other reports as well. Very easy to visit from Santa Cruz, every taxi driver know the Jardín. Quite big, about 5 kilometres deep. Not sure how wide but about 2 kilometres I think. It has a canopy tower. Easy for spotting sloths although I've heard their status might be questionable since people apparently also pick up sloths sometimes to use as pets and the Jardín is a convenient location to get rid of them again. It has clear trails and a large pond from where you start.

#### **Curichi del Madre**

A good place to spot Bolivian Squirrel Monkey, a bit hard to find though. It's about a 20 minute taxi drive from the centre I think. It used to be a refuge for animals I believe, so the status of animals might again be questionable. It is a very nice chunk of forest though and it's near the river. A staff member was happy to show us around and we gave her a tip afterwards, but were not obliged to pay anything. They just take your names.

## Barba Azul Nature Reserve

This reserve is owned and monitored by the Asociación Armonía, a NGO in Bolivia that mainly aims protects the critically endangered birds but also protects the mammals in the process. The main specialty of the reserve is obviously the Blue-throated Macaw, but it's also very cool to see Blue-and-Yellow Macaw's up close and in big groups. Afternoon counts had them in numbers up to 500 individuals and the blue-throats up to 180 individuals which is just a little less than half of the world's population... The reserve has forests of the Motacu Palm and is surrounded by cerrado grass. Visiting the reserve is a challenge. You have to take two Cessna planes from Trinidad. The first one is an airtaxi to Santa Ana del Yacuma and the second one takes you to the reserve. Armonía can book that for you. You can find more about visiting the reserve here: <http://armoniabolivia.org/protecting-the-beni-savanna-of-bolivia/>. If you've got the chance I would go though because it really is a nice place. I went there as a volunteer for a week and I helped mainly with setting up cameratraps to monitor mammals. By the way, it really is the perfect place for a thermal camera. Because it's open, the area cools off relatively quick and the mammals light up like Christmas trees.

### List of species I saw

For the exact locations go to:

[https://bolivia.observation.org/user/lifelists/47799?user=47799%2F&g=2&local\\_list=0&local\\_list=1&fam=0&jaar=0&maand=0&from=1800-01-01&to=2019-10-01&prov=0&rar=0&s%5B%5D=S&s%5B%5D=I&akt\\_g=0&method=0&met\\_absolute=0&kle\\_g=0&exo=0&esc=0&incm=0&export\\_log=0](https://bolivia.observation.org/user/lifelists/47799?user=47799%2F&g=2&local_list=0&local_list=1&fam=0&jaar=0&maand=0&from=1800-01-01&to=2019-10-01&prov=0&rar=0&s%5B%5D=S&s%5B%5D=I&akt_g=0&method=0&met_absolute=0&kle_g=0&exo=0&esc=0&incm=0&export_log=0)

1. **Nine-banded Armadillo (*Dasyus novemcinctus*):** Seen in Barba Azul. Had great views of them, very clearly in the grass. Pretty tame.
2. **Seven-banded Armadillo (*Dasyus septemcinctus*):** Seen in Barba Azul. Easy, they fed on thrown away chicken bones behind the house. Very tame, I had them up to one meter. Great opportunity for photos.
3. **Brown-throated Three-toed Sloth (*Bradypus variegatus*):** seen two in the Jardín Botánico and then another two in Trinidad, both in the bushes near the airport.
4. **Giant Anteater (*Myrmecophaga tridactyla*):** Seen in Barba Azul. Was a very nice lifer for me. Because we had rain I had to wait for three days before I had my first but after that I saw one almost every day. Barba Azul is a really good place for them.
5. **Southern Tamandua (*Tamandua tetradactyla*):** Seen in Barba Azul. Had good views of one individual, other people that were also there when I was there had one running around them. Apparently the reserve is very good for this one too, I spoke to researchers that had them almost every day from where they were doing research.
6. **Bolivian Squirrel Monkey (*Saimiri boliviensis*):** Seen in Curichi del Madre. Had a nice group around us, about 10-20 individuals I think.
7. **Brown Capuchin (*Sapajus apella*):** Seen in Jardín Botánico, saw them on both visits.
8. **Black-tailed Marmoset (*Mico melanurus*):** cool primate, had five of them moving through the canopy on my second visit to the Jardín.
9. **Bolivian Grey Titi Monkey (*Plecturocebus donacophilus*):** Seen in Curichi del Madre, nice bonus with the Squirrel Monkeys.



10. **Amazon Black Howler (*Alouatta nigerrima*):** Seen multiple individuals in the Jardin, heard only in Barba Azul.
11. **Southern Amazon Red Squirrel (*Sciurus spadiceus*):** Seen an individual on my first visit to the Jardin.
12. **Montane Guinea Pig (*Cavia tschudii*):** saw a fairly large, 'brownish' guinea pig from the bus. Researched it later and this species was the most likely.
13. **Capybara (*Hydrochoerus hydrochaeris*):** Seen multiple ones in Barba Azul. Two extremely tame young ones that approached us!
14. **Central American Agouti (*Dasyprocta punctata*)::** Seen in Barba Azul, common.
15. **Puma (*Puma concolor*):** seen one in the thermal scope, sadly no other views. Went out one morning in Barba Azul and then I noticed a dog or catlike animal in the top of a relatively small tree. Judging by the size of the tree and since canids don't climb trees I think I can say it was a certain puma. Wouldn't have counted it if it was my first though, I never count animals I only saw in the scope.
16. **Crab-eating Fox (*Cerdocyon thous*):** Seen multiple ones in Barba Azul.
17. **South American Coati (*Nasua nasua*):** Seen a family of six in Jardin Botanico and one individual in Barba Azul.
18. **Collared Peccary (*Pecari tajacu*):** Seen multiple ones in Barba Azul.
19. **Amazonian Brown Brocket (*Mazama nemorivaga*):** Seen one individual regularly in Barba Azul.
20. **Pampas Deer (*Ozotoceros bezoarticus*):** Seen multiple ones, mostly at night.

### **On stuff I missed**

Sadly I could not add Maned Wolf to the list. I gave it my best effort and went out spotlighting either in the morning or evening and sometimes both. I think I was just unlucky with that particular time of the year or perhaps just that year. I know on other years they have had quite regular sightings and heard them also often. This year it was only heard once. I heard later that it was caught regularly on cameratraps (that I had helped set up) in August. We also caught an Ocelot on cameratraps while I was there, but I did not manage to see it. Later we had cameratrap pictures with a cub. There is also supposed to be another Agouti species that lives in the cerrado but I'm not sure what it's called. We also trapped Marsh Deer on the cameratraps and this is also one that should not be that hard I think.

## Some pics

I put some bird pictures in there as well. Couldn't resist, enjoy 😊. Below the star of the reserve:  
Blue-throated Macaw.



*Blue-and-yellow Macaw*



*Brown-throated Three-toed Sloth*



*Bolivian Grey Titi Monkey*



*Black-tailed Marmoset*



Both Amazonian Black Howler, below is obviously the male.





*Giant Anteater that took a bath*







*Southern Tamandua*



*Amazonian Red Brocket Deer*





*Seven-banded Armadillo*



*Nine-banded Armadillo*

## **Peru**

A big goal for me in Peru was to improve my Spanish, which was also one of the reasons why I wanted to do a large trip throughout South-America. So I went for two weeks to a language school in Cuzco. Then I went for three weeks to a place in Tambopata National Park in the Amazon. I volunteered for Fauna Forever, an organisation that has been doing research to animals in Peru for more than 20 years. I had a great time with the staff and they really did their best to find mammals for me. Sadly the mammals themselves had different ideas. If anyone is looking for a way to get to know the Amazon, learn to do research there on different group of animals, (probably) see some cool stuff and just hang around with a bunch of nice people I can definitely recommend Fauna Forever (go to [faunaforever.com](http://faunaforever.com)).

## **Impressions**

Because I spent a longer time here and my activities differed from what I did in Bolivia and Chile I cannot really compare the three countries. I can say however that Peruvians in my experience can be very unreliable people. In just the short time I was there I have had things promised and then just cancelled at the last minute. I was prepared for the whole not-getting-on-time-thing, which is indeed a thing I might add, but it's very annoying if you make a deal with someone and they just cancel. I took from this that in Peru you can only be sure if a certain activity goes on when the guy is standing in front of you when you want to leave. Even then the car can break down (and did in my case)... So my advice: don't ever get your hopes up and be patient!

## **August**

01-16: Crossing the Peruvian border. Doing touristy things, attending a language school in Cuzco for two weeks.

17: Travel to Tambopata

18-

## **September**

-09: Stay near Explorers Inn in Tambopata National Park.

09-12: Doing touristy things, visiting Machu Picchu among other things.

12-16: Staying in the village Ollantaytambo, hiked up a mountain and camped in the high Andes at 3900 meters, back the next day.

## **Areas visited in Peru**

### **Tambopata National Park**

This is one of Peru's national parks in the Amazon. I had a room in Explorers Inn while I volunteered with Fauna Forever. I mainly stayed around that area. One morning we went on a jaguar search and went upriver for about three hours and then returned. The rest of the days I mainly explored the area around the lodge on foot. We went camping near two oxbow lakes in the vicinity of the lodge. I also visited another oxbow lake that required us to sail for about 15 minutes upriver. The area was interesting because on one side of the river it was pristine rainforest and the other side was much more cultured and also heavily logged. So I had the opportunity to directly witness how logging and burning affects the mammals and birds in the area.

I must say mammalwise my stay in Tambopata was a disappointment. My goal was to see at least one cat species and I didn't succeed in that, despite going out almost every night for three weeks. I went on nightwalks of at least two hours, and often much more. I must say I had expected the Amazon to be better for mammals but the thick rainforest makes it hard to spot anything. Still I often went on night where I didn't see or hear anything at all despite mouse opossums and rats. My thermal scope gave me some nice new bird species though. Since there was a record drought, that also might have had something to do with it. I have tried different tactics in nightwalking. First I mainly walked slowly in order not to miss anything, later I tried walking a lot faster to maybe ambush animals that were not quick enough to get away. Both tactics can be successful I think. I spoke to guys that had seen (big) cats in the jungle and they told me it often was when they weren't at their most quiet and then just stumbled upon them. I don't know, I do know I wasn't really successful with either of them. The other people on the team had had multiple sightings of Margay, Short-eared Dog and Tapir at other sites in Tambopata so perhaps I was just unlucky with the location. The area that was previously logged delivered very little animals, also on cameratraps there was almost nothing to be seen, the difference between untouched rainforest and forest that has grown after logging is huge.

### **Quellomayo**

The place itself is a village that is not very interesting in terms of mammals. There is an Andean Cock of the Rock Lek near the village. We went on a camping trip high in the Andes in order to search for Andean Bear. It has been reported there and I even heard a guide in Machu Picchu talking that he had seen bear cubs near MP. I don't know if that is true of course, but he sounded convincing. We did not see bears, this did not really surprise me, but we did see fresh bear shit. So bears are definitely around, if anyone else wants to try to see bears here I would suggest contacting Fauna Forever about it and spend at least a week scanning the mountain slopes. It can be nicely combined with Machu Picchu since it is so near that place.

## Sightings

For the exact locations go to:

[https://peru.observation.org/user/lifelists/47799?user=47799%2F&g=2&local\\_list=0&local\\_list=1&fam=0&jaar=0&maand=0&from=1800-01-01&to=2019-10-01&prov=0&rar=0&s%5B%5D=S&s%5B%5D=I&akt\\_g=0&method=0&met\\_absolute=0&kle\\_g=0&exo=0&esc=0&incm=0&export\\_log=0](https://peru.observation.org/user/lifelists/47799?user=47799%2F&g=2&local_list=0&local_list=1&fam=0&jaar=0&maand=0&from=1800-01-01&to=2019-10-01&prov=0&rar=0&s%5B%5D=S&s%5B%5D=I&akt_g=0&method=0&met_absolute=0&kle_g=0&exo=0&esc=0&incm=0&export_log=0)

1. **Common Opossum (*Didelphis marsupialis*):** Indeed common... Saw many live ones in Tambopata, saw a dead one in Quellomayo. An ugly beast!
2. **Hoffmann's Two-toed Sloth (*Choloepus hoffmanni*):** might actually have been harder than some of the cats here since it was a new one for the guys on the team I was with. Of course it's my luck that we see this species and not a proper cat...
3. **Bolivian Squirrel Monkey (*Saimiri boliviensis*):** There was a group of about forty hanging around in the logged area in Tambopata, seen on multiple occasions.
4. **Brown Capuchin (*Sapajus apella*):** Seen on multiple occasions in Tambopata
5. **Saddleback Tamarin (*Saguinus fuscicollis*):** seen multiple times in Tambopata
6. **Azara's Night Monkey (*Aotus azarae*):** a group hung around the lodge, also seen on night walks.
7. **Dusky Titi Monkey (*Plecturocebus moloch*):** Hung around the lodge in Tambopata, one had a tiny baby. Also seen on other places in Tambopata
8. **Red Howler Monkey (*Aouatta seniculus*):** Heard every morning in Tambopata, also had good sightings. One very interesting sighting of a group that went drinking from the river from the river banks, probably because they couldn't find water elsewhere.
9. **Southern Amazon Red Squirrel (*Sciurus spadiceus*):** We had one place in the logged area in Tambopata we used to call 'squirrel street', they always hung around at that exact spot.
10. **Capybara (*Hydrochoerus hydrochaeris*):** Common along the Tambopata river.
11. **Central American Agouti (*Dasyprocta punctata*):** Seen multiple times in Tambopata, much harder to see than in Bolivia though.
12. **Spotted Paca (*Cuniculus paca*):** Had just one sighting of that one, in Tambopata.
13. **South American Coati (*Nasua nasua*):** One sighting in Tambopata.
14. **Kinkajou (*Potos flavus*):** Multiple sightings in Tambopata.
15. **Giant Otter (*Pteronura brasiliensis*):** Saw two very nice groups, one at the oxbow lake called Tristianbatis and another one called Kokococha.
16. **Collared Peccary (*Pecari tajacu*):** One habituated peccary in Tambopata.
17. **Grey Brocket Deer (*Mazama gouzoubira*):** Had two sightings of them during nightwalks in Tambopata.
18. **South American tapir (*Tapirus terrestris*):** One very frustrating sighting that I'm actually not counting but definitely was one. It was near one of the oxbow lake when I heard an animal moving. In my thermal I saw a large animal at just two or three meters away in the bushes. I decided to go for it with my spotlight in the hope that I would see it, but it quickly ran away. Based on what I saw in the thermal and what I heard I'm sure it was a tapir. Too bad it was such a bad sighting though.

## Regarding stuff I missed

I missed the cats obviously. We did have a puma in the cameratraps a couple of times and also an ocelot one time, but I didn't see anything. I might just have been unlucky, I must say in three weeks statistically I would expect to get lucky at least once even in the Amazon. Next time I would probably try Manu and not Tambopata since others have been lucky there. However Tambopata remains interesting, they had a place where Short-eared Dog was seen often. I might have been unlucky with the place or the drought or both. I wouldn't go there for jaguar though, although there are sightings along the river it's very hard. I met someone that had spent a total of eleven months there and not seen a single jaguar (not during the day at least).

By the way, I have not tried to ID the rats or mouse opossums I saw. I heard it was only possible in the hand. I also photographed two bats, they told me they couldn't be ID'd to species level. In any case the small stuff doesn't really have my interest, sorry 😊.

Some pics



*Red Howler*



*Dusky Titi havin' a good time*



*Bolivian Squirrel Monkey*



*Saddleback Tamarin*



*Azara's Night Monkey*



*Kinkajou*





*Grey Brocket Deer*



*Central American Agouti*



*Giant Otter*



*A mouse opossum*



*Bat2*



*Bat1*



Andean Cock of the Rock, because sometimes birds do beat mammals...

