

CHILE – TORRES DEL PAINE AND PUNTA ARENAS

07-23 September 2019

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Puma cub, Sarmiento Lake

Wonderful trip to Chilean Patagonia! I've joined a trip organized by a famous and very reliable tour company (WildImages www.wildimages-phototours.com, only 6 people plus the guide). The only trip with 7 full days of Puma search and watching in Estancia Laguna Amarga, near Torres del Paine National Park. With the new rules in the National Park, it's now quite difficult to see well Pumas, and for long and close encounters is better to join a tour like this, that spends a lot of time in the private Estancia Laguna Amarga. Expensive, but well worth it! I've added even a day in a Condor roosting site not far from Punta Arenas, and one and half day for my own along the Magellan Strait for coastal birds and mammals. We had mostly good weather, with no rain and a tolerable wind. With my small bridge camera I've got decent pictures, but tour participants with big lenses had really gorgeous shots!

We saw 17 amazing different PUMAS, in 19 encounters! Some very close, like a curious full grown cub that came no more than 5 meters from us! Than Pumas hunting Guanacos, one even jumped on a Guanaco that escaped on the very last second. We admired Pumas playing, watched social interactions, and, on the last day, a female calling for a mate in the golden sunset of Patagonian

steppe. Wonderful even to see Pumas with the blue Sarmiento lake in the background, or to walk with Pumas for a few kilometers. A very special way to see a big cat!

Other mammals: a lot of GUANACOS, 3 SOUTH AMERICAN GREY FOX, 2 CULPEO FOX, an HUMBOLDT'S HOG-NOSED SKUNK, a SOUTH ANDEAN HUEMUL and, near Punta Arenas, SOUTH AMERICAN SEA LIONS and PEALE'S DOLPHINS.

Check list:

1. GUANACO - Abundant in Torres del Paine area and some even near Punta Arenas
2. SOUTH ANDEAN HUEMUL - A tame individual in Torres del Paine National Park
3. SOUTH AMERICAN GREY FOX or CHILLA - One in the steppes near Punta Arenas, and two different individuals in Estancia Laguna Amarga
4. CULPEO FOX - One near Punta Arenas and a tame individual in Torres del Paine NP
5. HUMBOLDT'S HOG-NOSED SKUNK - One in Estancia Laguna Amarga was a bonus
6. PUMA - WOW - 17 different Pumas, seen multiple times: 7 adult females, 1 adult male, 2 subadults, 7 cubs of 9-10 month



Bonita, adult female

7. SOUTH AMERICAN SEA LION - A few south of Punta Arenas
8. PEALE'S DOLPHIN - a pod of 5-6 south of Punta Arenas near the beach

9. European Hare - Introduced, widespread

10. European Rabbit - Introduced, one near Santiago



Hermanita, adult female



Bonita, adult female



Blinka, adult female

We missed only the local species of Armadillo. September is still a bit too cold for them.

Honorary mammals: ANDEAN CONDOR, Torrent Duck and Magellanic Plover.



South American Grey Fox, or Chilla



Culpeo Fox



South Andean Huemul



Guanaco and Paine mountains



Hi folks! ☺