

Bird & Mammal Trip Report
Paraguay (July 2022)



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



Rob with a Southern Three-banded Armadillo

Romy scanning the field at Fortín Toledo

Information and how to use this trip report

This trip report covers the Chaco region in west Paraguay. We travelled this part in about 3 weeks from the 4th – 26th of July 2022. For all photos of our Paraguay trip, comments, compliments, any specific questions, visit and/or contact us via our website. We would love to hear from you!

 www.robjansenphotography.com/paraguay

 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 at 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 Paraguay can be found on Observation.org. We observed a total of 151 bird species and 31 mammal species in Paraguay. Click here for the: [total bird list](#), [total mammal list](#) or [the total species list](#).

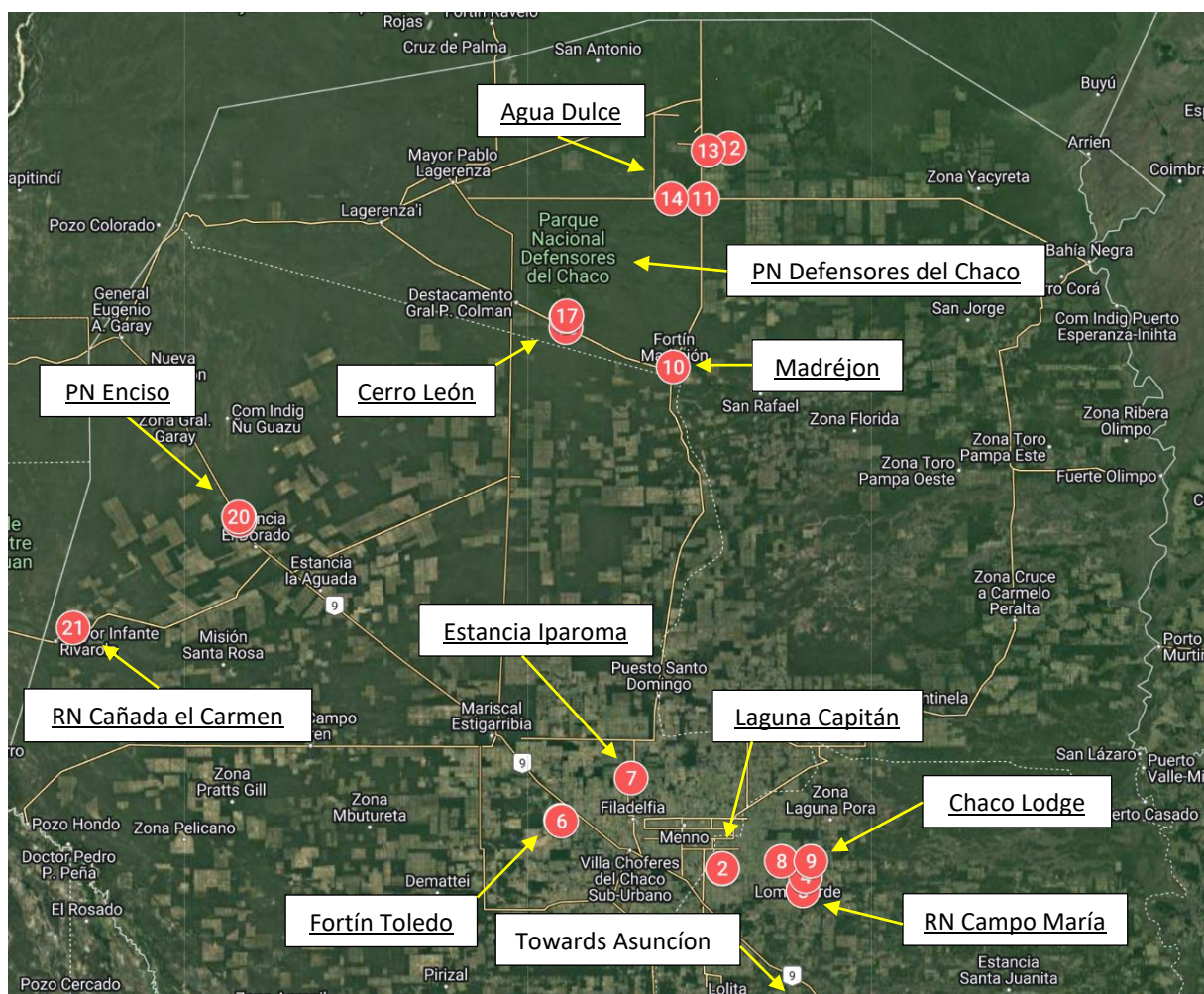
For more trip reports of other countries see our website: www.robjansenphotography.com/trip-reports

Map and specific locations

After bird- & mammalwatching the Atlantic Coast, the Central Cerrado and afterwards the southwest of Brazil (see previous two trip reports), we decided to cross to Paraguay. We crossed in the north of Paraguay (in Ponta Porã) and only quickly visited two locations before going to Asunción.

After we visited both Argentina and Brazil we had most of the targets in the Atlantic Rainforest, wetlands en cerrado habitat and therefor decided to skip on these sites in Paraguay. We shortly visited Mbaracayú forest for a night and morning, but found it very quiet with birds and only saw a **Black-capped Screech Owl** and an **Azara's Agouti**. In Asunción we took 2 weeks to rest before we went to west Paraguay for the Chaco region. That is the focus of this trip report.

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



There are many more places to visit in Paraguay, popular ones being:

- **Reserva Laguna Blanca:** White-winged Nightjar, Buff-bellied Puffbird, Sharp-tailed Tyrant, Cock-tailed Tyrant, Bearded Tachuri, Giant Snipe, Maned Wolf
- **Mbaracayú Forest NR:** Bare-throated Bellbird, Helmeted Woodpecker, Saffron Toucanet, Spot-billed Toucanet, Rusty-breasted Nunlet, Black-capped Screech Owl, Band-tailed Manakin
- **Arroyos y Esteros:** Strange-tailed Tyrant, Long-winged Harrier, Spectacled Tyrant, Long-tailed Reed Finch, lots of seedeaters
- **Kanguery:** Saffron-cowled Blackbird, Ocellated Poorwill, Sickle-winged Nightjar, Swallow-tailed Manakin, Black-capped Foliage-gleaner
- **Pro Cosara – Estancia Nueva Gambach:** Dusky-tailed Antbird, Southern Bristle-tyrant, Rusty-barred Owl, Purple-crowned Plovercrest, Olive Spinetail
- **Estacion Tres Gigantes (near Bahia Negra):** Pale Titi, Black-and-Gold Howler Monkey, Giant Otter, Black-tailed Marmoset (on the way near Bahia Negra)

Weather and timing

We visited Paraguay as part of our world travel from the 20th of June till the 26th of July 2022. The weather was generally warm during the day (25-35°C) and still quite warm at night (15-25°C, sometimes even 30°C). We only had one day with some short showers in the Chaco region, after which it got colder for a few days (15-20°C). We did have quite some days and nights with a lot of wind, which made birdwatching and especially spotlighting for mammals less productive.

Transportation

Our transportation in this trip report was of course our Toyota 4Runner SR5 4.0 2010 (2x4) called 'Forrest'. We bought this car in Santiago (Chile) and got it converted so that we could sleep inside as well as on the roof in our roof top tent. We were one of the few non-4x4's in the real Chaco. The roads are doable when they are dry, but have lots of potholes and sandy patches. There were some roads that seemed interesting for spotlighting that were really sandy and we didn't want to risk getting stuck. We would definitely advise to rent a 4x4 for a normal vacation if your budget allows. The roads apparently get terrible with rain. Rain did fall in the winter during the last few years (which it before than barely did). A 4x4 would give you that extra power and security that you can continue your schedule during a vacation with limited time than a 2x4 and gives you the ability to drive some more sandy roads than we could. Be sure to have a spare tire. We got our tire pinched two times around NP Defensores, one time so badly we were surprised it could be fixed at all.



Our loyal friend Forrest at Cerro León

Forrest at the ranger station of Agua Dulce

Literature

- Birds of Argentina and the South-west Atlantic, Helm Field Guides, 1st edition, 2020, Mark Pearman & Juan I. Areta. *We used this book of Argentina, as most of the bird population overlaps with it (except for White-bellied Nothura and Bolivian Slaty Antshrike for example). Drawings are ok, but for some species the details and proportions seem a bit off. But it's definitely a good book which will suffice in Paraguay most of the time in combination with the Merlin app*
- 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.*
- Merlin app for the birds sound. *Just amazing that this app is free. We didn't miss any sounds.*
- BirdNet app for recording the bird sounds. If you don't know all the sounds, BirdNet can give a possible ID. It helped us a few times when we were frustratingly searching for a bird we heard deep inside the shrubs. A sure ID of a bird from BirdNet saved us some time here and there ;)
- iOverlander app. This app gives nice information on where to camp or buy stuff.

Equipment

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

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

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

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, but gives some weird lines with photo/video☺)

Use of cell phones in Paraguay

There are three bigger telecom providers in Paraguay; Claro, Tigo & Personal. All require foreigners to register their SIM-card, which can be done in the store. We bought one Claro SIM card because they were the only available store at the border where we crossed. Activation in the Claro store was easy. It took a hour before it was ready and activated (check this in the store). Tigo seems to have better coverage. In the Chaco Claro had no signal, but Tigo did. So we would recommend buying a Tigo SIM card if you go to the Chaco region of Paraguay.

Paying in Paraguay

Paying in Paraguay can often be done by card (gas stations, supermarkets, hotels), but lots of places in the (Alto) Chaco don't accept cards. Be sure to bring enough cash. Banco Continental was a bank that didn't charge us a fee for a withdrawal. They give you the option withdrawal with quota (a proposal for a conversion which is bad), so be sure to choose without quota. You get your card back, and afterwards you get your money.

Water-to-Go

To reduce plastic usage on our travels we bought Water-to-Go water bottles. Read about our experience with Water-to-Go on our website: www.robjansenphotography.com/water-to-go. 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)

"Hug a tree, feel the Chaco"



Visited sites

Laguna Capitán

[-22.53902, -59.67593](#)

Visited dates: 5-6 & 20-21 July 2022

General information: You can reserve in English via WhatsApp (+595 983 344 463). They like to know up front with how many people you are coming, what exactly you are looking for and the exact dates you want to visit (they seemed a bit suspicious). There is a camping area (50.000¢ per motorhome or 20.000¢ p.p.) and there are rooms available. It is easy to get there from the highway Linea Sur.

We didn't reserve up front and encountered closed gates. The gates were not too high so we birded the area anyways when we couldn't find anyone. There was some (salt) water left in the area, but most lagunas were dry. **Lark-like Brushrunners** were present between the two entrance gates. A trail goes south, straight towards a (for us dried up) laguna on the west. This is where we encountered **Many-colored Chaco Finch** and **Olive-crowned Crescentchest**. **Tucuman Pygmy Owls** (ssp. *tucumanum*, a likely split from Ferruginous Pygmy Owl) were quite common and started calling just before sunset. We encountered one on the road going to the right before the first gate. We camped at the end of that road and also heard **Tropical Screech Owl** and **Great Horned Owl** in the middle of the night. Near the modern cattle farm along the entrance road we observed a **Chaco Puffbird**.



Tucuman Pygmy Owl

Many-colored Chaco Finch

Spotlighting at night involved driving the entrance road back towards the T-intersection, going north towards the Linea Sur. Near Laguna Capitan we observed multiple **Pampas Foxes** and 3 **Crab-eating Foxes** in a field after the T-junction. Near the Linea Sur we observed a **Geoffroy's Cat** near a pool of water at the west side of the road! Finally, after so 4 nights of failed attempts searching for this species in El Palmar, Argentina!

When we had to go back to Filadelfia after a badly punctured tire (more on that later) we decided to give this location another go. We spotlighted some roads leading up to Laguna Capitán, starting south of Halbstadt (-22.509700, -59.836119), passing Fortín Isla Po'i and ending at Laguna Capitán. We observed 6 **Pampas Foxes**, 2 **Common Brocket Deers** and 1 **Molina's Hog-nosed Skunk**. The next

morning we tried to get better pictures of the only **Olive-crowned Crescentchest** we had seen during our time in Paraguay, and it was still present in the grassy field ([-22.54357, -59.67499](#)). Standing there we heard **White-bellied Nothura** and later also a **Spotted Nothura** (ssp. *chacoensis*), and then saw the Spotted Nothura flying to a patch further in the field.



Olive-crowned Crescentchest



Geoffroy's Cat

RN Campo Maria

[-22.62402, -59.34838](#)

Visited dates: 6 - 7 July 2022

General information: We didn't reserve and the (cattle) gates towards the Mirador Campo Maria were all open, day and night. If you want to be 100% sure that you can visit you might want to contact the administrator, Albert Unrau (+595 982 317 791).

Campo Maria is a nice place, and the water in the lagoon held the usual species like **Chilean Flamingo**, **Greater Yellowlegs**, **Lesser Yellowlegs**, **White-backed Stilt**, and many **White-cheeked Pintails** and **Brazilian Teals**. It might get more interesting later in the year with migrant waders, if the lakes are not dried up by then.

The shrubs around the observation tower ([-22.56905, -59.33952](#)) held **Chaco Earthcreeper**, which showed nicely. **Greater Wagtail-tyrant** and **Short-billed Canastero** were observed here too, as well as the more common flock species (**Masked Gnatcatcher**, **Golden-billed Saltator**, **Red-crested Finch**, **Black-capped Warbling Finch**). A dirt-covered *Leptodactylus macrosternum* was seen where they removed the shrubs to make a new road.

Spotlighting at night involved driving the entrance road back, and driving some of the side roads between the fields. We quickly encountered **Molina's Hog-nosed Skunk** and later observed multiple **Pampas Foxes** and a **Crab-eating Fox**. Eyeshine in a tree turned out to be a **Barn Owl**. Driving a bit further we initially thought we observed Barn Owl another flying in front of our car, but when it sat down we saw it was a **Chaco Owl!** What an amazing species!

**White-browed Blackbird****Chaco Earthcreeper**

Fortín Toledo

[-22.35501, -60.34142](#)

Visited dates: 7 - 9 & 21-23 July 2022

General information: No reservation is needed, and you can just show up here. We were allowed to camp anywhere we liked. The place is officially open from 08.00-11.30 (Mon-Sat)/14.00-17.00 (Mon-Fri), but the rangers seem to come and go whenever during those times. Most likely you will still be allowed to walk the trail outside of those hours as well.

This is a breeding centre for the endangered Chacoan Peccary, which they breed to release again in the wild (mainly the Alto Chaco region: Cerro Leon etc.). There is a small reserve next to the breeding centre with a circular trail of about 4km, and a 1.8km long side trail which ends at a pool. We walked the trail early morning and quickly encountered **Black-legged Seriema**. **Chacoan Mara** is relatively common around here, but quite shy. We heard **Quebracha Tinamou** calling shortly, but didn't see it. **White-banded Mockingbirds**, an Austral migrant, was quite common here too.

**Molina's Hog-nosed Skunk****Black-legged Seriema**

The first night we spotlighted a road recommended by the rangers as being good for mammals. The road goes south of Hotel Toledo (a bit to the east of the entrance road of Fortin Toledo, starting here: [-22.35818, -60.33889](#)). As it was quite windy we didn't find a lot in the 2,5h spotlighting. We

did see a **Molina's Hog-nosed Skunk**. Back at Fortin Toledo we observed a total of 5 **Pampas Foxes** in the surrounding properties.

The second night one of the rangers invited us to go spotlighting with him. We drove the same road as the night before, but afterwards went to a private estancia where they have permission to drive (west of that road). It was only after an hour on the private estancia we had our first mammals; **Pampas Fox** and **Chacoan Maras**. When stopping for a **Southern Three-banded Armadillo** we observed 2 **Chaco Owls**. A **Giant Anteater** was walking in a field, which we were able to follow on foot for a while! Driving back to the reserve we had 2 more **Three-banded Armadillos** and also a **Lesser Hairy Armadillo** on the road (our only one during the whole trip).



Chaco Owl

Giant Anteater

We arrived very late again on the 21st after spotlighting the road towards the Chaco Lodge. We spotlighted the entrance road from the highway towards the ranger station and saw **Pampas Fox**, **Chaco Owl** and 2 **Southern Three-banded Armadillos**.

The second night we spotlighted the recommended road going south again and had 2 **Pampas Foxes**, 2 **Crab-eating Foxes**, **Southern Three-banded Armadillo**, a **Quebracha Tinamou** calling from one of the fields and we observed **Common Brown Brocket** and 2 **Lowland Tapirs**. The road towards the highway only yielded 2 **Chaco Owls** and 2 **Pampas Foxes**. The road going west (past the Bolivian cemetery from the Chaco war) is where we observed 5 **Collared Peccaries** and suddenly a cat crossed the path; another **Geoffroy's Cat**!

The last morning we tried to find the Quebracha Tinamou again, but it didn't call or even respond to playback. Driving back Rob suddenly spotted a brown animal sticking its head out of a hole next to the main road towards the ranger station: a **Chacoan Tuco-tuco/Conover's Tuco-tuco**! Along this road were many (freshly) dug burrows, so if one waits patiently it might be a good spot to see one too.

**Conover's/Chacoan Tuco-tuco****Brushland Tinamou (without raised crest)**

Estancia Iparoma

[-22.19992, -60.04979](#)

Visited dates: 9-10 July 2022

General Information: This place can be visited without a reservation, but especially if you would like to stay here in a room (250.000¢ for 2, including breakfast) you might want to reserve. You can also camp here (30.000¢ p.p.). Merylin Wohlgemuth Epp is a great host and cares about nature (unlike many of the neighbours). She speaks German, Spanish and English and can be contacted by email: estanciaiparoma@gmail.com.

The main reason for us to come here was for the **Azara's Night Monkeys** that hang around the main building. One of them is an escaped captive from the neighbour, but it found a mate and now there are 4 of them. Be ready right after sunset, when they come out of their roost, which was on the neighbours' property at the moment. After sunset we quickly encountered the 4 of them in the trees above the fence between the two properties, while they crossed to get to the water tank at Estancia Iparoma to drink water. Later at night we searched for them again, but couldn't find them. Around the same area is where we had our only **Cinereous Tyrant** on both days.

**Azara's Night Monkey****Chacoan Mara**

In the afternoon we had the pleasure of meeting and spending some time with Paul Smith, who runs the tour company Fauna Paraguay (faunaparaguay@yahoo.com.ar). We had contact with him before and he was so friendly to share information with us. He is great company and we are 100% sure that going on a trip with him is money well spent if your budget allows. We joined Paul and his group of 2 mammal watchers for an afternoon in a search for a special species of Tuco Tuco, but encountered none unfortunately.

Spotlighting on the estancia didn't yield much for us (in windy conditions), and we only saw **Chacoan Maras** and a **Pampas Fox**. Others had **Southern Tamandua** and Paul's group had a **Giant Anteater** with young. There is supposed to be a **Chaco Owl** on the property as well, but we didn't actively search for it. We did run into a **Rococo Toad (*Rhinella dyptichus*)**.

Chaco Lodge

-22.51202, -59.31738

Visited dates: 10-11 & 21 July 2022

We first wanted to visit the Chaco Lodge, but after contact with Norbert Epp (+595 981 223 974) he told us the place was closed at the moment because the lagoons were dried up. Then Tomer (one of the mammalwatchers in Paul's group) told us they had a really good result spotlighting the main road leading up to the lodge. We decided to follow up on that advice and spotlighted the road from 17.15 – 21.30 (starting here: **-22.51151, -59.43657**). Even though the wind (finally) laid down and the road is very promising with nice forest on both sides and almost no traffic, we didn't encounter a lot of mammals. We had a **Crab-eating Raccoon** near a water pool and a **Crab-eating Fox** in a field next to the road. We also saw 2 **Chaco Owls**, a **Tropical Screech Owl** and a **Tucuman Pygmy Owl**. A snake warming up on the road turned out to be a beautiful **Argentine Coral Snake (*Micrurus pyrrhocryptus*)**. In the morning a **Molina's Hog-nosed Skunk** crossed the road. A mixed species flock with the common birds (see Campo Maria) also held **Chaco Warbling Finch/Ringed Warbling Finch** (migrant ssp. *pectorales*).

After we had to go back to Filadelfia (see further below) we decided to give the road leading up to the Chaco Lodge another go when we heard that another mammal watcher had seen 5+ Geoffroy's Cat on one evening there! Driving up there we immediately had a **Geoffroy's Cat** under the cover of the shrubs next to the road, very close to some houses. The main road leading up to Chaco Lodge yielded 2 **Molina's Hog-nosed Skunks**, a **Pampas Fox** and again 2 **Chaco Owls**. Where there had been a dead **Greater Capybara** last time was now a dead **Tayra** a bit further up the road. Driving the road for 2 hours back and forth we decided to focus more on road going south with altered habitat, with patches of forest adjacent to grassland where we initially saw the Geoffroy's. After being stopped by an angry bare-chested local (read: bear-chested) for apparently wanting to poach his cows we continued anyways when he had left the road on his scooter. We observed a **Southern Three-banded**

Armadillo and close to the (remnants of the) salt lagoons we observed a group of 6+ **Collared Peccaries**. Driving further towards the main road (Linea Sur) we passed lots of farms, but in between were still good patches of forest with good grasslands next to them. A **Common Brocket Deer** later, we again observed a cat. Disappointed that it was clearly not a Geoffroy's Cat. A heavyset cat, a bit larger than a normal domestic cat, but with a very interesting pattern: black feet, black bands above it, a blackish thick tail, a barely visible blotched pattern on its grey/brown back, large triangular ears, a pink nose, two stripes on the cheek, a white chin. Somewhat reminiscent of the Pampas Cat we searched in vain for 7 days a month before in Emas NP in Brazil. However, it turned out to be a domestic cat (probably hybrid between Geoffroy's Cat x Domestic Cat). Another one like this hung around Laguna Capitan, so be aware!



Possible hybrid domestic x Geoffroy's Cat

Geoffroy's Cat

PN Defensores del Chaco

[-20.63007, -59.87959](#)

Visited dates: 11-20 July 2022

General Information: The park protects a large chunk of Chaco habitat and can be visited without a reservation. There are multiple ranger stations where one can stay or visit, but actual access to the park itself is very limited to short walking trails. Searching for mammals mainly involves driving the roads on the border of the park. There are barely any gas stations in the Alto Chaco, the last official one being a 47km/45-50min drive south from Madréjon towards Filadelfia. Our car didn't really like this gasoline and showed fumes from the exhaust, had less power and took a bit longer to ignite the engine. So take a few extra bidons with good gasoline if you can from Filadelfia.

The road from Filadelfia to Madréjon can be driven with a 2x4 in dry conditions, but is more pothole than road sometimes. Quite some sandy patches and potholes and some bird/mammal watching made our journey take about 5 hours. There were two places where we passed a barrier, at the second one we had to pay a 20.000¢ fee to pass.

Madréjon

[-20.63007, -59.87959](#)

The Madréjon ranger station lies in the southeast corner of the park, and is the first part of the park you encounter coming from Filadelfia. It has two buildings that are still in decent state, the rest are deteriorated by a lack of maintenance (seems like European subsidy money well spent...). The main building after the gate is where we met the ranger, where we were allowed to use the kitchen and where there was potable water available. It also had two rooms with beds which we could use. This building had (solar) electricity. If you have Tigo as provider there should be signal here (not with Claro). Another building has 4 rooms with beds and bathrooms, and can be used for sleeping free of charge. It didn't have electricity when we were there. Although not super clean, they are ok enough for a couple of nights if you wouldn't have another place to sleep. Be sure to bring your own sleeping bag/liner and inflatable pillow.

In one of the ruins that used to be decent rooms we found 2 colonies of **Greater Round-eared Bats** (± 10 and 13 individuals). They were both in what used to be the bathrooms and judging by the faeces they are there regularly. In between one of the groups was a yellow colour morph, but it belongs to the same species (thanks Paul Smith for the ID!). Around the station was a **Chaco Granulated Toad** (*Rhinella major*) and on the door of one of the houses a female **Chaco Spiny Lizard** (*Tropidurus spinulosus*) (thanks to Paul Smith again for the ID!).

The water pool north of the ranger station housed 2 **Greater Capybaras**, and we encountered a **Crab-eating Fox** all three nights we were there. One of the nights a **Crab-eating Raccoon** was in the water's edge searching for food. While walking the short trail at night we found a **Chaco Pericote/Chaoan Leaf-eared Mouse** (*Graomys chacoensis*).



Greater Round-eared Bats

Greater Round-eared Bats

Driving north from Madréjon for about 2 hours (75km) you arrive at the northeast corner of the park: Agua Dulce. We drove this part during the afternoon and saw a total of 4 **Pale Titi Monkeys** during three different sightings. They were all in the higher trees next to the road, but quite shy. On the way back we (again) saw multiple groups of Titis close to Agua Dulce in the late afternoon. Besides many

Crab-eating Foxes (pay attention to the black 'socks', sometimes very short though) we observed no other mammals while spotlighting the last 50km back in the dark.



Crab-eating Foxes

Crab-eating Foxes

Agua Dulce

[-19.9842, -59.75799](#)

At Agua Dulce there is another ranger station where you are allowed to camp with a tent or motorhome. There are also two rooms with 2 respectively 3 beds and a private bathrooms which can again be used free of charge. These houses seemed a bit more new and were quite clean. There is electricity all day, but no potable water. Because it was warm but super windy, we spend most of our days inside here and slept inside with the ventilator on. If you have Tigo you have signal here again (not with Claro). We observed **Azara's Agouti** on the grounds around the ranger station, and **Black-legged Seriemas** were present daily. Other birds that seemed common in this region were **Crested Oropendola**, **Purplish Jay**, **Plush-crested Jay** and **Great Rufous Woodcreeper**. We also observed one **Black-banded Woodcreeper**.

On the other side of the roundabout is a shop which has more or less everything you need for groceries, your car or your horse. There is even a small gas station 100m further up, owned by the same shop. Go to the shop to tell them you need to fill up. When we arrived they ran out of gasoline for a couple of days, but the owner Edgar Bruno arranged for us to get fuel at a farm about 6km further up north. He helped us with a pinched tire and invited us for lunch, a great guy! As they only accepted cash and we almost ran out of Guaraní, we could even pay in euros. Edgar has small and very basic rooms too (bunk bed, airco & fridge), and beside the ranger station it is the only option in the region if you want to be sure that you have a place to sleep (the ranger station is first come, first serve). You can contact him via WhatsApp (+595 985 764222).

About 300m from the store is a water hole which attracts **Lowland Tapir** (which came at the end of an afternoon while we were on the road, but proudly proven by Edgar on video). We waited here the next night from 17.00-18.00 but saw nothing. We checked the lagoon every time we went searching for mammals, but only saw one **Southern Three-banded Armadillo** here.

There are quite some plots where all the shrubs have been cleared, and Edgar said they are going to build a school, health centre, church etc. there, so we expect that Agua Dulce is going to grow into a little village during the coming decade and all surrounding roads will become busier.



Pale Titi Monkey

Pale Titi Monkeys

Besides the southern road to Madréjon, there are three roads to drive from Agua Dulce:

Agua Dulce going east

The biggest/main road going east towards Bahia Negra. The road is in relatively good conditions, comparable to the road coming from Filadelfia. Traffic was quite high at night with about 6 cars/trucks per hour. We figure this was too high, and the road might be too disturbed for seeing much wildlife. We spotlighted this road the 12th of July 2022, from 19.30-22.30, 33km one way/66km total. This road was supposed to be good for **Ocelot**, but we only saw 1 **Pampas Fox**, 2 **Chaco Owls** and a **Tucuman Pygmy Owl** during the whole ride.

Agua Dulce going north

The second option from Agua Dulce is driving towards the north, in the direction of the Bolivian border (± 75 km). The road is in a bit worse condition than the main road from Filadelfia, but still doable, at least for the first 20-25km. We drove this road three times:

- **13 July 2022, 20.30-22.00, 8km one way/16km total.** Quickly after we entered the road we heard a sound coming from the trees on the west side of the road. While scanning for the sound we found a **Brazilian White-eared Opossum**. The sound turned out to be from 3 **Azara's Night Monkeys**. Except for a **Nine-banded Armadillo** the rest of the drive was quite uneventful. With the Lahoux Spotter Elite 35V heat scope we saw many **Common Tapetis** in the shrubs, which we somehow never picked up with the flashlight while driving. In a bush we observed a **Large Vesper Mouse**, with a clear buffy eye-ring visible.

- **14 July 2022, 16.00-22.30, 20km one way/40km total + 30km on a private estancia.** Driving up in the afternoon we saw 3 groups of **Pale Titi Monkeys** with a total 11 individuals within the first 8km. **Green-cheeked Parakeets** were feeding on the side of the road.

**Nine-banded Armadillo****Green-cheeked Parakeet**

Via Edgar, the store owner, we got permission to drive over a private estancia towards a Laguna (Estancia La Tormenta, entrance road: [-19.79991, -59.74056](#)). The lagoon was supposed to be huge and natural, surrounded by forest, so you understand our excitement. We drove the road leading up to the lagoons and saw **Common Brocket Deer**. Arriving after opening and closing way too many cattle gates, there were two large water holes, but nothing natural about it. It seems like the area is under water a part of the year, and therefore the vegetation around the water holes was quite low (barely any shrubs) and thus good for mammal watching. Not long after dusk we picked up some eyeshine in the shrubs and walked towards it. Quite soon we stood eye to eye with an **Ocelot**! Driving around the area with the lagoons we had a **Common Brocket Deer** and a **Lowland Tapir** crossing the field towards the lagoons. Besides one of the lagoons is a 33m high hill with a water pool on top ([-19.78642, -59.64895](#)), which made for a good vantage point to scan the surroundings with the Lahoux Spotter heat scope, binoculars and flashlights. This is how we observed another **Lowland Tapir** walking in the fields. At the end of the night we drove back over the land of Estancia Don Celso, as instructed by the manager we met during the night drive, via a sandy road (barely doable with a 2x4) with less cattle gates. Here we observed **Pampas Fox** and **Crab-eating Raccoon**. This estancia has apparently lots of collaborations with amongst others WWF, so hopefully at least some of the forests here will be preserved. This place might be of more and more interest in the future if (or once...) other places in the Chaco are developed, busier with traffic etc. Back on the main road we observed one more **Lowland Tapir** crossing the road.

**Ocelot****Lowland Tapir**

- **16 July 2022, 04.40-09.30, 30km one way/60km total + 25km on a private estancia.** In the hope that without much traffic the road would produce more cats, we decided to drive early in the morning. There were no cars/trucks on the road until sunrise, but no cats either. We only saw 3 **Crab-eating Foxes** and again many **Common Tapetis**. Multiple locals pointed us towards the area around Estancia La Tormenta as a good place for **Chacoan Peccary**, so we aimed to drive around there at and after sunrise. We observed two groups of **Pale Titi Monkeys** on the entrance road to the estancia and got some sound recordings. We drove all the way up to the lagunas again, but saw nothing there. Driving back suddenly a group of 4 **White-lipped Peccaries** crossed the road! As in the photos of Cheryl (2021) their fur was really dark black, different from the ones in Emas NP, Brazil.



Pale Titi Monkey



Pale Titi Monkey

Agua Dulce going west

Another road from Agua Dulce goes west. Parts of the road have quite some potholes, especially the first part, but it is doable with a 2x4. It had less traffic on the road, about 2 cars/trucks per hour. We drove this road four times:

- **12 July 2022, 15.45-19.30, 13km one way/26km total.** The first time we drove this road for 13km towards a water hole ([-19.98363, -59.8869](#)). Within ± 100 m from this water hole is where we observed **Azara's Night Monkey** (2 groups of 3 individuals, at 17.00 and at 18.00) and **Crab-eating Foxes**. Next to the water hole was the skin of a **Brazilian Porcupine**, indicating their presence in the region. Just before the water hole is a colony of **Lowland Yellow-toothed Cavies**. This is where we also observed **Bolivian Slaty Antshrike**. It took an hour to get a decent picture of the cavies, until at dusk they just wandered out of the vegetation. Right when I got a picture we wanted to step on the road when a **Jaguar** walked up! She probably followed the road already for a while, and paused when she heard/saw us standing on the side of the road about 50-60m further.



Jaguar



Lowland Yellow-toothed Cavy

- **13 July 2022, 16.10-20.30, 27km one way/54km total.** The second evening we drove this road in the hope of seeing the Jaguar again, hoping she would have some kind of routine in her day. Just before we arrived at the water hole we observed two different groups of **Pale Titi Monkeys** just before dusk with in total 7 individuals. On the road we observed **Ringed Warbling-finch** and at the water hole we heard **Great Horned Owl**. Driving the road further after the water hole we saw fresh Jaguar tracks in the sand parallel to the road that weren't there the night before, indicating the individual we observed continued her path after we left or the presence of another individual. Further west we observed **Crab-eating Foxes** and a **Pampas Fox**, as well as a **False Coral/Diamondback Flame Snake (*Oxyrhopus rhombifer*)**.

- **15 July 2022, 18.15-20.30, 15km one way/30km total.** Driving the road after sunset the Lahoux Spotter heat scope picked up many **Common Tapetis**. At the water hole we found **Azara's Night Monkeys** again in the big trees on the north side of the road (same tree as first night) as well as another group in the shrubs on the south side of the road. Next to the Cavy colony there were now fresh pug marks of an Ocelot, which made us decide to drive the road a little further until the straight part again. Right after we took the last curve and were about to turn around we picked up eyeshine on the road: **Ocelot!** After squeaking it stood still, but quickly went inside the shrubs again. Driving back there was something else on the road halfway towards Agua Dulce. Another **Ocelot!** This one cooperated a bit more and we got splendid views!

- **16 July 2022, 17.00-20.00, 18km one way/36km total.** It had rained a little bit during the day and the warm temperatures of 30+°C had made way for colder weather ($\pm 15^\circ\text{C}$). The night produced barely any interesting sightings, except for a **Common Brocket Deer**, 2 **Crab-eating Foxes** and a **Chaco Puffbird** (which we found sleeping with the Lahoux Spotter heat scope).

- **17 July 2022, 05.15-08.00, 23km one way/46km total.** We hoped that the morning would produce more mammals, but even without any traffic till 07.00 we only observed the more common birds and mammals, including a good sighting of the 2 **Great Horned Owls** on the edge of the water hole. Driving back in daylight we hoped for Peccaries crossing the road, and one did! It was quite distant, but still distinguishable greyish, large and with a bulgy (crested) back: **Chacoan Peccary!** Not the great sighting we had hoped for, but better than none.



False Coral/Diamondback Flame Snake

Ocelot

Cerro León

[-20.47621, -60.31897](#)

We decided to drive the road to Cerro Leon from Madréjon during the day, as it was still relatively cold and the nights and mornings before had produced almost 0 good sightings. Another trip report (Bocquier, 2012) stated that a peccary hunter had told them that during cold days/nights cats walk the roads during the day. Cold is relative, but either $\pm 20^{\circ}\text{C}$ isn't cold enough or the cats were walking different roads, but we didn't see any. The only mammal we observed was a cute-as-always **Southern Three-banded Armadillo** crossing the road. We suddenly heard a pishing sound and that turned out to be one of our tires being pinched by a thorn. Well, we thought it was a thorn but it turned out to be a piece of wood enough to make a decent campfire. After changing our tire we were now left without a spare, which altered our plans of staying multiple nights at Cerro León. The 5km entrance road is not in very good state, and we would advise to only drive to the water hole ([-20.43912, -60.32001](#)) and maybe walk up to the viewpoint ([-20.43217, -60.3168](#)) for a nice view of hilly Chaco. Unlike at the other parts of the park there are no beds to sleep on (just empty rooms, besides the **Przewalsky's Geckos** (*Phyllopezus przewalskii*)), nor is there electricity or water. There is ample space to camp though, and we had a nice quiet night.



Southern Three-banded Armadillo

Southern Three-banded Armadillo

At night we spotlighted on foot to not risk another puncture. Just before dark we heard and then saw an **Amazonian Motmot**, and later heard multiple **Undulated Tinamous**. The walk produced **Azara's Night Monkey** and another **mammal watcher**, but not much else.

We drove back to Madréjon from 05.15-08.00 the next morning to still have some spotlighting and to catch the first light of the day in hope for a better sighting of **Chacoan Peccary** or even a **Jaguarundi**, neither of which we saw. There were lots of fresh cat tracks (most likely Geoffroy's cat and Jaguar), besides the many fox pugmarks. Again **Crab-eating Foxes** were abundant, but nothing else was observed.



Pinched Tire...



Azara's Night Monkey

PN Enciso

[-21.20908, -61.65795](#)

Visited dates: 23-25 July 2022

General Information: Tientiente Agripino Enciso National Park is the full name of this park. It's open between 07.00 – 17.00, but they kept the gate open for us while we spotlighted the roads at night. There are multiple rooms, coming straight out of the fairy tale Snow White and the 7 Dwarfs, as every room has about 4 bunk beds for people up till 1,70m. There is a kitchen with a gas stove you can use for free, and there is enough space to camp outside. Again this is all for free. The 20km from La Patria towards Enciso are not in very good condition, and by driving one wheel into the sandy side of the road instead of the bumpy middle it still took us 30 minutes to get there.

Around the camping area we added **Brown Cacholote** as a new species for the Paraguay list. There was barely any water when we visited as it hadn't rained for almost a year. So no waterholes to stake out. We went out for spotlighting from 17.00 – 21.00 and focussed on the road going northeast about 1,5km before the ranger station (starting here: [-21.21885, -61.65258](#)). This road is quite sandy with a lot of bumps, and can be driven with a 2x4, but a 4x4 is recommended (and necessary after rain). This first afternoon/night we observed 2 **Black-legged Seriemas**, 2 **Southern Three-banded Armadillos**, many **Common Tapetis** and **Lowland Yellow-toothed Cavies**, and 3 **Pampas Foxes**. We heard multiple owl species, and afterwards got to see them. **Tropical Screech Owl**, **Chaco Owl**, **Barn Owl** and best of all: 3 **Striped Owls**! Walking a small round afterwards at the camping area with the

Lahoux Optics heat scope yielded a **Pearson's Chaco Mouse** (*Andalgalomys pearsoni*) and a **Chaco Leaf-eared Mouse** (*Graomys chacoensis*) (Paul is a hero in ID-ing all this stuff from picture☺).



Red-crested Cardinal



Lark-like Brushrunner

The second night we drove the main road going to PN Medanos Del Chaco (towards the border), because we read that people observed **Quebracha Tinamou**, **Black-crested Finch** and **Spot-winged Falconet** in this region. After driving about 20km the road got sandier and we didn't want to risk getting stuck in the dark. We stopped the car and right away heard **Quebracha Tinamou** calling, and about 200m further on the road we observed one walking! What a luck and we were happy to finally observe this species! We didn't manage to see the other bird targets. Driving back in the dark after 18.00 there was no traffic (Sunday night), but we only observed **Chaco Owl**, **Common Tapetis**, **Pampas Fox**, **Southern Three-banded Armadillo** and many **Plains Viscachas**! The best place to look for the last mammal is at the first estancia after the ranger station. There is a big open field in front of the estancia where they walked around after dark ([-21.20285, -61.66314](#)). We decided to drive the same road as the first night for about 10km, and quickly heard a noise in the shrubs. 2 **Chacoan Peccaries** were working their way through the shrubs, crouching under branches, their crest clearly visible! Unfortunately taking pictures between the shrubs was impossible, but we were happy to get a better look at this mammal after our first sighting far away. Later on we again heard some noise on the side of the road, and this time it was a **Cascabel Rattlesnake** (*Crotalus durissus*). Except for **Southern Three-banded Armadillo** and awesome fresh **Ocelot** tracks on the road, we didn't observe anything. No **Puma** unfortunately (which is regularly observed in this region), not even tracks.



Chaco road towards the border



Chacoan Mara

RN Cañada el Carmen

[-21.62812, -62.33869](#)

Visited dates: 25-26 July 2022

General Information: This small reserve (4000 hectares) is from Guyra Paraguay, and a reservation has to be made to ensure you have a room and that the rangers are there to receive you (instead of being in the field). Camping was 50.000¢ p.p.p.n. Reservations can be made by emailing aviturismoguyrapy@gmail.com (same organisation for the great location Tres Gigantes near Bahia Negra).

The site is pretty nice and we camped here because it is close to the Bolivian border (which we crossed early morning on the 26th). They have two waterholes which attract many birds and mammals. We saw **Common Brocket Deer**, but they had **Lowland Tapir** coming to drink there earlier that week. **Chacoan Mara** was seen around the main area. There are 3 walking trails, but as it was dry season most birds were near the waterholes. We added **Ultramarine Grosbeak** and **Blue-and-yellow Tanager** to the Paraguay list. **Ringed Warbling-finch** was common as well. According to the ranger **Quebracha Tinamou** can often be seen on the 1,5km long entrance road early morning. They saw a **Chaco Eagle** with a juvenile in the week before and observe them quite regularly here.

We walked one trail in the evening to search for mammals and herpetofauna, but only found one gecko species: **Homonota marthae**. Spotlighting the main road was very comfortable because it is tarred and in perfect condition, but other cars/trucks (about 4 per hour) drive fast so stopping is a bit more risky. We observed **Barn Owl**, multiple **Pampas Foxes**, a **Crab-eating Fox** and a **Molina's Hog-nosed Skunk**. The rangers had seen **Geoffroy's Cat** while walking a few evenings before. At the ranger station we found a beautiful **Boulenger Oven Frog** (*Leptodactylus bufonius*).



Common Brocket Deer



Boulenger Oven Frog

You made it! Thank you for reading 😊

For all photos of our Paraguay trip, comments, compliments, any specific questions, visit and/or contact us via our website. We would like to hear from you!

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All observations made by us in Paraguay can be found on Observation.org. We observed a total of 151 bird species and 31 mammal species in Paraguay. Click here for the: [total bird list](#), [total mammal list](#) or [the total species list](#).

Our Top 5	Birds	Mammals
1	Chaco Owl	Jaguar
2	Black-legged Seriema	Geoffroy's Cat
3	Ringed/Chaco Warbling Finch	Ocelot
4	Quebracha Tinamou	Pale Titi Monkey
5	Tucuman Pygmy Owl	Southern Three-banded Armadillo

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Chaco Puffbird



Crab-eating Fox



White-banded Mockingbird



Chaco Owl



Lark-like Brushrunner

Pale Titi Monkeys



Savanna Hawk



Green-cheeked Parakeet