



Greater Rheas in southern Entre Ríos - © Marcelo Gavensky

Pre “Ornithological Congress of the Americas 2017” Tour

Southern Entre Ríos

3 days/ 2 nights tour, August 4th to 6th

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Espinal forest and marsh in southern Entre Ríos - © Marcelo Gavensky

INTRODUCTION

The south of Entre Ríos province is one of the most productive birding areas in Argentina, and the best place in Buenos Aires surroundings. Although not being formally protected, the regions preserves very good habitats for birds and wildlife, with an interesting combination of Espinal forest, marshes and Pampas grassland. This gives refuge to an unsuspected diversity of birds, with a total list of over 300 species, including iconic pampas species such as Greater Rhea, as well as endangered and range restricted specialties such as Saffron-cowled Blackbird, Straight-billed Reedhaunter and Bay-capped Wren-spinetail, among many others.

But southern Entre Ríos is not just about bird diversity: it's also a land of abundance. This is especially evident while visiting the huge wetlands where it is possible to see hundreds of Maguari and Wood storks, Southern Screamers, Snail Kites and a plethora of herons and egrets. This, combined with the typical Argentine pampas landscape, with real gauchos and warm small town people, plus good stake and wine, makes of this area an incredible birding destination, and a "must go" place because its proximity to Buenos Aires.

This tour gives a good insight to the south of Entre Ríos, visiting the best spots within it, starting and ending in Buenos Aires city.

Main targets: Greater Rhea, Spotted Nothura, Roseate Spoonbill, Wood Stork, Maguari Stork, Southern Screamer, Ringed Teal, Snail Kite, Long-winged Harrier, Savanna Hawk, White-tailed Hawk, Giant Wood-Rail, Plumbeous Rail, Limpkin, South American Snipe, Great Horned Owl, Tropical Screech-Owl, White-fronted Woodpecker, White Woodpecker, White-barred Piculet, Curve-billed Reedhaunter, Straight-billed Reedhaunter, Lark-like Brushrunner, Short-billed Canastero, Chotoy Spinetail, Tufted Tit-spinetail, Little Thornbird, Firewood Gatherer, Brown Cacholote, Scimitar-billed Woodcreeper, Great Antshrike, White Monjita, Gray Monjita, Black-crowned Monjita, Black-and-white Monjita, White-tipped Plantcutter, Yellowish Pipit, Hellmayr's Pipit, Correndera Pipit, White-browed Warbler, Diademed Tanager, Gray-throated Warbling-Finch, Grassland Sparrow, Saffron-cowled Blackbird, Brown-and-yellow Marshbird, White-browed Blackbird and many more.



Maguari Stork - © Jorge La Grotteria

TOUR DESCRIPTION

The tour starts with an early pick up at the hotel in Buenos Aires city, from which we will travel to our first birding stop: Otamendi Natural Reserve area.

Otamendi is the nearest well preserved natural area to Buenos Aires, and one of the best places for a couple of bird specialties: **Straight-billed** and **Curve-billed Reedhaunters**. Both species have breeding populations in the area, although they are skulking and not easy to spot. Other birds typically found in this reserve are **Dusky-legged Guan**, **Rufous-capped Antshrike**, **Diademed Tanager** and **Scarlet-headed Backbird**.

After birding in Otamendi we will continue travelling northwards, to get to the first destination in southern Entre Ríos, around the town of Ceibas. Birding along dirt roads, we will look for wetland and Espinal forest species, such as **Southern Screamer**, **Maguari Stork**, **Snail Kite**, **Giant Woodrail**, **White-fronted Woodpecker**, **Spectacled Tyrant**, **White Monjita**, **Black-crowned Monjita**, **Warbling Doradito**, **Austral Negrito** and **White-tipped Plantcutter**, among many others.

Before arriving to our accommodations in the late afternoon, we will make one more birding stop near the town of Médanos, where we will try our luck with **Long-winged** and **Cinereous Harriers**, **Spotted Rail** and the beautiful **Many-colored Rush Tyrant**.

The following day, depending on the weather and dirt road conditions, we will visit a particular spot where we will have our best chances of seeing the endangered species **Black-and-white Monjita** and **Saffron-cowled Blackbird**, which are declining and hard to find.



Black-and-white Monjita with flock of Saffron-cowled Blackbirds - © Jorge La Grotteria

After trying that spot we will visit another patch of Espinal forest to add chances of seeing **Scimitar-billed Woodcreeper**, **Brown Cacholote**, **Lark-like Brushrunner** and **Short-billed Canastero**. In the huge savanas interspersed with the forest and marshes, we will look for the **Greater Rhea** and some of its distant relatives, the **Spotted Nothura** and **Red-winged Tinamou**, which are more often heard than seen.

Raptors are common in the area and include species such as **Savanna Hawk**, **Harris's Hawk**, **Rufous-thighed Hawk** and **Aplomado Falcon**. But the aquatic related birds are the ones who catch our attention because of their conspicuity: **Great Grebe**, **Limpkin**, **Plumbeous Ibis**, **Roseate Spoonbill**, **Black-necked** and **Coscoroba Swans**, **White-faced** and **Fulvous Whistling-Ducks**, **Rosy-billed Pochard**, **Brazilian Teal**, **Ringed Teal** and the very scarce **Black-headed** and **Mased Ducks**, are just some of the species that we will be looking for.

On the third and last day, we will start going back to Buenos Aires while making more birding stops along the way, to add chances of finding all of our proposed targets. We will plan to be back in BA by 7 PM, when the tour ends.

ITINERARY*

DAY 1: Pick up at 6 AM in Buenos Aires city. Transfer to southern Entre Ríos with birding stop in Otamendi area. Birding afternoon in Ceibas and Médanos surroundings. Check-inn at hotel in Gualaguay. Dinner and night in Gualaguay.

DAY 2: Morning tour to endangered species spot or Gualaguay surroundings (depending on weather). Afternoon birding in Gualaguay surroundings. Dinner and night in Gualaguay.

DAY 3: Transfer back to Buenos Aires with birding stops in Médanos, Ceibas and/or Ibicuy surroundings. End of tour in Buenos Aires city.

** The itinerary may change due to force majeure*



Roseate Spoonbills in southern Entre Ríos - © Marcelo Gavensky

TOUR DETAILS

Price

The tour has a total price of **US\$750** per person, in double basis. Single supplement (subject to group size): US\$150.

Includes accommodations, three meals a day (breakfast, lunch and dinner), all land transfers in private vehicle, driver and tour leader with spotting scope, snacks and drinks (bottled water) during the tour.

Does not include alcoholic drinks or sodas, tips, nor anything not mentioned on previous paragraph.

Group size

The tour will be made with a minimum of 2 and a maximum of 10 passengers (+ 1 driver and 1 tour leader).

Fisical difficulty

Easy.

Acommodations

We will accommodate in a comfortable, historical hotel of Gualeguay town.

Weather in southern Entre Ríos

This is a temperate region with high humidity and winter temperatures that usually vary from 5 to 21 ° centigrades, but this depends on the direction of the wind (northern wind brings warmer temperatures). Rain fall could be expected, although that will also depend on wind direction.



Birding in southern Entre Ríos - © Marcelo Gavensky

Packing for the trip

Bring long-sleeves shirts and long pants, plus a light jacket and a warmer coat and a good sweater with a scarf, wool hat and gloves in case there is southern wind. It's also essential to bring closed shoes (2 pairs if possible), a rain coat ("ponchos" are very usefull) and a good hat. Along with that you should bring sun glasses, sun screen and insect repellent.

Important information (READ): Birding Buenos Aires tours are designed for small groups, with low impact, personalized attention and hiring local guides whenever possible, in order to increase the quality of the tour. We keep the use play back down to a minimun possible so to avoid stressing the birds or affecting their natural behavior, thus actively contributing to the conservation of the same and promotion of responsible birding and ecotourism practices.

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