

# Birding Ecotours



**PARAGUAY BIRDING AND WILDLIFE ADVENTURE:  
AMAZING BIRDS AND WILDLIFE OF THE CHACO**

**DATES BY REQUEST**



*Crested Gallito is one of the targets of this Paraguay birding and wildlife adventure (photo Oscar Rodriguez).*

Although Paraguay is one of the less-frequently visited countries in South America, more adventurous wildlife travelers will certainly find that it has a very exciting array of birds, mammals and other wildlife on offer. Paraguay can in fact be seen as one of the last bastions for a number of rare and threatened bird species, many of which are difficult to find outside of this compact landlocked country. Partly because of its small size (it is slightly smaller than California), Paraguay has a relatively modest 724 bird species (IOC taxonomy, as of July 2021) and no country endemics. But this is compensated for by the sheer quality of the bird and mammal species; Paraguay is the easiest place to see a number of birds including many superb Chaco species as well as range-restricted Atlantic Forest denizens. Paraguay offers outstanding birding and wildlife viewing opportunities. and we are very excited to present this tour to you.

During this birding tour of Paraguay, we spend quite a lot of time exploring the vast Chaco habitat; Paraguay holds the largest intact tracts of this unique and threatened, uniquely South American, habitat. Not only is the Chaco habitat particularly large in Paraguay, but it is also really diverse here and contains Chaco ecotones such as the Dry and Humid Chaco, as well as the transition zone between the two. This diversity equates to a large number of Chaco-adapted bird species, making Paraguay the perfect destination to target all of the Chaco specials. These Chaco specials include some fascinating species such as **Black-legged Seriema**, **Crested Gallito**, **Spot-winged Falconet**, **Quebracho Crested Tinamou**, **Black-bodied Woodpecker**, **Chaco Owl**, and **Chaco Eagle**.



*Strange-tailed Tyrant, one of the five incredible-looking, long-tailed 'New World' flycatchers which are all possible on this tour (photo Oscar Rodriguez).*

During our twelve days in Paraguay, we will focus on finding all of the Chaco specials, and will also spend time exploring remnant patches of Atlantic Forest, such as those found in the Mbaracayú Reserve. In this forest reserve we will look for the rare **Helmeted Woodpecker** (one of the rarest woodpeckers on the planet!) together with another woodpecker gem, the aptly named **Robust Woodpecker**. Paraguay is indeed an amazing country for woodpeckers (with many species possible on this tour), as well as a good assortment of tinamous and all five spectacular, long-tailed, ‘New World’ flycatchers: **Fork-tailed Flycatcher**, **Streamer-tailed Tyrant**, **Long-tailed Tyrant**, **Strange-tailed Tyrant**, and **Cock-tailed Tyrant**.

The extensive forest trails at Mbaracayú include such classic Atlantic Forest species as **Eared Pygmy Tyrant**, **Bare-throated Bellbird**, **Rufous-capped Motmot**, **Sharpbill**, **Blond-crested Woodpecker**, **Surucua Trogon**, **Saffron Toucanet**, **Spot-billed Toucanet**, **Green-billed Toucan**, **Scaled Pigeon**, **Riverbank Warbler**, **Blue Manakin**, **Rufous Gnateater**, and if we are lucky, the rare **Black-fronted Piping Guan**.

Another highlight of this Paraguay birding and wildlife tour will be searching for the rare and Vulnerable (IUCN) **White-winged Nightjar**, one of the world’s rarest members of the Caprimulgidae (nightjar) family.



*Paraguay is perhaps the best place to see **White-winged Nightjar**, one of the rarest birds in South America (photo Oscar Rodriguez).*

Finally, the wetlands and other water bodies along the mighty Paraguay River will provide a great selection of aquatic species including **Jabiru**, **Roseate Spoonbill**, **Southern Screamer**, **Coscoroba Swan**, **Ringed Teal**, **White-winged Coot**, **Rosy-billed Pochard**, and **South American Snipe**. The adjoining grassy vegetation holding secretive species such as **Rufous-sided**

**Crake, Ash-throated Crake, Stripe-backed Bittern** and the recently described (2016) **Iberá Seedeater** (although IOC does not yet recognize this taxon). Our Paraguay tour is timed to coincide with the passing of a great selection of migrant seedeaters and we hope to encounter several interesting ones on our trip.

Paraguay is not only about the birding though, and it is one of the best places to view a number of rarely seen and elusive South American mammals. In fact, as a wildlife viewing destination, it is probably only surpassed by the **Brazilian Pantanal!** While out in the field, we will be on the lookout for unusual animals and will also partake in a few nocturnal drives where we have better chances of finding certain elusive species. Some of the more exciting mammals we stand a chance of finding on this trip include **Chacoan Peccary, Lowland Tapir, Crab-eating Fox, Pampas Fox, Capybara, Chacoan Mara, Coypu**, the elusive **Giant Anteater**, and rare felines such as **Puma, Jaguar, Jaguarundi** and **Geoffroy's Cat**.



*The Paraguayan Chaco is probably the best place on Earth to see the elusive **Geoffroy's Cat** (photo John Sterling).*

Our 11-day Paraguay birding and wildlife tour will be a quick taste of the biodiversity of this interesting country. We would however like to iterate that this tour is not for everybody and is quite different from most of our Birding Ecotours birding holidays. As such, we would encourage you to read the 'Important Information' tab on the [tour page](#), before deciding if this tour is for you.

This Paraguayan tour can be combined with our **Bolivia Birding Tour** which follows immediately after Paraguay. On our Bolivia tour we will target a number of loud and brightly colored parrots such as **Blue-throated, Red-fronted** and **Blue-and-yellow Macaws** as well as other specials like **Titicaca Grebe, Red-tailed Comet, and Cochabamba Mountain Finch**.

## Itinerary (12 days/ 11 nights)

### Day 1. Arrival in Asunción

You will arrive in Asunción and will be met at the airport by your tour leader and other Birding Ecotours representatives. You will then be transferred to the hotel, and if time permits, we might visit the wetlands and shores of the Bahía Asunción where we can make an early start on our bird list. Here we can find **Black-bellied** and **White-faced Whistling Ducks**, **Brazilian Teal**, **Collared Plover**, **Southern Lapwing**, **Large-billed Tern**, **Wattled Jacana**, **Snail Kite**, **Ringed Kingfisher**, **Crested Caracara**, **Wood Stork**, and **Cocoi Heron**. At this time of the year, we could also encounter migrant shorebirds such as **Upland Sandpiper**, **White-rumped Sandpiper**, **Pectoral Sandpiper** and **Lesser Yellowlegs**.

We may find our first mammals of the trip too, perhaps **Black-and-gold Howler Monkeys** or **Capybaras**.

Overnight: Bourbon Convention Hotel, Asunción

### Day 2. Asunción, Humid Chaco, Laguna Capitán and Loma de Plata

We will have an early start for our first morning in Paraguay, as we leave Asunción and cross the Paraguay River to head into the Humid Chaco area. Our birding will mostly be focused around a livestock ranch (that has Important Bird Area - IBA - status) which offers us the incredible opportunity of racking up over 100 bird species in just a few short hours. The area also holds an assortment of wonderful mammals and reptiles which we may be lucky enough to bump into. Many of the birds we are likely to see here are Chaco endemics with some of them threatened, mostly due to habitat loss. We will target a long list of species including the likes of **Greater Rhea**, **Red-legged Seriema**, **Chaco Chachalaca**, **Plumbeous** and **Buff-necked Ibises**, **Giant Wood Rail**, **Blue-crowned Trogon**, **Toco Toucan**, **White-barred Piculet**, **Campo Flicker**, **Green-barred**, **Golden-green**, **Little**, **Crimson-crested** and **Cream-backed Woodpeckers**, **Laughing Falcon**, **Nanday**, **Maroon-bellied** and **Blue-crowned Parakeet**, **Turquoise-fronted Amazon** and **Scaly-headed Parrot**. In addition to the above specials, we may also find **Great Rufous** and **Planalto Woodcreepers**, **Red-billed Scythebill**, **Tawny-crowned Pygmy Tyrant**, **Bearded Tachuri**, **White-bellied**, **Tawny-bellied** and **Rusty-collared Seedeaters**, **Black-capped Warbling Finch**, **Masked Gnatcatcher**, **Saffron-billed Sparrow**, **Scarlet-headed Blackbird**, **Yellow-rumped Marshbird**, **Golden-winged Cacique** and many others. The biodiversity of the Humid Chaco is truly amazing! After about three hours of bird watching, depending on the bird activity, we will continue on our way westwards.

We will then enjoy lunch in a restaurant well known for its tasty *empanadas*, while en route to the region of Loma Plata. In the afternoon we will visit the Laguna Capitan Reserve. This is a great birding site and will impress us by both the variety and quality of bird species on offer, which will likely include a couple of new Chaco target species. Some of the species we are likely to find here include **Ringed Teal**, **White-winged Coot**, **Southern Screamer**, **Rosy-billed Pochard**, **Stripe-backed Antbird**, **Checkered Woodpecker**, **White-fronted Woodpecker**, **Crested Hornero**, **Lark-like Brushrunner**, **Greater Wagtail-Tyrant** and if we are lucky, our first **Scimitar-billed**

**Woodcreeper.** We will arrive at our hotel in the early evening to grab dinner and celebrate a great day in Paraguay.

Overnight: Loma de Plata Inn



*The impressive and appropriately named Scimitar-billed Woodcreeper (photo Oscar Rodriguez).*

### Day 3. Loma de Plata, Chaco Lodge and Iparoma Ranch

Our Dry Chaco birding begins today! We will spend the day in the saline lakes in the transition zone between the Humid and Dry Chaco as well as in the Dry Chaco woodlands. To cap the day off we will make a nighttime excursion to target nocturnal birds such as **Great Horned Owl**, **Tropical Screech Owl**, **Scissor-tailed** and **Little Nightjars**, **Pauraque** and mammals such as **Pampas Fox**, **Yellow Armadillo**, **Crab-eating Fox** and the elusive **Geoffroy's Cat**.

Today, we hope to find the 'Big five' Chaco specials which include the rare **Black-bodied Woodpecker**, the most-wanted **Black-legged Seriema**, the elusive **Spot-winged Falconet**, the secretive **Crested Gallito**, and the nocturnal **Chaco Owl**. In addition, we should find birds such as **Brushland Tinamou**, **Quebracho Crested Tinamou**, **Cream-backed Woodpecker**, **Great Rufous Woodcreeper**, **Scimitar-billed Woodcreeper**, **Chaco Earthcreeper**, **Crested Hornero**, **Dinelli's Doradito**, **Cinereous Tyrant**, **Many-colored Chaco Finch**, **Black-capped Warbling Finch** and the recently split (2021) **Chaco Sparrow**. Additionally, there is an important variety of species which occur in high densities in the Paraguayan Chaco, which are difficult to observe in other parts of South America. Other important targets in the Chaco here include the likes of **Great** and **Bolivian Slaty Antshrikes**, **Black-bellied Antwren**, **Black-crested Finch**, and with luck the rare and majestic **Chaco Eagle**. We may also have encounters with **Golden-collared Macaw**,

**Black-backed Grosbeak, Swainson's and Brown-crested Flycatchers, Yellow-billed Cardinal, and Vermilion Flycatcher.**

Overnight: Iparoma Ranch

#### **Day 4. Iparoma Ranch and Teniente Enciso National Park**

The morning will be spent around Iparoma Ranch chasing down any specials we may still be missing before we make our way towards Teniente Enciso National Park where we will explore the depths of the Chaco, maximizing our efforts to see as many birds and wildlife as possible. The Teniente Enciso National Park offers chances of seeing **Jaguar**, and although far from guaranteed, it is one of the few places on earth to potentially observe this formidable predator in Dry Chaco habitat, rather than in the lush tropical forest and floodplains of the Pantanal. Other wildlife possibilities include **Yellow Armadillo, Puma, Lesser Grison** (the South American equivalent of the African Honey Badger and one of the rarest creatures of the 'New World').

While in Teniente Enciso National Park, there will be many Chaco specials to try and clean up on, including scarce species such as the imposing **Chaco Eagle** and the secretive **Spotted Nothura** (the Chaco subspecies here). We will also hopefully find **Olive-crowned Crescentchest** (here a potential split, as Chaco Crescentchest), **Brown Cacholote, Stripe-crowned, Chotoy, and Sooty-fronted Spinetails, Straneck's Tyrannulet, Blue-tufted Starthroat, Chaco Puffbird, Short-billed Canastero, Grassland Sparrow, White-naped Xenopsaris, Southern Scrub Flycatcher, Rufous Casiornis, Ringed Warbling Finch, Small-billed, Undulated and Tataupa Tinamous** and of course, **Black-legged Seriema**.

Overnight: Hotel Aeropuerto, Mariscal Estigarribia



*Yellow Armadillo photographed in the Chaco (photo John Sterling).*

### Day 5. Teniente Enciso National Park and Fortin Toledo Reserve to Neuland

After breakfast we will head to the Fortin Toledo Reserve where the large and incredibly rare **Chacoan Peccary** has been re-introduced into the wild. Despite the large size of this Chaco-adapted pig, it was only discovered in the Paraguayan Chaco as recently as 1976! We will have the chance to make a brief visit to the peccary breeding center where researchers are trying to bolster numbers of this Endangered (IUCN) and little-known species. The day will also be spent birding the Chaco here in search of specials such as **Quebracho Crested** and **Brushland Tinamous** and **Black-legged Seriema**.

Overnight: Hotel Boquerón, Neuland

### Days 6. Neuland and Selva Serena Private Reserve

This will be our final day birding the Chaco as we explore the nearby Selva Serena Private Reserve. While in the reserve we will target any missing Chaco specials such as **Black-bodied Woodpecker**, with this being one of the best places for this impressive woodpecker.

Overnight: Hotel Boquerón, Neuland



*The most-wanted **Black-legged Seriema** can be seen on our Paraguay tours.*

### Day 7. Neuland

We shall explore Selva Serena private reserve for another chance at **Black-bodied Woodpecker** and other specials we might have missed on previous days. We will spend most of the day exploring this great birding spot

Overnight: El Boquerón, Neuland

**Day 8. Neuland to Santa Rosa Del Aguaray**

Today will probably be the hardest day of the trip with a seven-hour drive to Santa Rosa del Aguaray. We will however make a few stops along the way, such as a lunch break in Concepción.

If we are not too tired from the long drive, we can stop at Rio Verde Forest Reserve to have our first birding in the Cerrado habitat. Here we will look for Cerrado specials and can have our first attempt at the Vulnerable (IUCN) and nocturnal **White-winged Nightjar** as well as the crepuscular **Giant Snipe**. If we manage to find **White-winged Nightjar** on this particular day, it will give us much more flexibility later on in the trip, during our stay in the Mbaracayú Reserve.

Overnight: Hotel Cristal, Santa Rosa Del Aguaray

**Day 9. Santa Rosa Del Aguaray to Mbaracayú Reserve.**

We will leave early for the Rio Verde Forest Reserve and will begin targeting a number of Cerrado specials such as **Cock-tailed Tyrant**, **Shrike-like Tanager**, and **Sharp-tailed Grass Tyrant**, among others. We will have lunch in Santa Rosa Aguaray and will then proceed to Mbaracayú Reserve.



*Helmeted Woodpecker is a big target during our visit to the Atlantic Forest at the Mbaracayú Reserve (photo Oscar Rodriguez).*

We will make the drive in the heat of the early afternoon, so as to maximize our time in the Mbaracayú Reserve. Some of the interesting species of this trans-frontier reserve (shared with Brazil) include **Spot-billed Toucanet**, **Bare-throated Bellbird**, **Surucua Trogon**, the ultra-rare **Helmeted Woodpecker**, the attractive **Blond-crested Woodpecker**, **Blue Manakin**, **Saffron Toucanet**, **Green-billed Toucan**, **Buff-bellied Hermit**, **Sharpbill**, **Plush-crested Jay**, **Spot-backed**, **Tufted**, as well as **Large-tailed**, **Great** and **Rufous-winged Antshrikes**. Other possible species include **Creamy-bellied Gnatcatcher**, **Rufous Gnateater** and with luck, **Black-fronted Piping Guan**.

Tonight we can make a nocturnal excursion (you can opt out if preferred) in search of **Black-capped Screech Owl** and **Rusty-barred Owl**.

Overnight: Mbaracayú Lodge

### Day 10. Full day at Mbaracayú Reserve, including White-winged Nightjar

Today will be a long day out in the field and will include another early start as we head to the center of the reserve, to a place known as Lagunita and will walk the trail along the Moroti Stream. We will enjoy a picnic lunch in the reserve and then move to the Cerrado area of Aguara Nu, where we will be birding for the rest of the afternoon and part of the evening. The afternoon's birding here should hopefully produce **Collared Crescentchest**, **Bearded Tachuri**, **Dinelli's** and **Crested Doradito**, **Sharp-tailed Grass Tyrant**, **White-rumped Monjita**, **White-headed Marsh Tyrant**, **Streamer-tailed**, **Long-tailed**, and **Cock-tailed Tyrants**, **Ochre-breasted Pipit**, **Black-masked Finch**, **Red Pileated Finch**, **Long-tailed Reed Finch**, **Wedge-tailed** and **Lesser Grass Finch**, **Buffy-fronted**, **Temminck's**, **Plumbeous**, **Rusty-collared**, **White-bellied**, **Copper**, **Tawny-bellied**, **Rufous-rumped**, **Dark-throated**, **Marsh**, and **Chestnut Seedeaters**. Many of the seedeater species here are intertropical migrants and are only present during their passage through Paraguay, between September and March.

The area is one of the most reliable places on earth to look for the Vulnerable (IUCN) **White-winged Nightjar**, one of *the* star targets of the trip. Other nocturnal species may include **Giant Snipe**, **Little**, **Scissor-tailed**, **Rufous** and **Silky-tailed Nightjars** and **Ocellated Poorwill**.

Overnight: Mbaracayú Lodge

### Day 11. Mbaracayú Reserve to Asunción

We will spend the morning in the Mbaracayú Reserve looking for any Atlantic Forest specials we may still be missing, such as the most-wanted **Robust Woodpecker**. We will then leave the reserve after lunch and head to Asunción. On our way to the city, we will make our last stop at the Arroyos y Esteros area IBA, hoping for an assortment of water bird species as well as some rare and unusual flycatchers. The biggest target bird here is the incredible-looking **Strange-tailed Tyrant**. Other species might include **Maguari Stork**, **White-faced** and **Bare-faced Ibis**, **Roseate Spoonbill**, **Tawny-headed** and **White-rumped Swallow**, and **Brown-chested Martin**.

Between October and November many migrant seedeaters may be seen passing through the area including **Chestnut**, **Dark-throated**, **Marsh**, **Rufous-rumped** and **Tawny-bellied** and **Double-collared Seedeaters**. The always-handsome **White-headed Marsh Tyrant** can often be seen here, as well as **Sooty Flycatcher**, **White Monjita** and **Fork-tailed Flycatcher**. There is the possibility

of skulking rallids in the marshy vegetation including **Ash-throated Crake** and **Rufous-sided Crake** and if we are lucky, we may find the tough-to-see **Stripe-backed Bittern**, while **South American Snipe** is much easier to find here. Additionally, **Yellow-rumped Marshbird**, **Long-winged Harrier**, **White-browed Blackbird**, and **Scarlet-headed Blackbird** are relatively easy to find in the area. We will then reach Asunción and our hotel for the last night of the tour, where we will enjoy our final dinner and say goodbye to our Paraguayan staff.

Overnight: Bourbon Convention Hotel, Asunción

## Day 12. Transfer to Asunción airport and flights home

In the morning we will be transferred to the airport to catch our flights home, or to catch our flights to nearby Bolivia to join our **Bolivia Birding Tour** where we can find endemics such as **Blue-throated** and **Red-fronted Macaws**, **Cliff Parakeet**, and **Black-hooded Sunbeam** as well as beauties like **Blue-and-yellow Macaw**, **Red-tailed Comet**, **Cochabamba Mountain Finch** and **Titicaca Grebe**.

*Please note that the itinerary cannot be guaranteed as it is only a rough guide and can be changed (usually slightly) due to factors such as availability of accommodation, updated information on the state of accommodation, roads, or birding sites, the discretion of the guides and other factors. In addition, we sometimes have to use a different international guide from the one advertised due to tour scheduling.*

<b>Duration:</b>	12 days
<b>Limit:</b>	We run this tour (or variations of it) by request, for various group sizes
<b>Start:</b>	Asunción, Paraguay
<b>End:</b>	Asunción, Paraguay
<b>Dates:</b>	By request
<b>Price:</b>	Please kindly ask for a quote
<b>Single supplements:</b>	Please kindly ask for a quote

### Price includes:

All meals (except where otherwise indicated)

All lodging is based in single rooms however some establishments have a limited number of single rooms and we may have to share double rooms.

All airport transfers

All ground transportation

Reserve entrance fees

All guiding services

Please bring your own water bottle which we will refill from our large containers — this will ensure we don't waste disposable plastic bottles.

**Price excludes:**

All flights

Visa fees

Medical and trip cancelation insurance

Personal expenses such as drinks, laundry, phone calls, minibar expenses, etc.

Gratuities (please see our [tipping guidelines blog](#))

Any meal on Day 1 and lunch/dinner on Day 11

Any activity not described in the itinerary