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## Estimates of Oil-Soaked Carcasses of the Magellanic Penguin (*Spheniscus magellanicus*) on the eastern shore of Península de Valdés, Chubut Province, Argentina Knaus, R. M. 1990

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- Turdus rufiventris*: 2 ? 66,5 y 71, 5 g, 10 Jun. 1987, Pichanal, SA. 1 ? 72 g, 15 Jul. 1988, Orán, SA.  
*Myioborus bruniceps*: 1 ? 9,5 g, 15 Jul. 1988, Orán, SA.  
*Basileuterus bivittatus*: 9 ? RA: 12,5-14 g, X y DS: 13,7 ± 0,71 g, 15 Jul. 1988, Orán, SA.  
*Thlypopsis sordida*: 1 ? 14,2 g, 10 Jun. 1987, Pichanal, SA.  
*Saltator coerulescens*: 1 ? 66,5 gr, 10 Jun. 1987, Pichanal, SA.  
*Passerina brissonii*: 1 ♀ 24,5 g, 15 Jul. 1988, Orán, SA.  
*Catamenia analis*: 1 ♀ 11,5 g, 25 Mar. 1987, Campo del Arenal, CA.  
*Catamenia inornata*: 1 ? 17,1 g, 21 Mar. 1987, El Infiernillo, TU.  
*Sicalis olivascens*: 1 ♂ 23,3 g, 21 Mar. 1987, El Infiernillo, TU.  
*Diuca diuca minor*: 1 ? 27,2 g, 24 Mar. 1987, Campo del Arenal, CA.  
*Diuca diuca crassirostris*: 2 ? 35,5 y 37,2 g, 1 ? 35,7 g, 24 Mar. 1987, Campo del Arenal, CA.  
*Phrygilus gayi*: 2 ♂ 27,5 y 28,5 g, 22 Jun. 1981, Inti Huasi, SL.  
*Phrygilus unicolor*: 2 ♂ 22,7 y 23,3 g, 21 Mar. 1987, El Infiernillo, TU.  
*Phrygilus carbonarius*: 2 ♂ 17,8 y 18 g, 22 Mar. 1987, Campo del Arenal, CA  
*Compsospiza baeri*: 1 ♂ 34,5 g, 1 ♀ 31,5 g, 2 ? 31,5 y 32,6 g, 21 Mar. 1987, El Infiernillo, TU.  
*Embernagra platensis*: 1 ? 46,2 g, 27 Mar. 1987, Arraga, SE.  
*Molothrus bonariensis*: 5 ♂ RA: 53,5-59,4 g, X y DS: 57,1 ± 2,21 g, 7 Oct. 1984, Villa María, CO.  
*Sturnella loyca*: 1 ? 93,5 g, 23 Mar. 1987, Campo del Arenal, CA.  
*Passer domesticus*: 6 ♂ RA: 24,5-28,5 g, X y DS: 27,3 ± 0,93 g, 5 ♀ RA: 24,5-27,5 g, X y DS: 26,7 ± 0,84 g, Jun. y Jul. 1982, Villa María, CO.

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### Estimates of Oil-Soaked Carcasses of the Magellanic Penguin (*Spheniscus magellanicus*) on the eastern shore of Península Valdés, Chubut Province, Argentina

Ronald M. Knaus\*

The specter of massive oceanic bird kills has intrigued man; sometimes as a fascinated bystander, other times as an involved scientist or humanitarian. Today the world stands in wonder and trepidation awaiting the evaluation of scientific reports of the consequences of the January, 1989, fuel-oil spill near Palmer Station in Antarctica and the crude oil spill near Valdes, Alaska. Seven months prior to this Antarctic spill, I made a series of observations of

petroleum-fouled, dead, marine birds littering the eastern shore of Península Valdés, Chubut Province, Argentina. On 20 June, 1988, traveling Ruta Provincial 3 toward Punta Norte, I turned onto an unnumbered road to Caleta Valdés, where the road came to a "T" junction. From Caleta Valdés I drove south 7.5 km along the sea front toward Punta Delgada, stopping several times for bird observation. Astonishingly, dozens of carcasses of Magellanic Penguin (*Spheniscus magellanicus*) were seen as much as 100 m inland from the sea, lying in brush-lined ravines leading up the cliffs. Close examination of these penguins well away from the surf revealed that they had been dead for several weeks, being in advanced states of decay. On 21 June, observations were made at several points along the beach from Punta Norte to Caleta Valdés, a distance of 47 km. On both days the number of dead penguins increased as one approached the surf at beach and cliff areas. In addition to birds well away (>75 m) from the surf, a higher tideline of jetsam and sea birds contained less dehydrated birds; a second, lower tideline was composed of fresher, still rotting carcasses. In each of the three zones (brushy upland (>75 m), high tideline, and low tideline), dead birds were counted along 10-m transects parallel to the strand at 5 random locations. In proximity to these 5 sites, a visual estimation was made to assure the sites were typical of the areas censused.

Along the beaches and cliffs from Punta Norte to 7.5 km south of Caleta Valdés, I estimated 1.5 relatively freshly dead Magellanic Penguins for every 10 m of shoreline closest to the sea and one dead penguin in the higher, parallel tideline. Above these two tidelines I estimated that there was one long-dead penguin every 10 m. The distance covered by these random observations was 54 km; extrapolation to this distance yields an estimate of almost 19,000 dead penguins from all three zones. Breaking this total down, would lead to estimates of over 5,000 freshly killed penguins and over 13,000 birds killed over undetermined periods of time.

Among the penguins were dead petrels, gulls, albatrosses, cormorants and other species, the great majority of which were also oiled. In aggregate, in all three zones mentioned above, these were estimated to be about one carcass per 10 m. Along the 54 km of coast, this would amount to over 5,000 birds of these other species. Because the coast from Punta Norte to Punta Delgada is 70 km in length, the totals for dead birds would be higher. It must be noted that the eastern coastline of Península Valdés is not perfectly uniform; the deposition of sea bird carcasses would be influenced by bays and indentations of the shoreline and by eddies in the variable ocean currents and tide. These variables would, in turn, influence estimates of dead animals when observations were made from only five observation locations. Because the population of the Magellanic Penguin numbers in the millions along the Argentine coast, one would expect to observe a natural mortality (Scolaro 1986). However, to see a high proportion of oiled birds among the dead is cause for concern and is an incentive for continual study into the future. Recent references to oiled birds along the coast of Argentina include Boersma 1987; Perkins 1983; and Scolaro 1986. It was interesting to note that no dead marine mammals were observed.

At least two-thirds of the dead birds were fouled by black or brown-black petroleum. Some dead Magellanic Penguins were so thickly coated that no white plumage showed and pebbles up to 2 cm in diameter adhered to their feathers. The other one-third would have to have been examined more carefully to determine the cause of death. However, several fresh-dead penguins that were examined were found to be in an emaciated state with essentially no body fat or breast muscle palpable, suggesting starvation as the cause of death. More than half of the 24 live Magellanic Penguins seen during the two days were badly oiled, and all appeared to be in weak condition. The one live and two dead penguins of a different species from the Magellanic Penguin were observed to have large patches of petroleum on their plumages.

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## Notas sobre aves del sur de Buenos Aires

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ABSTRACT.- Notes on the birds of southern Buenos Aires province

From 3-11 November 1988 a survey through the center and southwest regions of Buenos Aires province, was carried out. A total of 156 bird species were recorded, 44 of which were breeding. For 21 of the species ornithogeographic information is provided.

Con motivo de la preparación de un extenso trabajo sobre la avifauna de la provincia de Buenos Aires, se realizó, entre el 3 y el 11 de noviembre de 1988, un viaje por diversas localidades del centro y sudoeste bonaerense.

Se visitaron principalmente restos de bosques, pertenecientes a la provincia del Espinal (Cabrera 1976) o Provincia Chaqueña (Nores 1987).

Entre los lugares recorridos caben destacarse: a) un pequeño bosque de chañar (*Geoffroea decorticans*), situado a pocos kilómetros al este de Tornquist, en el partido homónimo; b) un bosque, de considerable extensión, contiguo a las Salinas Las Barrancas, unos 20 km al noroeste de Médanos, partido de Villarino, con predominio de caldén (*Prosopis caldenia*), algarrobo (*P. flexuosa*), sombra de toro (*Jodina rhombifolia*) y chañar; c) un pequeño bosque, principalmente de caldén, ubicado sobre el camino del Meridiano, que divide a las provincias de B. Aires y La Pampa, al sudoeste de Darregueira, partido de Puán.

Además se realizó una recorrida por las serranías de Curamalán, cordón de Ventania, próximas a Pigüé, partido de Saavedra; con una ascensión al cerro Curamalán.

Se registraron 156 especies, 44 de las cuales fueron halladas nidificando.

En la presente nota se da a conocer información considerada de interés ornitogeográfico sobre 21 especies. Se incluyen además datos inéditos, registrados en la zona con anterioridad, por uno de los autores (Narosky).

*Anhinga anhinga* - Aninga

4 Nov. 1988. Tres ejemplares, dos con plumaje de hembra y un macho, fueron observados posados en postes semisumergidos, a orillas de la ruta provincial 75, en el partido de General Alvear, a pocos kilómetros del Arroyo Vallimanca.

El primer registro de la especie en B. Aires pertenece a Narosky (1969). La mayoría de las