

Este trabajo fue revisado por pares y un comité científico, y ha sido aceptado para su publicación en la revista *Nuestras Aves*. Sin embargo, aún no ha sido modificado para su publicación final, por lo que esta versión y la final podrían no ser iguales.

A BLACK SKIMMER (*Rynchops niger*) IN USHUAIA, TIERRA DEL FUEGO

RAYADOR (*Rynchops niger*) EN USHUAIA, TIERRA DEL FUEGO

Anthony S. Cheke^{1*} & Ruth E. Ashcroft¹

¹39 Hurst Street, Oxford OX4 1HE, England, UK

*anthony.s.cheke@cantab.net

ABSTRACT: We observed a Black Skimmer (*Rynchops niger*) on 23 March 2026 in Ushuaia, Tierra del Fuego, Argentina. Presumably, the same individual was observed and photographed by numerous birders from late February until at least early April, with a probable last sighting in late May, nearly three months after its first record. Clarifying movement patterns at the subspecies level would improve our understanding of the species' movements in Argentina.

KEYWORDS: *Rynchops niger*, *R. n. cinerascens*, *R. n. intercedens*, southernmost record, Ushuaia, Tierra del Fuego

RESUMEN: Observamos un Rayador (*Rynchops niger*) el 23 de marzo de 2026, en Ushuaia, Tierra del Fuego, Argentina. Probablemente, el mismo individuo fue observado y fotografiado por numerosos observadores desde fines de febrero hasta al menos principios de abril, con un probable último avistamiento a fines de mayo, casi tres meses después de su primer registro. Esclarecer los patrones de movimiento a nivel de subespecie mejoraría nuestra comprensión de los movimientos de la especie en Argentina.

PALABRAS CLAVE: registro austral, *Rynchops niger*, *R. n. cinerascens*, *R. n. intercedens*, Ushuaia, Tierra del Fuego

Mid-morning on 23 March 2026, while birdwatching in Ushuaia after returning from an Antarctic cruise, we were surprised to see a Black Skimmer (*Rynchops niger*) in the Reserva Natural Urbana Bahía Encerrada adjacent to the town (54.81701°S, 68.31841°W). It was initially resting with a flock of Brown-hooded Gulls (*Chroicocephalus maculipennis*) hidden under a bank of vegetation, but flew up with them in response to an unknown stimulus. Although we expected it to return with the gulls to be photographed, the bird flew out of sight.

Our field guide (Narosky & Yzurieta 1993) does not include southern Tierra del Fuego within the species range, and a check of recent local bird lists online the following days revealed no records. After returning

to the UK, however, we found online photographs of what was presumably the same bird in the same place at Reserva Natural Urbana Bahía Encerrada. The earliest eBird record is from 22 February 2026 (54.8169° S, 68.3183° W; eBird: Bosch 2026; eBird: Strycker & Boyle 2026). After our record on 23 March, probably the same bird was recorded on 28 March (eBird: McKay 2026), 30 March (eBird: Hacker 2026), and 7 April (eBird: Ortali 2026), and it was still present on 16 April (eBird: Centurión 2026) and on 25 May (eBird: Gómez Carrillo 2026). Additional online photographs were found on Instagram dated 25 February 2026 (by user 'Donnikola') and on Facebook, uploaded 10 March 2026 by Ramon Luis Alvarado (<https://facebook.com/2735567193461231>), who wrote that the

bird had been around for about 20 days (*i.e.* since ca. 20 February). ASC contacted Mr Alvarado to suggest sharing authorship of this note, but got no reply. In all the mentioned reports, users referred to a single bird, indicating that all records likely involve the same individual that stayed at Reserva Natural Urbana Bahía Encerrada.

Three subspecies are recognized: *R. n. niger* in North and Central America, *R. n. cinerascens* in northern South America (mainly the Amazon and Orinoco basins), and *R. n. intercedens* in eastern and southern South America (Gochfeld et al. 2020). *R. n. cinerascens* is migratory, reaching southern Chile, whereas *R. n. intercedens* is largely sedentary, with few records from Chile or south of Buenos Aires Province (Jaramillo 2003; Vieira et al. 2018; Harrison et al. 2021). In Argentina, Petracci et al. (2005) state, without further details or references, that the Black Skimmer “ranges from the northwest to Tierra del Fuego”. Online records from Río Grande, northern Tierra del Fuego, from 2007, 2016, and 2024 are consistent with this statement (eBird: Benegas 2007; EcoRegistros: Costa 2016; eBird: Pressacco 2024). At the subspecies level, *R. n. cinerascens* is considered a rare migrant in Argentina (Pearman & Areta 2020), while in southern Chile it is usually recorded around Punta Arenas and the Strait of Magellan (Jaramillo 2003; Thomson et al. 2020; Ávila 2023).

Features used to separate the South American subspecies include tail and underwing covert color and the extent of white on the tips of the secondary feathers (Gochfeld et al. 2020). Our own sighting was rather brief, and we did not check the underwing coverts in flight. Reviewing online photographs of presumably the same individual, with brownish upperparts so possibly an immature, on 22 February 26 (eBird: Strycker & Boyle 2026) and by Ramon Luis Alvarado (10 March 2026, <https://facebook.com/2735567193461231>), the underwing appears pale or dusky depending on light and angle and is therefore inconclusive, although tail coloration is broadly brown above and would indicate *R. n. cinerascens*. Nevertheless, genetic studies (Goodenough et al. 2024) found that subspecies classification within South America did not correspond with measured genetic differentiation, suggesting that subspecific identification based on plumage should be treated with caution.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We thank the editors, Pablo Lavinia and Giselle Mangini, for a valuable source, and two anonymous reviewers for useful suggestions and some additional information. As we don't speak Spanish, we used Google to translate Spanish texts.

REFERENCES

- Ávila JM (2023) Avifauna costera urbana estival de Punta Arenas y Puerto Natales, Región de Magallanes, Chile Austral. *Revista Chilena de Ornitología* 29(1): 29-36
- Benegas LG (2007) eBird checklist: <https://ebird.org/checklist/S93235827>. eBird: An online database of bird distribution and abundance. eBird, Ithaca, New York. Accessed 22/7/2026
- Bosch K (2026) eBird checklist: <https://ebird.org/checklist/S303005232>. eBird: An online database of bird distribution and abundance. eBird, Ithaca, New York. Accessed 17/4/2026
- Centurión L (2026) eBird checklist: <https://ebird.org/checklist/S322635752>. eBird: An online database of bird distribution and abundance. eBird, Ithaca, New York. Accessed 17/4/2026
- Costa M (2016) Rayador (*Rynchops niger*). EcoRegistros: <https://www.ecoregistros.org/site/imagen.php?id=335717>. Accessed 22/7/2026
- Gochfeld M, Burger J, Lefevre KL (2020) Black Skimmer (*Rynchops niger*), version 1.0. En: Birds of the World, Billerman SM (ed). Cornell Lab of Ornithology, Ithaca, NY, USA. <https://doi.org/10.2173/bow.blkski.01>. Accedido el 17/9/2026
- Gómez Carrillo J (2026) eBird checklist: <https://ebird.org/checklist/S346594215>. eBird: An online database of bird distribution and abundance. eBird, Ithaca, New York. Accessed 22/7/2026
- Goodenough KS, Finch R, Newstead D, Mariano-Jelich R, Szczys P (2024) Variable connectivity among Black Skimmer (*Rynchops niger*) populations in North and South America: A population genetics investigation. *Waterbirds*, 47(1): 1-13. <https://doi.org/10.1675/063.047.0104>
- Hacker B (2026) eBird checklist: <https://ebird.org/checklist/S314882813>. eBird: An online database of bird distribution and abundance. eBird, Ithaca, New York. Accessed 17/4/2026
- Harrison P, Perrow MR, Larsson H (2021) *Seabirds: The New Identification Guide*. Lynx Edicions, Barcelona

- Jaramillo A (2003) *Birds of Chile*. Princeton University Press, Princeton & Christopher Helm, London
- McKay I (2026) eBird checklist: <https://ebird.org/checklist/S314152724>. eBird: An online database of bird distribution and abundance. eBird, Ithaca, New York. Accessed 17/4/2026
- Narosky T, Yzurieta D (1993) *Birds of Argentina & Uruguay: A Field Guide*. Vázquez-Mazzini Editorial, Buenos Aires
- Ortali S (2026) eBird checklist: <https://ebird.org/checklist/S320350477>. eBird: An online database of bird distribution and abundance. eBird, Ithaca, New York. Accessed 17/4/2026
- Pearman M, Areta JI (2020) *Birds of Argentina and the South-west Atlantic*. Helm, London
- Petracci PF, Canevari M, Bremer E (2005) *Guía de aves playeras y marinas migratorias del sur de América del Sur*. Fundación Vida Silvestre y Escuelas Hermanas de Aves Playeras, Argentina
- Pressacco Y (2024) eBird checklist: <https://ebird.org/checklist/S206242622>. eBird: An online database of bird distribution and abundance. eBird, Ithaca, New York. Accessed 22/7/2026
- Strycker N & Boyle A (2026) eBird checklist: <https://ebird.org/checklist/S303062389>. eBird: An online database of bird distribution and abundance. eBird, Ithaca, New York. Accessed 24/7/2026
- Thomson RF, Vukasovic MA, Estades C (2020) Estado de las poblaciones del Rayador (*Rynchops niger*) en Chile. *Gayana* 84(2): 144-151. <http://dx.doi.org/10.4067/S0717-65382020000200144>
- Vieira BP, Furness RW, Nager RG (2018) What do we know about Black Skimmers? A review on its annual-cycle and life-history main events, *Ardea* 106(2): 119-130, <https://doi.org/10.5253/arde.v106i2.a4>