



# First record of the scarce Magellanic plover *Pluvianellus socialis* for Uruguay, the northernmost record ever reported

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## Abstract

The Magellanic plover *Pluvianellus socialis* is considered rare and “Near Threatened” based on IUCN criteria due to its small population and the pressure on its habitat. It nests exclusively in southern South America, in the Patagonian Biome, and makes post-breeding movements to the Atlantic coast, arriving exceptionally in the Buenos Aires Province, Argentina. Here we report the first record of the Magellanic plover, and consequently a new bird family, Pluvianellidae, for Uruguay, becoming the northernmost record ever reported of the species. The species was observed between 7 and 10 May 2022 at Paisaje Protegido Laguna de Rocha, eastern Uruguay. Two individuals were photographed and identified as juveniles because of the streaked grey breast-band, a less evident dark line across the lores, and extensive yellowish base of the mandible, among other characters. The individuals were feeding fiercely on insects, sharing habitat with *Charadrius collaris*, *C. falklandicus*, *C. modestus*, and *Calidris fuscicollis*. This record emphasizes the importance of the site as a shorebird refuge and shows the potential ability of the species to move farther north than thought.

**Keywords** Chorlito ceniciento · Laguna de Rocha · Neotropical birds · Occurrence · Vagrant · Waders

The Magellanic plover *Pluvianellus socialis* is the single member of the Pluvianellidae family, within Charadriiformes, closely related to Chionidae (Paton et al. 2003; Baker et al. 2007; Remsen et al. 2022). It is considered rare and scarce (Grigera and Úbeda 1997; Ferrari et al. 2008; López-Lanús 2020). Its estimated population size ranges from 1500 to 7000 birds (Jehl 1975; Fjeldså and Krabbe 1990; BirdLife International 2022), and it also suffers pressure on its habitat. That is why it is considered “Near Threatened” (NT) based on IUCN criteria (BirdLife International 2022).

It is a migratory species that nests exclusively in the Patagonian Biome, on the marshes of the alkaline wetlands

of Tierra del Fuego and Santa Cruz Provinces, Argentina (Jehl 1975; Fjeldså and Krabbe 1990; Ferrari et al. 2008). Post-breeding birds move to the Atlantic coast with some birds flying relatively short distances north to Valdés Peninsula, Santa Cruz Province, Argentina, and exceptionally to south and central Buenos Aires Province and Falkland/Malvinas Islands (Hayman et al. 1986; Narosky et al. 1993; Chiurla 1996; Ferrari et al. 2008; Lowen et al. 2009; Wiersma and Kirwan 2020). However, its distribution and movements are poorly understood. Here, we report the first record of the species for Uruguay and the northernmost ever reported.

On the 7 May 2022, DC and LM photographed one Magellanic plover at Paisaje Protegido Laguna de Rocha, eastern Uruguay, part of the Sistema Nacional de Áreas Protegidas of Uruguay (34°40′51.2″S; 54°16′16.1″W; Fig. 1). Laguna de Rocha is also a Western Hemisphere Shorebird Reserve Network (WHSRN) site. The site is a brackish lagoon, located on the Atlantic Ocean coast. On the following 3 days, between the 8 and 10 May, two Magellanic plovers were photographed feeding together, always in the same area.

The individuals were identified as juveniles because of the streaked grey breast-band with feathers showing dark

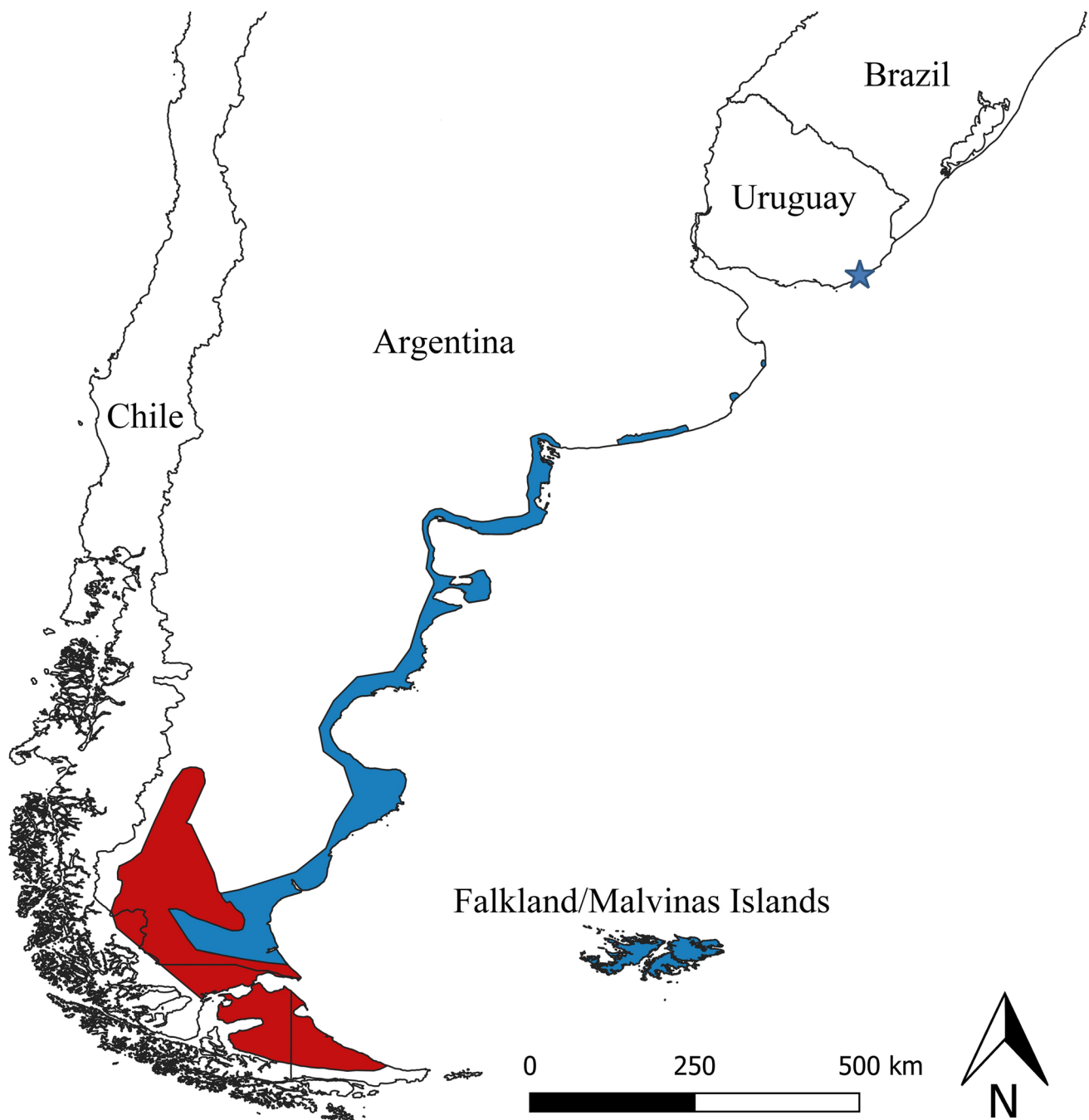
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**Fig. 1** Distribution of the Magellanic plover *Pluvianellus socialis*. Red and blue colours represent breeding and non-breeding seasons, respectively. The blue star indicates the Paisaje Protegido Laguna de

Rocha, location of the first record of the Magellanic plover *Pluvianellus socialis* for Uruguay. Adapted from BirdLife International

grey on their edges. The dark line across the lores was less evident. The bases of the lower and upper mandible showed an extensive yellowish patch covering a great part of the culmen. The iris was orangey and the legs more yellowish than in adults (Fig. 2; Hayman et al. 1986; Couve et al. 2016).

The individuals were feeding fiercely on insects in the marshes of the sandy coast and shore habitat of the lagoon.

There were other waders sharing the same habitat; however, most of the time, the Magellanic plovers maintained a distance from the other groups or joined them staying on the edges. The other waders were *Charadrius collaris*, *C. falklandicus*, *C. modestus*, and *Calidris fuscicollis*.

This is the first record of the species, and consequently of Pluvianellidae family, in Uruguay (Claramunt



**Fig. 2** a–b Juveniles of Magellanic plover *Pluvianellus socialis* photographed at Paisaje Protegido Laguna de Rocha, eastern Uruguay, May 2022. The following characteristics indicate that these individuals are juveniles: (1) yellow base of the bill; (2) extensive yellowish patch covering most of the culmen; (3) orange irises; (4) conspicuous yellowish legs; (5) streaked grey breast-band with feathers showing dark edges; and (6) less conspicuous dark line across the lores. Photos: Diego Castelli

and Cuello 2004; Claramunt and Aldabe 2021) and also it is the northernmost record ever reported (Franz et al. 2018; Pacheco et al. 2021), showing that the species has the potential ability to move 320 km farther north than thought (Lowen et al. 2009). The record at Paisaje Protegido Laguna de Rocha emphasizes the importance of the site as a shorebird refuge (Aldabe et al. 2009). Further exploration of this and other similar sites across the Uruguayan coast are recommended.

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**Author contribution** DC and LM recorded and photographed the individuals. DC made the map. DC and JA wrote the manuscript and LM made comments of the manuscript.

**Data availability** Not applicable.

**Code availability** Not applicable.

## Declarations

**Consent to participate** All the authors consent to participate in this study.

**Consent for publication** All the authors consent to publish this study.

**Conflict of interest** The authors declare no competing interests.

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