

The condor's feather: following and filming South America's birds

Michael Webster

NBC members who attended Birdfair 2018 in Rutland, UK, may recall seeing Michael Webster's film, Mar Chiquita, a haven for Argentina's flamingos, which both opened the event and featured at our AGM. In his new book, The condor's feather, Michael Webster tells of five years travelling through South America, following and filming birds for the benefit of conservation organisations across the continent.



One spring morning in 2014 my wife Paula and I left our tranquil home in Leicestershire, UK. A day later we were in Uruguay's bustling capital, Montevideo. Our small Toyota campervan, bursting at the seams with photographic and filming equipment, had just arrived there by sea. Our plan: to drive the length of the Andes, promoting bird conservation as we went, and to support cash-strapped bird-conservation organisations there by making films for them for free. Despite the dire warnings from friends that our mission was ridiculous, we consoled ourselves that it was to be an extended holiday: 12 months, maybe 18, and we'd be back home.

We were naïve. There were too many South American birds, the conservation demands too great. There were so many birds, and the people who protect them wanted our help. We finally made it back to the port of Tilbury in Essex, UK, five years later with scores of films and so many new birding friends. The following week I undid the waterproof box of notebooks, sat down and started to write.

All photographs by Michael and Paula Webster (websterswildshots.com).

1 Andean Condor *Vultur gryphus* (Vulnerable), Olta, La Rioja, Argentina, November 2015.