



NIH PUBLIC ACCESS

Author Manuscript

Virology Author manuscript; available in PMC 2009 September 1.

Published in final edited form as:

Virology. 2008 September 1; 378(2): 363–370. doi:10.1016/j.virol.2008.06.010.

Avian Influenza Virus Isolated in Wild Waterfowl in Argentina: Evidence of a potentially unique phylogenetic lineage in South America

Ariel J. Pereda^{1,*}, Marcela Uhart², Alberto A. Perez³, Maria E. Zaccagnini⁴, Luciano La Sala^{2,5}, Julieta Decarre⁴, Andrea Goijman⁴, Laura Solari⁴, Romina Suarez⁴, Maria I. Craig¹, Ariel Vagnozzi⁶, Agustina Rimondi¹, Guido König⁷, Maria V. Terrera³, Analia Kaloghlian³, Haichen Song^{8,9}, Erin M. Sorrell^{8,9}, and Daniel R. Perez^{8,9}

¹Instituto de Virología, CICVyA, Instituto Nacional de Tecnología Agropecuaria (INTA), C.C. 25, Castelar (1712), Buenos Aires, Argentina ²Field Veterinary Program-GAINS Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS), Estivariz 197, Puerto Madryn (9120), Chubut, Argentina ³Servicio Nacional de Sanidad y Calidad Agroalimentaria (SENASA), Av. Paseo Colon 367, Buenos Aires (1063), Argentina ⁴Instituto de Recursos Biológicos, CIRN, INTA, C.C. 25, Castelar (1712), Buenos Aires, Argentina ⁵Centro de Estudios Parasitológicos y Vectores CONICET, Calle 2 Nro 584, La Plata (1900), Buenos Aires, Argentina ⁶Laboratorio de Sanidad Aviar, EEA C. del Uruguay, INTA, Ruta Prov. 39 km 143,5, Concepción del Uruguay (3260), Entre Ríos, Argentina ⁷Instituto de Biotecnología, CICVyA, INTA, C.C. 25, Castelar (1712), Buenos Aires, Argentina ⁸Department of Veterinary Medicine, University of Maryland ⁹Virginia-Maryland Regional College of Veterinary Medicine, 8075 Greenmead Drive, University of Maryland, College Park, MD 20742-3711, USA

Abstract

Avian Influenza (AI) viruses have been sporadically isolated in South America. The most recent reports are from an outbreak in commercial poultry in Chile in 2002 and its putative ancestor from a wild bird in Bolivia in 2001. Extensive surveillance in wild birds was carried out in Argentina during 2006-2007. Using RRT-PCR, 12 AI positive detections were made from cloacal swabs. One of those positive samples yielded an AI virus isolated from a wild kelp gull (*Larus dominicanus*) captured in the South Atlantic coastline of Argentina. Further characterization by nucleotide sequencing reveals that it belongs to the H13N9 subtype. Phylogenetic analysis of the 8 viral genes suggests that the 6 internal genes are related to the isolates from Chile and Bolivia. The analysis also indicates that a cluster of phylogenetically related AI viruses from South America may have evolved independently, with minimal gene exchange, from influenza viruses in other latitudes. The data produced from our investigations are valuable contributions to the study of AI viruses in South America.

*Corresponding author: Laboratorio de Aves y Porcinos, Instituto de Virología, CICVyA, INTA – Casilla de Correo 25, Castelar, CP 1712, Provincia de Buenos Aires, Argentina. Tel: ++54-11-4621-1447. Fax: ++54-11-4621-1743. Email: apereda@enia.inta.gov.ar.

Publisher's Disclaimer: This is a PDF file of an unedited manuscript that has been accepted for publication. As a service to our customers we are providing this early version of the manuscript. The manuscript will undergo copyediting, typesetting, and review of the resulting proof before it is published in its final citable form. Please note that during the production process errors may be discovered which could affect the content, and all legal disclaimers that apply to the journal pertain.

Keywords

Avian Influenza; Argentina; Kelp Gull; waterfowl; molecular characterization; evolution; South America; H13N9

Introduction

Natural infections with influenza A viruses occur in a variety of avian and mammalian hosts. Influenza A viruses of avian origin have been implicated in outbreaks of influenza in mammals, such as seals, whales, pigs, horses, mustelids, felines and humans as well as in domestic poultry species (Gauthier-Clerc et al., 2007; Ito et al., 1995; Webster et al., 1992). Influenza A viruses are classified on the basis of two glycoproteins expressed on the virus surface, the haemagglutinin (HA) and the neuraminidase (NA). To date, 16 HA (H1-H16) and 9 NA (N1-N9) antigenic subtypes have been detected in avian species and can be found in multiple combinations (Capua and Alexander, 2006; Olsen et al., 2006). In wild aquatic birds, most avian influenza (AI) infections are either subclinical or accompanied by mild clinical signs, usually caused by low pathogenicity AI strains (LPAI). Occasionally, highly pathogenic avian influenza strains (HPAI) emerge in nature and cause severe outbreaks with high mortality rates (Donis et al., 1989; Gauthier-Clerc et al., 2007).

The low virulence of AI subtypes in wild aquatic birds is thought to be the result of co-adaptation and evolution, which has allowed these viruses to find an optimal balance between high levels of replication and few pathological effects for the host (Gauthier-Clerc et al., 2007; Sharp et al., 1997; Widjaja et al., 2004). LPAI viruses have been isolated from at least 105 different wild bird species representing 26 families. It is widely accepted that birds of wetlands and aquatic environments such as the Anseriformes and Charadriiformes constitute the major natural reservoirs of influenza A viruses (Alexander, 2000; Olsen et al., 2006; Rappole and Hubalek, 2006). A great deal of information exists on the ecology of LPAI viruses in these reservoirs from North America and Eurasia. Surveillance studies of wild ducks in the Northern Hemisphere have revealed a seasonal infection pattern of influenza A viruses (Olsen et al., 2006). In contrast, little information is available about the presence, movement, ecology and phylogenetic relationships of LPAI viruses in wild birds in the Southern Hemisphere, particularly in South America (Donis et al., 1989; Krauss et al., 2004; Olsen et al., 2006). Waterfowl are possible reservoirs of influenza virus in South America, since there are in this region the Anatidae counterparts of the Northern Hemisphere species (De La Peña and Rumboll, 2001; Narosky, 2003). Early surveillance efforts focusing on marine birds of South America revealed negative serologic results for influenza A virus though no viral isolation was attempted (Karesh et al., 1999; Padilla et al., 2003; Travis et al., 2006; Uhart et al., 2003). Interestingly, besides historical references of HPAI outbreaks in the early 20th century the only other HPAI virus outbreak in South America was reported in 2002 from commercial poultry in Chile. Additionally, a LPAI virus H7 strain was isolated in Bolivia from an indigenous wild duck (Cinnamon Teal - *Anas cyanoptera*), which was phylogenetically related to the Chilean H7 HPAI strains (Spackman et al., 2006; Spackman et al., 2007; Suarez et al., 2004).

Susceptibility of South American waterfowl to the Asian HPAI H5N1 strains was confirmed during a HPAI outbreak in two nature parks in Hong Kong in late 2002, when 11 Anseriformes species, indigenous to South America, were infected and died (Ellis et al., 2004). The unprecedented emergence and spread of the HPAI H5N1 virus during 2003-2004 in East and Southeast Asia and its subsequent expansion to the Middle East, Europe and Africa has placed AI on top of the priority list of potential transboundary diseases (Alexander, 2000). Whether the broad scale spread of HPAI H5N1 is due to Anatidae migrations (Gilbert et al., 2006) or human activity involved in movement of infected domestic poultry, there is certainly an urgent

need to establish worldwide epidemiological efforts to track the movement and ecology of this and many other AI subtypes (Gauthier-Clerc et al., 2007). International organizations involved in human and animal health have promoted collaboration and coordinated efforts to intensify AI surveillance programs across the globe. In Argentina, the National Agriculture Technology Institute (INTA) and the National Animal Health Service (SENASA), in collaboration with the Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) have co-organized a long-term surveillance program in resident and migratory wetland bird populations. These surveillance efforts are aimed at elucidating the presence and ecology of influenza A viruses in wild aquatic birds and to provide an early warning system for the potential introduction of HPAI strains in densely populated poultry areas (DPPAs) in Argentina. The present study reveals preliminary results obtained from the initial surveillance activities performed during 2006-2007 on hunter-killed waterfowl and captured live birds in Argentina. Using RRT-PCR, 12 AI positive samples were detected from 2895 samples. After blind passages in 10 - day-old SPF chicken eggs one positive remained. The virus identified in this report, A/Kelp Gull/Argentina/LDC4/06 (H13N9), represents the first AI isolate from indigenous wild birds captured in Argentina. Sequence and phylogenetic analysis revealed similarities with other AI viruses isolated in South America, and suggest the existence of a population of AI viruses in South America that evolved independently from viruses in other latitudes.

Materials and methods

Geographic locations of sampling sites in Argentina

The targeted geographic locations included in this study are considered potential risk areas for avian influenza infections and outbreaks (Figure 1). The sampling locations consist of vast wetlands located along important migratory bird pathways and in close proximity to Densely Populated Poultry Areas (DPPAs), which comprise approximately 70% of the poultry production in Argentina. These wetland locations serve as reservoirs for multiple populations of resident waterfowl species, particularly ducks (*Netta peposaca*, *Amazonetta brasiliensis*, *Anas versicolor*, etc.). From October to March (Austral spring and summer seasons), a large number of gregarious migratory Charadriiformes use these wetlands as feeding grounds or stopover sites, interacting with resident waterfowl populations. In addition, agro-ecosystems, including rice plantations, receive significant numbers of Nearctic waders during December and January. These habitats are extensive along the Argentine Atlantic coast and in addition, vast fresh water wetlands, consisting of lagoons, forest islands and marshes are interconnected via the Paraná and Uruguay rivers, two of the major river systems in South America. Contrary to the Northern Hemisphere, South American duck populations have a more homogeneous distribution of the number of birds during the year, as winter migrations are not as critical (López-Lanús and Blanco, 2005; Olsen et al., 2006; Gilbert et al., 2006). From May to August, the wetlands are used for game bird hunting focusing mainly on ducks, tinamous and wild pigeons.

Two major geographic areas were used as sampling sites (Figure 1)

Area 1 includes four districts of Entre Ríos province (Gualeguay, Paraná, La Paz and Victoria), one district in Corrientes province (Esquina) and one district in Santa Fe province (San Javier). Samples were collected from private hunting lodges and national reserves, strategically set within the described wetlands. Each of these 6 districts covers 15,000 hectares. In area 2 samples were obtained from a variety of seabirds (gulls, penguins, cormorants, terns and shorebirds) captured along the Argentine Atlantic coast from the provinces of Buenos Aires to Tierra del Fuego. This particular seashore area covers approximately 5,000 kilometers from parallel 36° S to 55° S.

Sample collection

Trained biologists and veterinarians carried out the sampling activities. Each bird was initially identified by species, sex, age category (adult, juvenile or fledgling) and weight. Following identification swabs were collected. Cloacal swabs, 2895 in total, were collected from wild waterfowl using single-use polyester sterile swabs and then stored separately into single plastic cryo-tubes, containing 2 ml of Phosphate Buffer Solution (PBS) with 50% glycerol and Penicillin 10,000 IU/ml, Streptomycin 5,000 µg/ml, Gentamicin Sulfate 1,000 µg/ml, Kanamycin sulfate 700 µg/ml and Anphotericin B 10 µg/ml (Sigma Chemical Co™, St. Louis, MO, USA). Samples were either refrigerated at 4°C for less than 48 hours before they were processed for molecular diagnosis and virus isolation or, if immediate processing was not available, they were frozen in liquid nitrogen.

AI detection

Viral RNA was extracted from 200 µl of PBS suspension from cloacal swabs using the Total RNA Isolation Chemistry Starter Kit (Applied Biosystems™, Foster City, CA, USA) in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions. RNA was eluted in a final volume of 100 µl and stored at -80°C. Viral cDNA was prepared using 30 µl of viral RNA and random hexamers in a final volume of 60 µl as per manufacturer's directions using the High Capacity cDNA Archive kit™ (Applied Biosystems™, Foster City, CA, USA). The cDNA was tested for AI by real-time reverse transcription PCR (RRT-PCR) using TaqMan Universal PCR Master Mix™ (Applied Biosystems™, Foster City, CA, USA) directed to the matrix (M) gene, which detects all type A influenza viruses as previously reported (Spackman et al., 2002). The PCR reaction was performed in an ABI Prism 7500 SDS apparatus (Applied Biosystem™, Foster City, CA, USA).

Virus isolation and characterization

All swab samples determined positive by RRT-PCR were processed for virus isolation in specific pathogen free (SPF) embryonated chicken eggs. Briefly, 200 µl of PBS suspension from the cloacal swab samples were used for viral isolation in the allantoic cavity of 9 - 11 day-old SPF chicken embryonated eggs, in accordance to standardized protocols described in the OIE (2000) and to Argentine regulations.

Genetic analysis and phylogenetic characterization

The genome segments of AI were amplified by RT-PCR as described by Hoffman (Hoffmann et al., 2001) and directly sequenced with the BigDye terminator kit (Applied Biosystems™, Foster City, CA, USA) on an ABI 3730 (Applied Biosystems™, Foster City, CA, USA). Regions corresponding to the entire open reading frame of HA, NP, NA, M1 and NS, and partial sequences of PB2, PB1 and PA were obtained (primer sequences available upon request). Genomic information was derived from overlapping sequences covered by forward and reverse primers. At least two independent RT-PCR reactions were produced for each gene and used for sequencing. Sequences are available through GenBank, accession nos. EU523136 through EU523143. Nucleotide BLAST analysis (at <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/blast/Blast.cgi>) was initially used to identify the most closely related influenza A virus gene for each respective segment. Then, all available isolates obtained were included in a multiple alignment by CLUSTAL X Version 1.8.3 program (Thompson et al., 1994), and the percent identities were calculated. The same reference isolates were then used for phylogenetic analysis. The phylogenetic trees, calculated by neighbor-joining method, were computed with the DNADIST and NEIGHBOR modules of the PHYLIP package (Felsenstein, 1989). Bootstrapping values (1,000 replicates) were calculated with the modules SEQBOOT, DNADIST, NEIGHBOR and CONSENSE. Branches with bootstrapping values ≥ 70 were considered significant, corresponding to a confidence interval $\geq 95\%$ (Hillis and

Bull, 1993). For visualization and printing of the trees, the TREEVIEW program, Version 1.6.6 (Page, 1996) was used.

Results

Isolation of a H13N9 type A influenza virus from a Kelp Gull

From March 2006 to December 2007, 2895 cloacal swabs were collected from wild waterfowl from different locations (as described previously in Materials and Methods). Our sampling and processing procedures revealed the presence of 12 AI positive samples by RRT-PCR, using the matrix gene as the target for amplification. Additional RRT-PCR tests ruled out the presence of H5 and H7 using a protocol kindly provided by Dr. William Dundon at the Istituto Zooprofilattico Sperimentale delle Venezie (IZSVE, 2006). Twelve of the thirteen RRT-PCR positives samples corresponded to Area 1 and one to Area 2 (Figure 1). Efforts to grow the RRT-PCR positive samples in SPF embryonated chicken eggs resulted in only one positive isolation from Area 2. This virus was isolated from a free-ranging Kelp Gull (*Larus dominicanus*) captured in the estuary of Bahía Blanca, in the southern part of Buenos Aires province (40° 33' S, 62° 16' W). Initial molecular characterization of this isolate revealed that it is an influenza type A virus of the H13N9 subtype and was named A/Kelp Gull/Argentina/LDC4/06 (H13N9). The Kelp Gull is mainly a coastal gull, which breeds on shores and islands throughout much of the southern hemisphere. *L. dominicanus* is a subspecies found mostly in South America, parts of Australia and New Zealand (where it is also known as the Southern Black-backed Gull or Karoro). It is the southern equivalent of the northern hemisphere's Lesser Black-backed Gull and is similar in size and wingspan. Our study suggests that the Kelp Gull of the Argentine Atlantic coast is a potential reservoir of avian influenza viruses in South America. To our knowledge this is the first avian influenza virus isolated from gulls in South America.

The detection rate using RRT-PCR was 0.41%, whereas isolation in SPF eggs yielded an overall virus prevalence of 0.035%. This and previous studies suggest that it is not possible to rely singly on RRT-PCR or virus isolation to perform thorough characterizations of avian influenza viruses in wild birds (Runstadler et al. 2007). The H13N9 virus isolated in this study was obtained after a second blind passage in chicken embryos producing HA titers between 1/64 – 1/128 and a virus titer of 10⁵ EID₅₀/ml (mean egg infectious dose). Thus, it is tempting to speculate that failure to amplify some of our RRT-PCR positives in SPF chicken eggs maybe due to the inability of the latter to act as a good substrate for virus growth.

Sequencing and phylogenetic characterization of the H13N9 from Kelp Gull suggest the presence of influenza genes unique to the Southern Hemisphere

In order to better characterize the H13N9 virus isolated from Kelp Gull, we performed sequencing and phylogenetic analysis for the 8 genomic segments. Based on the phylogenetic analysis performed in this study (Figure 2), the PB2, PB1, PA, NP, M1 and NS genes are most closely related, phylogenetically, to the AI isolates collected during an outbreak in commercial poultry in Chile in 2002 and the putative ancestor isolated from a Cinnamon Teal in Bolivia (Table 2). In addition, the NP and M genes are more distantly related to an AI virus isolated from a shorebird in Brazil in 1990, A/semi-palmated sandpiper/Brazil/43/1990 (H2N1) (Figure 2). The analysis also indicates that the internal genes from the South American isolates are grouped in their own cluster with considerable bootstrap values (Figure 2). The PA, NP and NS genes also showed phylogenetic relationship with influenza viruses isolated from equine and canine species; most notably the NS tree shows a close relationship with an Argentinean equine isolate. Spackman et al. (2006) previously described a similar relationship in the NS gene for the Bolivian isolate. This data suggests the potential for occasional introduction of AI genes from birds into the horse population in South America.

With respect to genes that code for surface proteins, the closest HA gene relative is A/duck/Siberia/272PF/1998 (H13N6) while bootstrap values indicate a more distant relationship to H13 viruses isolated from gulls in Maryland, USA in 1977. Interestingly, our kelp gull isolate is less phylogenetically related to more recent H13 viruses isolated in North America or Europe. Thus, it is tempting to speculate that H13 viruses in South America may have evolved independently from other H13 viruses in other parts of the world. Analysis of the deduced HA protein sequence shows a cleavage site consistent with a low pathogenic AI (VPAISNRGLF) with little variation among viruses of the H13 subtype (Table 3). Interestingly, the N9 NA gene is more closely related to European isolates than to North American isolates. The two most phylogenetically related NA genes are from influenza viruses isolated during a poultry outbreak in Italy and from a wild duck captured in the Netherlands (Figure 2). The NA phylogenetic tree shows that these isolates are grouped in a different cluster from others N9 subtype viruses and supported with high bootstrap values, indicating a phylogenetically distinct lineage group of N9 NA genes. However, the nucleotide distance between the European and the Argentinean isolates is remarkably high (22%) to support a unique lineage group and additional N9 sequences from this cluster would be necessary to better explain its evolutionary pattern.

Discussion

As noted previously (Spackman et al., 2006; Spackman et al., 2007), AI surveillance in wild birds in South America has been minimal. In this study we attempted to provide a better understanding of the ecology of AI in wild birds in Argentina. National Veterinary Services in South American countries are routinely screening commercial and backyard poultry farms for the presence of AI. These efforts are targeted to prevent the introduction of AI in domestic poultry. However, in order to provide a better and more credible risk analysis of the potential introduction of AI to commercial and/or backyard poultry it is necessary to monitor the presence and prevalence of these viruses in wild bird populations (Munster et al., 2006). One H7N3 HPAI outbreak in commercial poultry was reported in Chile in 2002 (Suarez et al., 2004). The source of the virus was postulated to be wild waterfowl due to the low infectivity of this virus strain in chickens. Interestingly a closely related LPAI H7 virus was obtained from a Cinnamon Teal in Bolivia collected only a few months before the HPAI outbreak. However, this virus was only characterized recently (Spackman et al., 2006; Spackman et al., 2007) highlighting the importance of timely wild bird surveillance and virus characterization.

The present study reveals data obtained from the initial, inter-institutional AI surveillance effort performed in Argentina during 2006-2007 on hunter-killed waterfowl and captured live birds. As a result, we report for the first time an isolation of a H13N9 AI virus from a kelp gull in Argentina. As past surveillance efforts have shown, a majority of the H13 viruses isolated to date have been from different gull species and this case is not an exception (Fouchier et al., 2005). However, our phylogenetic analysis suggests that the H13 virus isolated in Argentina is evolving independently from other H13 viruses. More importantly, our analysis indicates that the Kelp Gull N9 gene belongs to a phylogenetic cluster that until recently contained NAs of purely Eurasian origin, leading us to believe that this lineage spreads beyond Eurasia. However, additional N9 gene sequences from this poorly defined lineage are required to draw proper conclusions based on the high nucleotide distance observed between the European and Argentinean isolates. It is also interesting to note that the internal genome segments (PB2, PB1, PA, NP, M, and NS) of this isolate are closely related to those viruses previously isolated from the Chilean outbreak, and the putative ancestor from a wild bird captured in Bolivia. This relation suggests a pattern of genetic evolution with little exchange of segments with North American isolates, despite sharing multiple trans-hemispheric migratory routes. As noted by others (Spackman et al., 2006) the NS genes from these South American isolates are related to equine viruses; however it is not a gene derived from the equine lineage due the great nucleotide divergence observed. Our data coupled with the fact that the kelp gull (*Larus*

dominicanus) is a nonmigratory bird, supports the notion of a particular, and yet poorly understood, ecology of AI viruses in South America. In this regard, this study certainly sheds more attention and awareness regarding the presence and molecular characteristics of AI viruses in South America.

Acknowledgements

The authors would like to thank to Juan Trinidad, Guillermo Berra, Sergio Duffy, Fernando Fernandez, Cora Espinoza, William Dundon, William Karesh, Damien Joly and Carolina Marull for their invaluable support.

This work was partially supported in Argentina by INTA through the Proyecto Influenza – PE Otras Exóticas (AESA1573) and through the Global Avian Influenza Network for Surveillance (GAINS) program, funded in part by USAID Grant No. LAG-A-00-99-00047-00 (the opinions expressed herein are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of the US Agency for International Development).

H.S., E.M.S. and D.R.P. were supported in part by the Program on Prevention and Control of Avian Influenza in the US (AICAP), 2005-05523, CSREES-USDA, and by grant number AI052155 from NIAID-NIH.

References

- Alexander DJ. A review of avian influenza in different bird species. *Vet Microbiol* 2000;74(12):3–13. [PubMed: 10799774]
- Capua I, Alexander DJ. The challenge of avian influenza to the veterinary community. *Avian Pathol* 2006;35(3):189–205.
- De La Peña, MR.; Rumboll, M. Birds of Southern South America and Antarctica. Checklists, PI., editor. Princeton University Press; 2001.
- Donis RO, Bean WJ, Kawaoka Y, Webster RG. Distinct lineages of influenza virus H4 hemagglutinin genes in different regions of the world. *Virology* 1989;169(2):408–17. [PubMed: 2705304]
- Ellis TM, Bousfield RB, Bissett LA, Dyrting KC, Luk GS, Tsim ST, Sturm-Ramirez K, Webster RG, Guan Y, Malik Peiris JS. Investigation of outbreaks of highly pathogenic H5N1 avian influenza in waterfowl and wild birds in Hong Kong in late 2002. *Avian Pathol* 2004;33(5):492–505. [PubMed: 15545029]
- Felsenstein J. Phylip, phylogeny inference package (version 3.5c). *Cladistics* 1989;5:164–166.
- Fouchier RA, Munster V, Wallensten A, Bestebroer TM, Herfst S, Smith D, Rimmelzwaan GF, Olsen B, Osterhaus AD. Characterization of a novel influenza A virus hemagglutinin subtype (H16) obtained from black-headed gulls. *J Virol* 2005;79(5):2814–22. [PubMed: 15709000]
- Gauthier-Clerc MLC, Thomas F. Recent expansion of highly pathogenic avian influenza H5N1: a critical review. *Ibis* 2007;149(2):202–214.
- Gilbert M, Xiao X, Domenech J, Lubroth J, Martin V, Slingenbergh J. Anatidae migration in the western Palearctic and spread of highly pathogenic avian influenza H5N1 virus. *Emerg Infect Dis* 2006;12(11):1650–6. [PubMed: 17283613]
- Hillis DM, Bull JJ. An empirical test of bootstrapping as a method for assessing confidence in phylogenetic analysis. *Syst Biol* 1993;42:182–192.
- Hoffmann E, Stech J, Guan Y, Webster RG, Perez DR. Universal primer set for the full-length amplification of all influenza A viruses. *Arch Virol* 2001;146(12):2275–89. [PubMed: 11811679]
- Ito T, Okazaki K, Kawaoka Y, Takada A, Webster RG, Kida H. Perpetuation of influenza A viruses in Alaskan waterfowl reservoirs. *Arch Virol* 1995;140(7):1163–72. [PubMed: 7646350]
- IZSVE, I., editor. Laboratory Manual for the diagnosis of Avian Influenza. Padova - Italy: 2006.
- Karesh WB, Uhart MM, Frere E, Gandini P, Braselton WE, Puche H, Cook RA. Health evaluation of free-ranging rockhopper penguins (*Eudyptes chrysocomes*) in Argentina. *J Zoo Wildl Med* 1999;30(1):25–31. [PubMed: 10367640]
- Krauss S, W D, Pryor SP, Nile L, Chenghong L, Hinshaw VS, Webster RG. Influenza A Viruses of Migrating Wild Aquatic Birds in North America. *Vector-Borne and Zoonotic Diseases* 2004;4(3):177–188. [PubMed: 15631061]

16. López-Lanús, B.; Blanco, DE., editors. El Censo Neotropical de Aves Acuáticas 2004. Global Series No. 17. Wetlands International; Buenos Aires, Argentina: 2005.
17. Munster VJ, Veen J, Olsen B, Vogel R, Osterhaus AD, Fouchier RA. Towards improved influenza A virus surveillance in migrating birds. *Vaccine* 2006;24(4446):6729–33. [PubMed: 16806601]
18. Narosky, TYD.; Y, D. Guía para la Identificación de las Aves de Argentina y Uruguay. Vázquez-Manzini, editor. Aves Argentinas/ Asociación Ornitológica del Plata; 2003.
19. OIE - Manual of Standards for Diagnostic Tests and Vaccines. Chapter 2.1.14. Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza. Fourth Edition. Office International des Epizooties; Paris, France: 2000. p. 212-220.
20. Olsen B, Munster VJ, Wallensten A, Waldenstrom J, Osterhaus AD, Fouchier RA. Global patterns of influenza a virus in wild birds. *Science* 2006;312(5772):384–8. [PubMed: 16627734]
21. Padilla LR, Huyvaert KP, Merkel J, Miller RE, Parker PG. Hematology, plasma chemistry, serology, and Chlamydomphila status of the waved albatross (*Phoebastria irrorata*) on the Galapagos Islands. *J Zoo Wildl Med* 2003;34(3):278–83. [PubMed: 14582791]
22. Page RD. TreeView: an application to display phylogenetic trees on personal computers. *Comput Appl Biosci* 1996;12(4):357–8. [PubMed: 8902363]
23. Rappole JH, Hubalek Z. Birds and influenza H5NI virus movement to and within North America. *Emerg Infect Dis* 2006;12(10):1486–92. [PubMed: 17176561]
24. Runstadler JA, Happ GM, Slemons RD, Sheng ZM, Gundlach N, Petrula M, Senne D, Nolting J, Evers DL, Modrell A, Huson H, Hills S, Rothe T, Marr T, Taubenberger JK. Using RRT-PCR analysis and virus isolation to determine the prevalence of avian influenza virus infections in ducks at Minto Flats State Game Refuge, Alaska, during August 2005. *Arch Virol* 2007;152(10):1901–10. [PubMed: 17541700]
25. Sharp GB, Kawaoka Y, Jones DJ, Bean WJ, Pryor SP, Hinshaw V, Webster RG. Coinfection of wild ducks by influenza A viruses: distribution patterns and biological significance. *J Virol* 1997;71(8):6128–35. [PubMed: 9223507]
26. Spackman E, Senne DA, Myers TJ, Bulaga LL, Garber LP, Perdue ML, Lohman K, Daum LT, Suarez DL. Development of a real-time reverse transcriptase PCR assay for type A influenza virus and the avian H5 and H7 hemagglutinin subtypes. *J Clin Microbiol* 2002;40(9):3256–60. [PubMed: 12202562]
27. Spackman E, McCracken KG, Winker K, Swayne DE. H7N3 avian influenza virus found in a South American wild duck is related to the Chilean 2002 poultry outbreak, contains genes from equine and North American wild bird lineages, and is adapted to domestic turkeys. *J Virol* 2006;80(15):7760–4. [PubMed: 16840356]
28. Spackman E, McCracken KG, Winker K, Swayne DE. An avian influenza virus from waterfowl in South America contains genes from North American avian and equine lineages. *Avian Dis* 2007;51(1 Suppl):273–4. [PubMed: 17494565]
29. Suarez DL, Senne DA, Banks J, Brown IH, Essen SC, Lee CW, Manvell RJ, Mathieu-Benson C, Moreno V, Pedersen JC, Panigrahy B, Rojas H, Spackman E, Alexander DJ. Recombination resulting in virulence shift in avian influenza outbreak, Chile. *Emerg Infect Dis* 2004;10(4):693–9. [PubMed: 15200862]
30. Thompson JD, Higgins DG, Gibson TJ. CLUSTAL W: improving the sensitivity of progressive multiple sequence alignment through sequence weighting, position-specific gap penalties and weight matrix choice. *Nucleic Acids Res* 1994;22(22):4673–80. [PubMed: 7984417]
31. Travis EK, Vargas FH, Merkel J, Gottdenker N, Miller RE, Parker PG. Hematology, plasma chemistry, and serology of the flightless cormorant (*Phalacrocorax harrisi*) in the Galapagos Islands, Ecuador. *J Wildl Dis* 2006;42(1):133–41. [PubMed: 16699155]
32. Uhart MM, Quintana F, Karesh WB, Braselton WE. Hematology, plasma biochemistry, and serosurvey for selected infectious agents in southern giant petrels from Patagonia, Argentina. *J Wildl Dis* 2003;39(2):359–65. [PubMed: 12910764]
33. Webster RG, Bean WJ, Gorman OT, Chambers TM, Kawaoka Y. Evolution and ecology of influenza A viruses. *Microbiol Rev* 1992;56(1):152–79. [PubMed: 1579108]
34. Widjaja L, Krauss SL, Webby RJ, Xie T, Webster RG. Matrix gene of influenza a viruses isolated from wild aquatic birds: ecology and emergence of influenza a viruses. *J Virol* 2004;78(16):8771–9. [PubMed: 15280485]



#	Location	Province	Positive RRT-PCR
A	Esquina	Corrientes	3
B	San Javier La Paz	Santa Fe	5
C	Victoria	Entre Rios	1
D	Pta. Rasa	Buenos Aires	0
E	Mar Chiquita	Buenos Aires	0
F	Bahia Blanca	Buenos Aires	1
G	Bahia San Blas	Buenos Aires	0
H	Pta Loma – Pta. León	Chubut	0
I	Pta Tombo - Cb. Dos Bahias - Bahía Bustamante	Chubut	0
J	Puerta deseado	Santa Cruz	0
K	Bahía San Julián	Santa Cruz	0
L	Monte León	Santa Cruz	0
M	Cabo Virgenes	Santa Cruz	0
N	I. Conejo, I. Marfillo, La Turbera	Tierra del Fuego	0

Figure 1. Geographical location of the areas under surveillance. The numbers corresponds to the quantity of samples analyzed from each area. The associated table indicates the locations individualized from A to O, with the positive RRT-PCR results obtained from each of them.

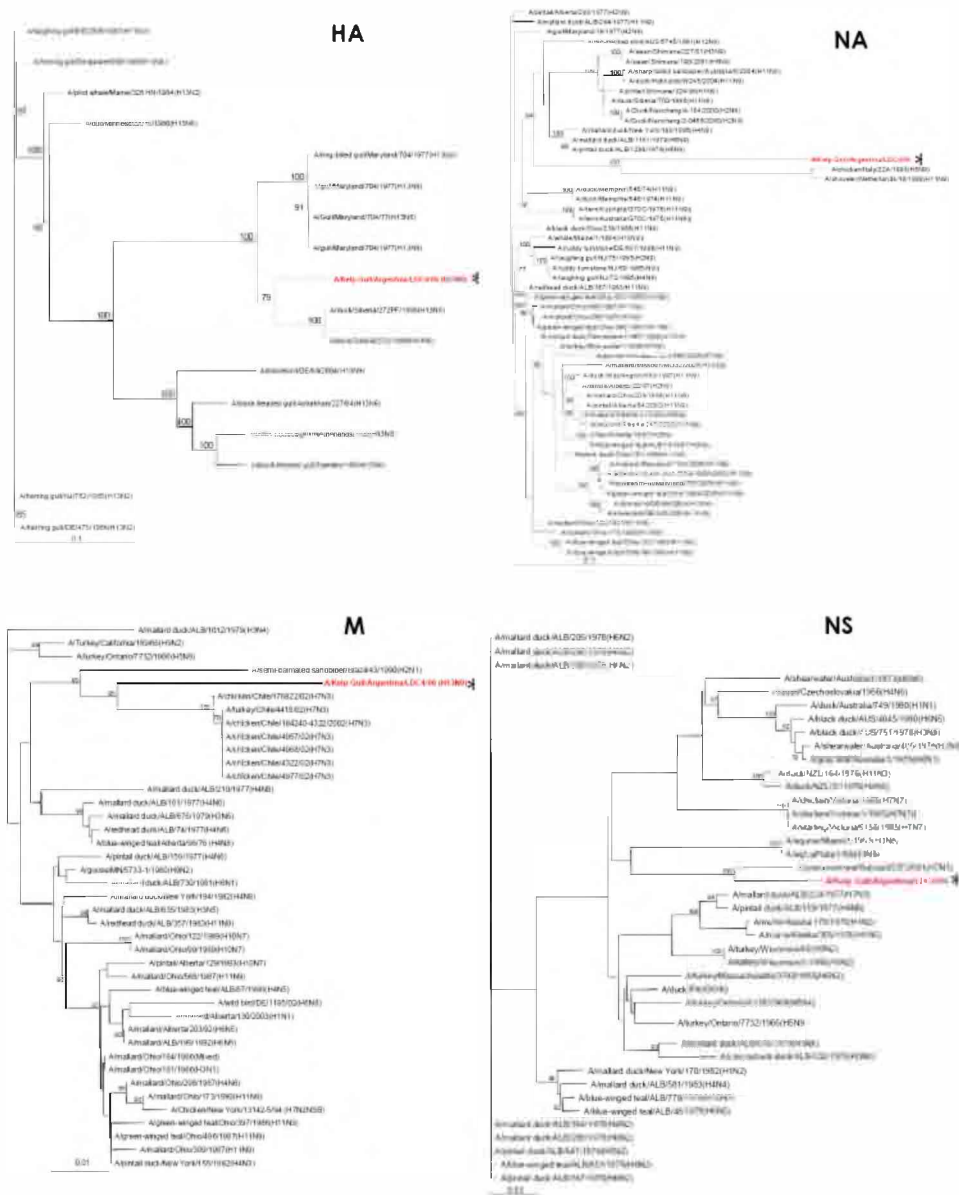


Figure 2. Phylogenetic trees of individual gene segments (indicated in the upper-right side of each tree). All trees were constructed with PHYLIP package (Felsenstein, 1989) using Neighbor Joining with 1000 bootstrap replicates. Bootstrap values above 60% are detailed. To easily identify the Argentinean isolate an asterisk (*) was used.

Table 1

A - Details of birds sampled in the present study, indicating the scientific and common name, the order and family and the number of birds sampled.

B - Table summarizing the number of samples for each order and the percentage from the total of samples obtained.

Table 1A				
Scientific name	Common name	Samples	Order	Family
<i>Amazonetta brasiliensis</i>	Brazilian Duck	143	Anseriformes	Anatidae
<i>Anas bahamensis</i>	White-cheeked Pintail	5	Anseriformes	Anatidae
<i>Anas flavirostris</i>	Speckled Teal	16	Anseriformes	Anatidae
<i>Anas plataea</i>	Red Shoveler	9	Anseriformes	Anatidae
<i>Anas sibilatrix</i>	Southern Wigeon	1	Anseriformes	Anatidae
<i>Anas versicolor</i>	Silver Teal	140	Anseriformes	Anatidae
<i>Callonetta leucophrys</i>	Ringed Teal	103	Anseriformes	Anatidae
<i>Coscoroba coscoroba</i>	Coscoroba Swan	1	Anseriformes	Anatidae
<i>Dendrocygna bicolor</i>	Fulvous Whistling Duck	139	Anseriformes	Anatidae
<i>Dendrocygna viduata</i>	White-faced Whistling Duck	53	Anseriformes	Anatidae
<i>Heteronetta atricapilla</i>	Black-headed Duck	1	Anseriformes	Anatidae
<i>Netta peposaca</i>	Rosy-billed Pochard	1242	Anseriformes	Anatidae
<i>Oxyura dominica</i>	Masked Duck	1	Anseriformes	Anatidae
<i>Sarkidiornis melanotos</i>	Comb Duck	1	Anseriformes	Anatidae
<i>Anas georgica</i>	Brown Pintail	4	Anseriformes	Anatidae
<i>Dendrocygna autumnalis</i>	Black-bellied Whistling Duck	1	Anseriformes	Anatidae
<i>Calidris fuscicollis</i>	White-rumped Sandpiper	9	Charadriiformes	Scolopacidae
<i>Calidris melanotos</i>	Pectoral Sandpiper	16	Charadriiformes	Scolopacidae
<i>Charadrius collaris</i>	Collared Plover	5	Charadriiformes	Charadriidae
<i>Larus atlanticus</i>	Osprey's Gull	73	Charadriiformes	Laridae
<i>Larus dominicanus</i>	Kelp Gull	162	Charadriiformes	Laridae
<i>Larus scoresbii</i>	Dolphin Gull	15	Charadriiformes	Laridae
<i>Nycticorax nycticorax</i>	South American Painted Snipe	2	Charadriiformes	Rostratulidae
<i>Pluvialis dominica</i>	American Golden Plover	3	Charadriiformes	Charadriidae
<i>Rynchops niger</i>	Black Skimmer	6	Charadriiformes	Rynchopidae
<i>Thalasseus s. eurynatha</i>	Cavenne Tern	17	Charadriiformes	Sternidae
<i>Sterna hirundinacea</i>	South American Tern	91	Charadriiformes	Sternidae
<i>Thalasseus maximus</i>	Royal Tern	36	Charadriiformes	Sternidae
<i>Thalasseus sandvicensis</i>	Sandwich Tern	42	Charadriiformes	Sternidae
<i>Tringa subruficollis</i>	Buff-breasted Sandpiper	8	Charadriiformes	Scolopacidae
<i>Ardea coccyz</i>	White-necked Heron	1	Ciconiiformes	Ardeidae
<i>Ardea alba</i>	Great Egret or White Heron	1	Ciconiiformes	Ardeidae
<i>Phimosus infuscatus</i>	Bare-faced Ibis	1	Ciconiiformes	Threskiornithidae
<i>Plegadis chihi</i>	White-faced Ibis	5	Ciconiiformes	Threskiornithidae
<i>Columba maculosa</i>	Spotted-winged Pigeon	3	Columbiformes	Columbidae
<i>Columba picus</i>	Picus Ground-Dove	11	Columbiformes	Columbidae
<i>Fulica leucoptera</i>	White-winged Coot	16	Gruiformes	Rallidae
<i>Fulica rufifrons</i>	Red-fronted Coot	1	Gruiformes	Rallidae
<i>Furnarius rufus</i>	Rufous Horned	3	Passeriformes	Furnariidae
<i>Mimus saturninus</i>	Chalk-browed Mockingbird	2	Passeriformes	Mimidae
<i>Molothrus bonariensis</i>	Shiny Cowbird	2	Passeriformes	Icteridae
<i>Poliophtila dumicola</i>	Masked Gnatcatcher	2	Passeriformes	Sylviidae
<i>Progne subis</i>	Southern Martin	19	Passeriformes	Hirundinidae
<i>Saltator coerulescens</i>	Greenish Saltator	1	Passeriformes	Thraupidae
<i>Synallaxis frontalis</i>	Sooty-fronted Spinetail	2	Passeriformes	Furnariidae
<i>Taraba major</i>	Great Antshrike	1	Passeriformes	Thamnophilidae
<i>Turdus amaurochalinus</i>	Creamy-bellied Thrush	10	Passeriformes	Turdidae
<i>Turdus rufiventris</i>	Rufous-bellied Thrush	2	Passeriformes	Turdidae
<i>Zonotrichia capensis</i>	Rufous-collared Sparrow	1	Passeriformes	Emberizidae
<i>Phalacrocorax albiventer</i>	King Cormorant	17	Pelecyaniformes	Phalacrocoracidae
<i>Phalacrocorax atriceps</i>	Imperial Cormorant	78	Pelecyaniformes	Phalacrocoracidae
<i>Phalacrocorax magellanicus</i>	Rock Cormorant	1	Pelecyaniformes	Phalacrocoracidae
<i>Phalacrocorax brasilianus</i>	Neotropic Cormorant	1	Pelecyaniformes	Phalacrocoracidae
<i>Macronectes giganteus</i>	Southern Giant Petrel	18	Procellariiformes	Procellariidae
<i>Spheniscus magellanicus</i>	Magellanic Penguin	349	Sphenisciformes	Spheniscidae
<i>Nothura maculosa</i>	Spotted Tinamou	2	Tinamiformes	Tinamidae

Table 1B		
Order	Samples	Percentage
Anseriformes	1860	64.2
Charadriiformes	485	16.8
Ciconiiformes	8	0.3
Columbiformes	14	0.5
Gruiformes	17	0.6

Order	Samples[*]	Percentage
Passeriformes	45	1.6
Pelecaniformes	97	3.4
Procellariiformes	18	0.6
Sphenisciformes	349	12.1
Tinamiformes	2	0.1
TOTAL	2895	100.0

* Number of samples obtained.

Table 2

Type A Influenza virus isolates most related to A/KelpGull/Argentina/LDC4/06 by individual gene segment.

Gene Segment	Most related virus isolate	Percentage of identity (percentage sequenced)
4 - HA	A/duck/Siberia/272/1998 (H13N6)	91% (100%)
6 - NA	A/shoveler/Netherlands/19/1999(H11N9)	78% (94%)
8 - NS	A/cinnamon teal/Bolivia/4537/2001(H7N3)	97% (100%)
7 - M	A/chicken/Chile/184240-4322/2002(H7N3)	96% (50%)
3 - PA	A/chicken/Chile/184240-4322/2002(H7N3)	95% (26%)
2 - PB1	A/cinnamon teal/Bolivia/4537/2001 (H7N3)	94% (28%)
1 - PB2	A/chicken/Chile/176822/02(H7N3)	94% (29%)
5 - NP	A/cinnamon teal/Bolivia/4537/2001(H7N3)	94% (100%)

Table 3

Amino acidic sequence pattern of the cleavage site of all available H13 HA subtype Influenza Viruses.

A/duck/Siberia/272/1998(H13N6)	VPATSNRGLF
A/gull/Maryland/704/1977(H13N6)	VPATSNRGLF
A/black-headed gull/Netherlands/1/00(H13N8)	VPATSKRGLF
A/black-headed gull/Sweden/1/99(H13N6)	VPATSNRGLF
A/herring gull/DE/475/1986(H13N2)	VPATSNRGLF
A/shorebird/DE/68/2004(H13N9)	VPATASRGLF
A/herring gull/NJ/782/1986(H13N2)	VPATSNRGLF
A/laughing gull/DE/2838/1987(H13N2)	VPSTSNRGLF
A/herring gull/Delaware/660/1988(H13N6)	VPATSNRGLF
A/gull/Maryland/704/1977(H13N6)	VPATSNRGFF
A/gull/Minnesota/945/1980(H13N6)	VPATSNRGLF
A/Gull/Maryland/704/77(H13N6)	VPATSNRGLF
A/ring-billed gull/Maryland/704/1977(H13N6)	VPATSNRGLF
A/pilot whale/Maine/328 HN/1984(H13N2)	VPATSNRGLF
A/Kelp Gull/Argentina/LDC4/06 (H13N9)	VPATSNRGLF