

# **The Patagonian Ecosystem**

**By Graydon German**

For the King's College Photo Essay Contest, I have chosen to submit a series of photographs I had taken during my trip to Patagonia. The series of photos describe the natural order of wildlife and how the environment of Patagonia allows it to thrive. The surrounding environment that the majority of Patagonia consists of is quite barren and vast, with only small shrubbery and trees scattered throughout the hillside. The Andes mountains that line the region create a border, the jagged and massive ranges make it hard to traverse.

Back in the plains, the wildlife thrives. The pumas are the main predator of the region; they have no shortage of food as the guanacos can be found around almost every corner in herds eating and drinking. As the main source of food for these predators, guanacos need to stay alert as the pumas stay low and blend in perfectly with the beige and grassy hillsides. Springtime is a much more dangerous time for animals such as the guanacos because the pumas hunt more frequently to feed their cubs. However, hunting a guanaco does not prove a challenge for the pumas.

Other animals in the ecosystem include the rheas and Andean condor. The rheas are a much faster, smaller and less enticing prey for the pumas, though they can always be seen fleeing the scene of a kill, seeming to have a startled expression on their face. The grassy hills provide the rheas with a clear and safe runway, evolution designing them to be effective and fast runners, capable of navigating the terrain quickly. The Andean condor with their 10-foot wingspans can be seen soaring near to a carcass, patiently waiting for the pumas to finish their meal.

The windswept hills and blue lakes dot the terrain of Patagonia, providing a fit ecosystem for large amounts of herbivores, allowing for both camouflage and safety. In turn, this creates a perfect scenario for predators, allowing them to effectively hide and hunt the abundance of animals. The cliff sides and wide horizons give scavengers the final feast on carcasses and a safe place to build nests for the next generations. The wildlife and environment can be shown collaborating together to allow for a healthy ecosystem to thrive within my photo essay. All animals are shown surviving within the Patagonia terrain and represent how they function as a whole.



A guanaco is looking alert and ready to run if pumas attack.



The guanacos' surroundings are a quiet, silent and beautiful terrain in Patagonia.





The puma has made a kill and is eating a guanaco.



A rhea stands close by and alert of the sudden disturbance. It's ready to flee if necessary.





The mother stays alert as her cub feeds on the carcass.



A condor is patiently perched on a ledge, awaiting its turn to feed on the dead guanaco.





The mother puma grooms her young. She protects, feeds and cares for it.





The peaceful surroundings are reinstated until the next kill and the cycle continues.