

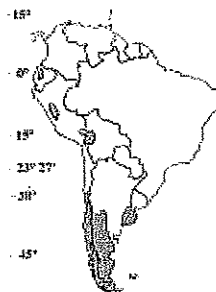
Yahgan: **Lejuwa**, Léxuwa  
 Mapudungun: **Raki**, Raqui, Raquin, Rakifí  
 Spanish: **Bandurria**, Bandurria austral, Bandurria común,  
 Bandurria baya  
 English: **Buff-Necked Ibis**, Cinnamon-Necked Ibis  
 Scientific: *Theristicus melanopis*

The loud metallic calls of the Buff-Necked Ibises distinguish the temperate forests of southern South America. These strong vocalizations lead to its onomatopoeic Mapudungun name *raki*. These calls are used to forecast the weather by Mapuche-Huilliche communities. On Chiloé Island it is said that when Buff-Necked Ibises call half way up the mountain, they announce good weather. In contrast, when they shout with their wings open, perched on the trees or crow in chorus, they announce bad weather. When they cry at the moment of taking flight, then there will be a south wind and the weather will get better.

Moving in flocks, the ibises clean the fields of insects that could be harmful to the plantings. In the fields and other open habitats it is common to observe numerous ibises scratching with their long beaks in search for earthworms, larvae, snails and

other invertebrates. To sleep and nest, they use the canopy or branches of tall trees, where they come together in colonies.

At the end of fall, the populations migrate to the north along the length of the Andes, returning to the south to announce spring. The Yahgan culture also associates the migratory movements of the Buff-Necked Ibis or *lejuwa* with marked seasonal or climatic changes, as is appreciated in the following history narrated by the Yahgan grandmother Cristina Calderón.



**Yahgan story.** In the times of the ancestors, one day when spring arrived, a *yamana*\* leaned out of his *akar* or hut and saw a Buff-Necked Ibis or *lejuwa* flying in the sky. The *yamana* was so happy that he yelled to the other members of the community, "An ibis is flying over our *akar*. Look!" Immediately the others came out of their huts, shouting loudly, "The spring has come, the ibises are already in their return flight." They jumped for joy, and they jumped hard.

*Lejuwa* is, however, a very delicate and sensitive woman and likes to be treated with special deference. Upon hearing the noise of the shouts, she became furious, and profoundly offended, causing a strong snow storm. It snowed incessantly; it was freezing cold; all the land was covered with ice; and all the waters froze. Many people died because they could not navigate in their canoes to search for food. Neither could they leave from their *akars* to look for firewood because all was covered with snow. More and more people continued to die. Only after a long time did it stop snowing, and the sun begin to shine.

The sun warmed so much that begin to melt the ice and snow that had completely covered the land, and consequently floods began to flow towards the channels and the oceans. The ice that covered the wide and narrow channels broke apart and melted, and the Yahgans could finally go to the shores and navigate in their canoes to collect food. On the big mountainsides and deep valleys, however, the ice was so thick that not even this sun could melt it. Even today, glaciers can be observed coming down to the sea, that remind us of the severe frost and snowstorm that *lejuwa*, who is a very delicate and sensitive woman, provoked in those times. Since then, the Yahgans treat the Buff-Necked Ibis or *lejuwa* with much respect, and when they come near the houses or *akars*, the people keep quiet, particularly the little children who are not allowed to imitate them or to cry.

\**Yamana* is an ambiguous term because this is the name of the ethnic group and refers to a Yahgan man. In this case it refers to the second meaning.