

Yahgan: **Shakóa**

Mapudungun: **Porotu**, Carcareñ, Cadcadeñ, Kaikayem, Kedkedeñ

Spanish: **Becasina, Porotera**, Becacina, Becacina común

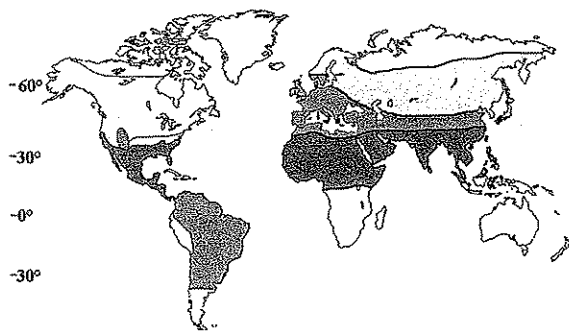
English: **Common Snipe**

Scientific: *Gallinago gallinago*

The Mapudungun name *porotu* is onomatopoeic with the sound that the Common Snipe male emits during the reproductive period. At dusk during spring, the male rises to the air and then falls back to the ground, making his tail feathers vibrate and generate a strange hum: "*porotu, porotu, porotu, porotu, porotu.*"

In the spring, the shrimp also make their appearance. Due to this synchrony, the strange twilight sound of the *porotu* announces harvest time for the *madeu* or shrimp, a favorite food of the *Lafkenche*. Because of its talent for extracting the *madeu* with its long beak from the caves they make in the mud, the *porotu* is also known as the shrimper-bird in the *Lafkenche* region on the coast of Temuco.

The Common Snipe is characterized by a long bill, which they use to eat invertebrates buried in the mud. Snipes live in a variety of aquatic and riparian environments, especially the inundated wetlands and rush thickets adjacent to the forests of southern Chile and Argentina.



The South American Common Snipe is considered by some scientists to be a subspecies (*Gallinago gallinago paraguaiiae*) and by others to be a completely separate species, *Gallinago paraguaiiae*.

Darker and more robust than the Common Snipe, the Large Snipe, *Gallinago stricklandii* (35 cm), also lives in southern South America. It is a resident of the territory south of Tierra del Fuego, where it receives the Yahgan name *shakóa*. The Large Snipe is inconspicuous because its plumage mimics the colors and patterns of the grasses and rushes, and when one approaches them they remain immobile. However, their presence is noticed at dusk during the spring, when the male elevates into the air, making his loud

courtship humming sound.

Among the Yahgan it is not permitted to imitate the sound of the snipe or *shakóa*. She or he who imitates the sound of the *shakóa* will awake with her or his toes cut by blades of *ushkulampi* or rush (*Marsippospermum*

grandiflorum) that grow in the bogs. In fact, the grandmothers Úrsula and Cristina Calderón remember that when they were little girls one day they awoke with the big toe of each foot cut because of imitating the *shakóa*, even when they had covered their feet well. They tell that:



Yahgan story. My father and my grandparents and my mother said that one should not imitate the snipe or *shakóa* when it is flying during the night. "If you imitate the bird, they will hurt you. They will make a cut in your big toe with grass or *kuruk*," they said.

As we were naughty and we wanted to test if the things were certain or not we decided to try it. We were three little girls. So we wrapped our feet with a very thick cloth and with a sock over it, and began to imitate the bird at night. The next day we woke up with a lot of pain in our feet, because the story of the snipe was true. We were certainly naughty girls, but after that we never did it again because we knew that it was certain what the grandparents told us.