



Rockjumper Birding Tours

Worldwide Birding Adventures

# *New Zealand*

## *Trip Report*

*20<sup>th</sup> October – 6<sup>th</sup> November 2015*



Broad-billed Prion off Stewart Island by David Quady

Trip Report compiled by Tour Leader Erik Forsyth

## **Trip Summary**

New Zealand holds a number of rare and endangered bird species as well as many seabirds for which it is world famous. Our tour started out in the far north with a short visit to the Kerikeri area. A night search produced fantastic views of the iconic North Island Brown Kiwi with a Morepork sitting on a nearby fence, a great start! Back in the Auckland area our pelagic out on the Hauraki Gulf gave us good looks at the endangered and highly desired New Zealand Storm Petrel, as well as Black (Parkinson's) and Cook's Petrel while our visit to the world-famous Tiritiri Matangi Island gave us the highly desired Stitchbird and after a fair wait, we found a very confiding pair of (North Island) Kokako. We enjoyed fantastic scope looks at Wrybill and the endangered (North Island) Takahe were admired while our list was growing. The impressive Blue Duck was found at fast flowing streams and our first tour to Kapiti Island was very enjoyable with unbeatable views of Little Spotted Kiwi, New Zealand Kaka, a calling Long-tailed Cuckoo and confiding Weka. Down on the South Island we visited the Marlborough Sound where we admired the rare Rough-faced Shag while our pelagic out of Kaikoura gave us five species of albatross including the huge Northern Royal, Southern Royal and Wandering. The highly endangered Black Stilt was located daily near Twizel and Milford Sound produced the tiny New Zealand (South Island Wren) Rockwren. Our visit to Stewart Island was very rewarding with an enjoyable night tour where we had fabulous looks at Southern Brown Kiwi eating sandhoppers on the beach, while the endangered Yellowhead and South Island Saddleback were much enjoyed on Ulva Island. Our final pelagic tour produced the much wanted Fiordland Penguins and six species of albatross including Black-browed, [Campbell Island] and Buller's. We finished the tour off in Dunedin with a visit to the [Northern Royal] Albatross colony and a tour of a Yellow-eyed Penguin Reserve with close looks at the latter. We covered the whole country and saw a good deal of New Zealand's rare and critically endangered birds and had an enjoyable adventure doing so.

## **Daily Diary**

Heading out from our Auckland hotel, a quick stop at Puketutu Island gave us the endemic Tui, a large Honeyeater feeding in a Pohutakawa Tree. At a nearby bay, a scanning revealed a distant mixed flock of waders including Bar-tailed Godwits and Red Knots. Close by was a group of endemic Wrybill, allowing great scope looks, close enough we could even see the bill of this species curving to the right, as they fed on the mudflats. With this success we headed north to the Muriwai Gannet Colony arriving mid-morning. Breeding season had just started and many Australasian Gannets were attending nests, although only a few eggs were seen. Nearby, many White-fronted Terns were nesting, while Red-billed and Kelp Gulls patrolled overhead. After a quick stop for lunch we continued to Waipu Cove, where a short walk to the shoreline produced several Variable Oystercatchers and Caspian Terns but best of all, several of the endemic New Zealand (Red-breasted Dotterel) Plovers, some in fine breeding plumage. It was a joy to see several of these endangered birds and no doubt they must have been breeding nearby. While scanning around we picked up a small tern roosting a few hundred metres from us, which proved to be the endangered Fairy Tern, the sub-species of which is unique to New Zealand. With a fair drive ahead we continued to Kerikeri, our destination for the night.

Arriving in the late afternoon at our lodge, we had time to rest and enjoy birding in the lodge grounds. Here, the huge New Zealand Pigeon was seen at close range along with Grey Gerygone, New Zealand Fantail and African Collared (Barbary) Dove. After dinner we headed out after dark to a nearby forest patch to look for North Island Kiwi. After walking down into

the valley we eventually heard distant calls of male and female birds. Several Morepork (Southern Boobook) were heard calling and then one was spotlighted in a gully. We continued our search for kiwi for several hours, with no luck, and were heading back when a sudden soft scratching sound close to the trail was heard. Erik headed down the bank and within a few minutes a North Island Brown Kiwi was seen running up the bank and along the road. Wow! We had nearly given up but had now seen this endemic and mythical family of birds. After this success, we walked to the car and drove back to our lodge, a content but tired group of birders.

The following morning, after a late breakfast due to the previous night's activities, we headed south stopping at Helena/Teal Bay, where we enjoyed very good looks at the endemic



**Stitchbird on Tiritiri Matangi Island by Thomas Heatley**

Brown Teal, thirty at a small wooded stream and ten-plus at a nearby pond. We then had lunch at Waro Lake, Hikurangi, where a family of New Zealand Grebes entertained us and a pair of New Zealand Scaup, was seen sunbathing on a large rock. Arriving at our hotel in the late afternoon, we checked in before heading to a local nature reserve. This visit proved successful, with great looks at Tui, New Zealand Bellbird, a few Brown Teal scattered along a stream, Grey Gerygone, New Zealand Fantail, but best of all were the pair of (North Island) Takahe seen slowly walking over a hillside while we stood nearby in awe. This is one of New Zealand's rarest birds, with a population of less than three hundred birds. Equally rare was a pair of (North Island) Saddlebacks, found calling and feeding in some *Flax* bushes.





**Blue Duck at Turangi by Thomas Heatley**

Early the next morning, we drove to a nearby harbour for a Hauraki Gulf Pelagic first stopping to watch a Buff-banded Rail feeding on a grassy lawn. The weather was perfect, with 2m swells, light winds and sunshine. We first motored towards Little Barrier Island, picking up our first Flesh-footed, Fluttering and Buller's Shearwaters, Common Diving Petrels and Fairy Prions. We continued until we were in ideal depth and territory to encounter the widest variety of seabirds possible. Here we set anchor and proceeded to 'chum', throwing pieces of fish into the water to attract seabirds for miles around, made possible by their incredible sense of smell. A short while later, Fairy Prions, Buller's and Flesh-footed Shearwaters arrived, as well as many dainty White-faced Storm-Petrels, dancing over the water. Interestingly, three Shy (White-capped) Albatross were also seen well, but stayed away from the boat. We were about to haul in our anchor when a minute dark bird with a striking white rump dabbled delicately across the waves to our starboard side. To our delight, we had just found the endemic and highly sought-after New Zealand Storm-Petrel - a species that was only rediscovered in 2003 while the breeding site was only discovered as recently as early 2013. We watched them for long periods and could see four at one time.

We continued towards Little Barrier Island, where we encountered our first of several endemic Cook's Petrels. We dropped anchor, and it was shortly thereafter that we found our only Black (Parkinson's) Petrel, (squabbling among the Flesh-footed Shearwaters over scraps) most likely having recently arrived back from its wintering grounds. Having lunch at Little Barrier we heard the distinctive call and then counted seven New Zealand Kaka, flying over the forest. After all our successes we headed back to shore, rounding off a great day.



**Juvenile Grey-headed Albatross off Stewart Island by Thomas Heatley**

The following morning an excited group headed to Gulf Harbour to catch a ferry over to Tiritiri Matangi Island. After arriving at the jetty, we soon boarded and were heading to the Island. After a briefing from the ranger, we headed up a hill seeing several Tui and New Zealand Bellbirds but, best of all, were the male Stitchbirds, their ornamental ear-tufts on display. During our morning here, we recorded many great species, including fabulous close looks at North Island Saddlebacks, their pink wattles glowing in the sun. We also saw North Island Robins, Grey Gerygone, New Zealand Pigeons, Brown Quail, and Red-crowned Parakeets. A new family for us was the Whiteheads, an endemic family of birds seen in small, noisy, moving flocks throughout our stay on the island. Positioning ourselves at a water drinking trough, we endured a long tense wait, but eventually a pair of (North Island) Kokako appeared, showing very well and at close range, much to our delight. They hung around, giving great looks and, interestingly, ate leaves while we observed them feeding. This is a very rare species and occur only at a handful of sites where the population is less than 2000 birds. We celebrated having seen all our target birds, especially the latter, as this species was very difficult to find at other sites.

The following day, we headed south to Turangi, first stopping at Lake Taupo for a flock of endemic Black-billed Gull hanging around the lakeshore. After enjoying good looks and a welcome stretch we drove on to Turangi where we checked into our hotel. After a short break, we re-assembled and headed for the Tongariro River, where we searched in earnest for the endemic Blue Duck- a resident of fast flowing streams. It proved harder than anticipated, and after a couple of hours and several sites later we had not found our target. After finding a pair of New (Australasian) Zealand Pipits by chance in the riverbed, a lucky bonus, we again tried a reliable site and bingo! There it was, a bird was sitting on a rock on the far side of the river. Scopes were set up and cameras clicked. Although the distance was huge we still enjoyed great looks.

Early the next morning we headed out to a nearby reed bed where Australasian Bittern were heard booming. In the open water alongside the reed beds we saw New Zealand Grebe,

Royal Spoonbill and Little Black Cormorants, while Common Redpolls called as they flew overhead. Although we stayed for quite some time, and at least three bitterns were heard calling, none flew over the reed beds.



**New Zealand Kaka, Stewart Island by Thomas Heatley**

From here we continued south, stopping only for lunch at Paraparaumu. We then boarded our ferry to take a short ride over to Kapiti Island for a night's stay. Arriving on the beach, we could hear the cacophony of bird calls ringing through the trees. On our walk to our rooms we saw small flocks of Whiteheads, New Zealand Bellbird, many Tui, Grey Gerygone, and numerous Red-crowned Parakeets. Later, around the lodge, we found several Weka, a large flightless rail, as well as New Zealand Kaka. These huge parrots were fairly tame and comical as they called and flew around the buildings. A search for a calling Long-tailed Cuckoo proved successful, as we saw the cuckoo flying past, being chased by a Tui. That night after dinner, we went on a Little Spotted Kiwi walk and soon heard the birds calling nearby. After an hour of searching, with the birds eluding us, we found our target, a bird walking at close range in the spotlight. Fabulous! What a night; we could head to bed happy.

The following morning after a late breakfast and some final birding, we caught our ferry back to the coast, and then we drove to the Interisland Ferry dock to catch a ferry over from Wellington to Picton on the South Island. The ferry crossing was pleasant as the ship was large and even though the winds were high the ship was stable. We did see Shy (White-capped) Albatross, Sooty Shearwater, Fairy Prion and Cape Petrel, but best of all were Salvin's Albatross and Westland Petrel, which were new for us.





**The critically endangered (North Island) Takahe by Thomas Heatley**

We arrived at Picton in the early evening and settled into our hotel. The following morning we went out by boat with E-Ko Tours (previously Dolphinwatch). We headed out into the Marlborough Sound past several flocks of Fluttering Shearwaters and Little (Blue) Penguins. Arriving later at an exposed headland we were soon watching 18 Rough-faced (King) Shag. Apart from being a large bird, their large pink feet were very distinguishable. This is a threatened species, although a survey recently estimated the population at 830 birds a fair increase on the earlier guesstimated 550 birds. We then ventured over to Blumine Reserve, where a search for Orange-fronted Parakeet proved unsuccessful but did yield several Weka, Tui and New Zealand Bellbirds. In the afternoon we drove to Kaikoura, stopping briefly at Blenheim Oxidation Ponds where several Royal Spoonbills were seen. Further south along the coast, we enjoyed a surprise stop at a well-known stream where several baby New Zealand Fur Seals played at a waterfall having travelled the 350m from the rocky shoreline. The baby seals feel safe here, away from dangers of the sea, such as Great White Sharks! After this enjoyable treat we drove further south, arriving at our motel in the late afternoon, and settled in for the evening.

Early the next morning we joined Gary Neville on our scheduled Albatross Encounters pelagic tour. Gary knows the seabirds well here, including many individuals, and it wasn't long before we had anchored and the chum bag was dropped attracting many birds within minutes. Fairly numerous and argumentative were the Northern Giant Petrels, squabbling with numerous Shy (White-capped) and Salvin's Albatrosses. Then there were the numerous and huge Wandering Albatross towering over all the other birds, later joined by several (Southern) Royal and a single [Northern Royal] Albatross. These large and stately species dominated the feeding area and were a delight to watch at such close range. Other species recorded were the range-restricted Westland Petrel, a handful of Short-tailed Shearwaters, Fairy Prion, Cape and White-chinned Petrels and, on our return, the highly sought-after Hutton's Shearwater, here at its only breeding area.



South Island Robin, Ulva Island by David Quady

In the afternoon, after a quick lunch, we headed further south, our destination Arthur's Pass. We arrived in the late afternoon, checked into our motel and then drove through the small town, looking for our target bird, the endemic and *Alpine*-dwelling, Kea, a large parrot which lives in the mountains. It did not take long and soon we were watching up to four birds at the carpark. We enjoyed good looks and photo opportunities of these confiding birds. Around our rooms the following morning, we found a small group of Pipipi, while the tiny Rifleman were also found, the latter an endemic family of New Zealand (South Island Wren) Rockwrens. We continued to Franz Joseph, our destination for the night, first stopping in the Jade/Greenstone area of Hokitika for lunch. We arrived at our hotel in the late afternoon and shortly after we arrived, a calling New Zealand Falcon attracted our attention and was seen twice, flying opposite our hotel. Unfortunately, not everybody had seen it and it turned out to be the only sighting of the tour. In the late afternoon, we walked out to the Glacier, enjoying good views of Tomtit on the walk. The following morning, after another search for the falcon without luck, we started our long drive to Omarama via the Haast Pass. During the drive we enjoyed fabulous looks at scenery through the Haast Pass, Lakes Wanaka and Hawea, and eventually over the desolate Lindis Pass. En route to our hotel we stopped briefly at the Ahuri River to enjoy a small flock of Black-fronted Terns hawking insects over the braided riverbed. We arrived at our hotel in Omarama in the late afternoon, but after a cup of tea reinvigorated ourselves and headed to Twizel in search of the critically endangered Black Stilt. It wasn't long before we connected with our target, a lone immaculate Black Stilt, which was thoroughly enjoyed through the scope. This is one of New Zealand's rarest waders, with a population of less than 300 birds! Nearby we found several breeding-plumaged Double-banded Plovers, as well as a few Black-fronted Terns.





**The critically endangered Black Stilt at Twizel by Thomas Heatley**

The following morning, after breakfast, we packed up and headed back to Twizel to look for New Zealand Falcon. At a series of small wetlands to the west of the town we found several White-headed (Pied) Stilts and eventually another adult Black Stilt, the latter allowing great photo opportunities. It was here that we enjoyed good looks at Mount Cook towering above the Alpine Mountains. Several Swamp Harriers were seen but, alas, no falcon. A brief stop at a series of wetlands outside town produced Black Swan, New Zealand Scaup and a pair of Great Crested Grebe. It was time to head south and west and we navigated the car towards Te Anua. It was a fair drive, with only a few Black-billed Gulls and Black-fronted Terns noted, and we arrived in the late afternoon.



**Yellowhead on Ulva Island by Thomas Heatley**

The next morning we headed out early to Milford to join a ferry cruise through the beautiful Milford Sound. Our first stop en route was full of anticipation as we pulled over next to the Homer Tunnel. Here we would search for the enigmatic New Zealand Rockwren (South Island Wren) on a rocky and boulder-strewn hillside. This was our only possible site on the tour and with the weather stunningly warm and no wind, we had a great chance of finding this little gem. We weren't long into our walk when suddenly we heard the call of our target- the faintest of squeaks. Everybody was alert and the bird called again, a shout went up, the tiny mite was seen bouncing over a rock behind us. An anxious few seconds for everybody, and then it appeared on top of an exposed rock and called again. Fabulous views were had and we all connected and watched as a pair, for a few minutes, were seen bounding over the rocks and eventually out of site. What a thrill! We continued on the boat cruise, after taking pictures of four Kea by the tunnel. We enjoyed beautiful scenery, but did not connect with Fiordland Penguin, which breed in this area. We would have to wait for Stewart Island to find this species. After the ferry ride we drove to Cascade Creek where we connected with Riflemen and New Zealand Robin, the latter giving us the run-around.



**Rock (South Island) Wren, Milford Sound by David Quady**

Early the following morning we packed up and headed to Stewart Island. At the ferry terminal at Bluff we watched our first Bronze Shag. The ferry crossing was eventful. From the back of the boat we saw several Shy (White-capped) Albatross, Cape Petrel, Sooty Shearwater and Common Diving Petrels. After lunch we caught a water taxi to Ulva Island, a predator-free conservation area a few kilometres off the coast. On our walk here we enjoyed the plentiful birds, and flocks produced multiple views of Pipipi, South Island Saddleback, New Zealand Robin, and great, close looks at Yellowhead. We also saw Red-crowned (-fronted) and a group of four Yellow-crowned (-fronted) Parakeet feeding high in a tree. On the beach we found several confiding Weka before catching our water taxi and heading back to the mainland. Around our motel were several friendly New Zealand Kaka, allowing close approach and good photo opportunities.



**A Rock (South Island) Wren in song, Milford Sound by David Quady**

Our day wasn't over as we had reserved places with Philip Smith of Bravo Adventures for the kiwi night tour. After dinner, we climbed on a boat at the jetty. From here we travelled along the coast for about 30 minutes before heading to a bay, where we moored the boat. From here we walked for about 15 minutes through a forest to a beach. We were about to walk when a Southern Brown Kiwi was seen coming out of the grass a few metres away. This individual walked along the sand just a few metres from us allowing fabulous, close looks. We had hit the jackpot, and continued to watch it as it fed on sand hoppers amongst the kelp wow! A second bird was seen further along the beach and after this success we headed back to our boat before sailing back to Oban.



**Double-banded Plover by Thomas Heatley**



The following day saw us out at sea all day on a pelagic where we successfully located eight Fiordland Penguins along the rocky shoreline and even a few fishing in the sea. We stopped and chummed at several places, which produced many Shy (White-capped) and Salvin's Albatross. Other species that were high on our wanted list that made an appearance included singletons of Buller's, Black-browed and even (Campbell Island) Albatross and two of the highly sought-after Broad-billed Prions, which came close to the boat. Other seabirds noted included good numbers of Sooty Shearwaters, Common Diving Petrels and two pairs of Brown Skua, which put in a performance around the boat. After a hugely succesful and enoyable day at sea, we headed back to port. The following morning we had a leisurely breakfast and enjoyed the attentions of a group of New Zealand Kaka feeding outside our motel windows. Next, we caught the ferry back to the South Island, noting several Common Diving Petrels and a few Shy (White-capped) Albatross on the Foveaux Strait. We then collected our vehicle and drove to Dunedin, arriving in the afternoon.



**Salvin's and Buller's Albatrosses off Stewart Island by Erik Forsyth**

On our last full day we drove out to the Sinclair Wetlands, where we walked along several trails leading to open bodies of water. After a bit of a search we eventually tracked down a New Zealand Fernbird, of the South Island sub-species. While walking back we found another two, allowing better views and even photographs. Other species included a stunningly plumaged male Yellowhammer, several Common Redpolls and a few Dunnocks. After lunch, we drove on the beautiful coastal road to Taiaroa Head on the Otago Peninsular, where in the carpark we scanned for (Northern) Royal Albatross, New Zealand's only mainland site where albatross breed. It wasn't long before two birds were seen over the headland and these huge birds made the Kelp Gulls look tiny as they glided with ease along the valley. Nearby, we had excellent close looks at Spotted Shags at their nests, as well as four Royal Spoonbills roosting in a Pine tree. After this excitement, we drove to Penguin Place, a nature reserve where there is a breeding Yellow-eyed Penguin colony. After a briefing, we hopped onto our bus and

headed into a valley. From here, we entered a trench which led to a hide and just on the other side stood face-to-face with a Yellow-eyed Penguin with a mate in a nest box. Fantastic! We were watching New Zealand's rarest breeding Penguin consisting of less than 3000 birds and, unfortunately, declining. We saw another four birds and really enjoyed our time here. In the evening we headed back to our hotel. It had been a highly successful and fun-filled tour and I would like to thank all our guests for making this tour memorable.



Yellow-eyed Penguin at nest by Erik Forsyth

**Top 10 Birds voted by the participants for New Zealand**

- |                                 |                              |
|---------------------------------|------------------------------|
| <b>1) (North Island) Takahe</b> | <b>6) Buller's Albatross</b> |
| <b>2) Yellow-eyed Penguin</b>   | <b>7) Kea</b>                |
| <b>3) Southern Brown Kiwi</b>   | <b>8) New Zealand Kaka</b>   |
| <b>4) (North Island) Kokako</b> | <b>9) Yellowhead</b>         |
| <b>5) Wrybill</b>               | <b>10) Fiordland Penguin</b> |





Shy (White-capped) and Buller's Albatross following the boat off Stewart Island by Erik Forsyth

## **Annotated List of Bird Species seen**

Nomenclature and taxonomy follows the IOC 3.1 List of: Gill, F. and M. Wright. 2012. Birds of the World: Recommended English Names. Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press.

EN – Endangered

TH- Threatened

CE- Critically Endangered

### **KIWIS: Apterygidae**

#### **Southern Brown Kiwi (E) (TH)**

*Apteryx australis*

On our first evening the tour was cancelled due to high winds and so a tense group were awaiting the news for the second night. Thankfully we were given the go ahead. First we hopped onto a boat at dusk and cruised for thirty-five minutes to a secluded beach. We then adorned flashlights and walked along a muddy forest track for fifteen minutes before arriving at a beach. After a short briefing by our guides our attention was distracted by a Southern Brown Kiwi walking along the sand nearby. Fabulous close looks were had in the torchlight as it walked past the group at close range. After this early success we walked along the beach for another 400m before finding a second bird feeding on sand-hoppers below washed up *kelp* and *seaweed*. Here we enjoyed fantastic close looks on two separate occasions. Magic!

#### **North Island Brown Kiwi (E) (TH)**

*Apteryx mantelli*

Fabulous close views on three occasions as a bird was found running along a bank and then on the road close to the group at a roadside forest near Kerikeri. Several other pairs of birds were heard calling in the valley.

#### **Little Spotted Kiwi (E) (TH)**

*Apteryx owenii*



We had brilliant looks at two birds during our stay on Kapiti Island. A memorable experience. This is one of the few islands where this species thrives in good numbers.

### **DUCKS, GEESE & SWANS: Anatidae**

#### **Canada Goose (I)**

*Branta canadensis maxima*

Recorded on the North and South Islands. Introduced to New Zealand in 1905.

#### **Black Swan**

*Cygnus atratus*

First recorded at Puketutu Island, Auckland with regular sightings throughout the tour thereafter. Introduced in 1864 but it is believed that the species has migrated to New Zealand from Australia.

#### **Blue Duck (E) (EN)**

*Hymenolaimus malacorhynchos*

After a frantic search, a singleton was located late in the evening on the Tongariro River at Turangi allowing fabulous scope looks. This is a threatened species, with less than 2500 birds remaining in the wild.

#### **Paradise Shelduck (E)**

*Tadorna variegata*

This striking endemic was seen throughout the tour.

#### **Mallard (I)**

*Anas platyrhynchos*

Commonly seen at all wetland sites

#### **Pacific Black Duck**

*Anas Superciliosa*

Seen on most days of the tour.

#### **Grey Teal**

*Anas Gracilis*

Recorded at many wetlands throughout the tour.

#### **Australasian Shoveler**

*Anas rhynchos variegata*

First recorded at the Mangere Ponds, with further sightings on the South Island.

#### **Brown Teal (E) (EN)**

*Anas aucklandica chlorotis*

We found up to forty birds at Helena (Teal) Bay and ten birds at Tawharanui Regional Park. Found only on the North Island, where the population is around 2500 birds. There have been some introductions to the South Island.

#### **New Zealand Scaup (E)**

*Anas Novaeseelandiae*

First recorded was a pair scoped at Waro Lake, Hikurangi, with further sightings at Lake Taupo, around Twizel and we had several other sightings on the South Island.

### **NEW WORLD QUAILS: Odontophoridae**

#### **California Quail (I)**

Excellent views were had on our first few days in the North Island.

### **PHEASANTS & ALLIES: Phasianidae**

#### **Wild Turkey (I)**

*Meleagris gallopavo*

Recorded in small groups in farmland on the North and South Islands.

#### **Brown Quail (I)**

*Synoicus ypsilophorus*

Great views of seven at Tawharanui Regional Park and three on Tiritiri Matangi Island.

#### **Common (Ring-necked) Pheasant (I)**

*Phasianus colchicus*

This introduced species was seen only in the North Island on several dates.

#### **Indian Peefowl (I)**

*Pavo cristatus*

A male was seen and heard calling on our drive from Muriwai to Wellsford.

### **PENGUINS: Spheniscidae**

#### **Fiordland Penguin (E) (TH)**

*Eudyptula pachyrhynchus*

We enjoyed fabulous sightings of up to eight birds on rocks and fishing at sea on our Stewart Island pelagic.

**Yellow-eyed Penguin (E) (EN)**

*Megadyptes antipodes*

We enjoyed fabulous close looks at six + birds at Penguin Place Nature Reserve on the Otago Peninsular. A rapidly declining species with less than 4000 birds remaining.

**Little Penguin**

*Eudyptula minor*

Recorded on our Hauraki Gulf pelagic and in the Marlborough Sound.

**ALBATROSSES: Diomedidae**

**Wandering Albatross**

*Diomedea exulans*

Up to 15 birds were around our boat and often at arm's length on our pelagic off Kaikoura. An incredible sight that supports Kaikoura's reputation as a world-class pelagic destination!

*Note: We saw the Wandering (Snowy) Albatross, D. exulans at Kaikoura. Two other species are recognised Antipodean Albatross D. antipodensis antipodensis and Gibson's Albatross D. antipodensis gibsoni.*

**(Southern) Royal Albatross**

*Diomedea epomophora epomoph*

A singleton of these giants was seen at Kaikoura and up to fifteen were seen on our pelagic off Stewart Island.

**[Northern Royal Albatross]**

*Diomedea epomophora sanfordi*

Two adults were seen on our Kaikoura pelagic.

*Note: Accepted by most authorities including the IOC. Not accepted by Clements as yet.*

**Black-browed Albatross**

*Thalassarche melanophris melanophris*

A singleton was seen well as it fed near the boat on our Kaikoura pelagic.

**[Campbell Albatross]**

*Thalassarche melanophris impavida*

A singleton was seen at close range on our Stewart Island pelagic, revealing the honey coloured eye. A great find!

*Note: Accepted by the IOC but not by Clements.*

**Shy (White-capped) Albatross (E)**

*Thalassarche cauta steadi*

First recorded on our ferry crossing from the North to the South Islands with further sightings at Kaikoura and on Stewart Island.

*Note: Most Authorities split this species as NZ White-capped Albatross T. cauta steadi and Shy Albatross T. cauta cauta.*

**Salvin's Albatross**

*Thalassarche salvini*

A singleton was seen on our ferry crossing from the North to the South Islands on the Cook Strait. Up to fifteen of these, range-restricted birds were seen on our Kaikoura pelagic and a further 15 on our Stewart Island pelagic. This species breeds on the Snares Island.

**Gray-headed Albatross**

*Thalassarche chrysostoma*

Further analysis of photos taken of a juvenile bird proved that this was a Gray-headed Albatross that we saw during our pelagic tour off Stewart Island, (after mistakenly identified as a juvenile Black-browed Albatross) much to our delight. A rare visitor to New Zealand waters.

**Buller's Albatross (BE)**

*Thalassarche bulleri*

We enjoyed a great look at a singleton alongside the boat on Stewart Island. This is a winter visitor and most birds had left to breed on the Snares Island.

**SHEARWATERS & PETRELS: Procellariidae**

**Northern Giant (-) Petrel**

*Macronectis halli*

Up to thirty were seen on our Kaikoura pelagic often very close to the boat. Singleton's seen off the Hauraki Gulf, the interisland ferry and the flybys off Stewart Island, were probably this species.

**Cape Petrel**

*Daption capense capense*

A single bird was seen on our ferry crossing between the North and South Islands and up to fifteen birds were seen off Kaikoura and small numbers off Stewart Island.

**Broad-billed Prion***Pachyptila vittata*

Two birds were seen close to the boat on our Stewart Island pelagic. Their huge dark bills were noticeable.

**Fairy Prion***Pachyptila turtur*

Very common on our Hauraki Gulf pelagic with smaller numbers off Stewart Island and on the interisland ferry.

**Cook's Petrel (BE)***Pterodroma macroptera*

Good numbers were seen on our Hauraki Gulf pelagic.

**White-chinned Petrel***Puffinus Aequinoctialis*

Six birds were seen on our Stewart Island pelagic.

**Black (Parkinson's) Petrel (BE)***Puffinus Parkinsoni*

A singleton was eventually found on our Hauraki Gulf pelagic allowing close looks alongside the boat. We were getting worried as it was late in the day.

**Westland Petrel (BE)***Procellaria westlandica*

Up to five were seen on our interisland ferry crossing and around thirty on our Kaikoura pelagic. This species breeds on the west coast off the South Island.

**Buller's Shearwater (BE)***Puffinus Bulleri*

Commonly seen on our Hauraki Gulf pelagic.

**Sooty Shearwater***Puffinus Griseus*

Recorded off the Hauraki Gulf, on our interisland crossing and lastly on Stewart Island.

**Short-tailed Shearwater***Puffinus tenuirostris*

Five birds were found on our Kaikoura pelagic.

**Flesh-footed Shearwater***Puffinus carneipes*

Recorded on our Hauraki Gulf pelagic.

**Fluttering Shearwater (E)***Puffinus Gavial*

Very common off the Hauraki Gulf and on our trip to Moturua Island in the Marlborough Sound.

**Hutton's Shearwater (BE)***Puffinus huttoni*

Up to three-hundred birds were seen on our Kaikoura pelagic while heading back to shore. This localised species breeds in burrows in the surrounding mountains

**STORM PETRELS: Hydrobatidae****White-faced Storm (-) Petrel***Pelagodroma marina*

Good numbers were recorded on our Hauraki Gulf pelagic, allowing fabulous looks alongside the boat.

**New Zealand Storm (-) Petrel (E) (CE)***Pealeaornis maoriana*

Up to eight of these mythical birds were seen very well, often close to the back of the boat, following the chum line on our Hauraki Gulf pelagic. This species was thought to be extinct as there were only three specimens collected in the 1850s, and it has not been sighted for the past 150 years until 2003 when it was rediscovered, which made big news in the birding world. Recently, breeding sites, were discovered for the first time in February 2013 on Little Barrier Island, in the Hauraki Gulf!

**DIVING PETRELS : Pelecanoididae****Common Diving-Petrel***Pelecanoides urinatrix*

Excellent looks were had on our Hauraki Gulf pelagic and off Stewart Island.



**GREBES: Podicipedidae****New Zealand Grebe (E)***Poliocephalus rufopectus*

A singleton was at Puketutu Island, Auckland, three at Waro Lake, Hikurangi and ten were seen at Tokaanu Wharf, Lake Taupo. This species only occurs on the North Island.

**Great Crested Grebe***Podiceps cristatus*

Up to six birds were seen on freshwater lakes at Twizel. This species occurs only on the South Island.

**IBISES, SPOONBILLS: Threskiornithidae****Royal Spoonbill***Platalea regia*

Forty were seen at Puketutu Island, eight at Lake Taupo, thirty at Blenheim Treatment Plant and ten at the Royal Albatross colony at Taiaroa Head, Dunedin.

**HERONS & BITTERNS: Ardeidae****Australasian Bittern (H)***Boatarus poiciloptilus*

Frustratingly, we only heard 2-3 birds calling in reed beds at Tokaanu Wharf!

**Great Egret***Ardea alba modesta*

A single breeding plumaged bird was found near Hokitika on the West Coast of the South Island. There is only one breeding colony known in New Zealand.

**White-faced Heron***Egretta novaehollandiae*

A common species recorded throughout the tour.

**GANNETS & BOOBIES: Sulidae****Australasian Gannet***Morus serrator*

First recorded at a breeding colony at Muriwai Beach where we enjoyed fabulous close looks with further sightings in the Marlborough Sounds and Kaikoura.

**CORMORANTS & SHAGS: Phalacrocoracidae****Little Pied Cormorant***Phalacrocorax melanoleucos brevirostris*

Common throughout the tour at many waterbodies.

**Spotted Shag (E)***Phalacrocorax. Punctatus*

Great looks on our ferry crossing through the Cook Strait, our Marlborough Sound boat trip and around Stewart Island. This included some spectacular adults in breeding plumage with superb crests.

**Little Black Cormorant***Phalacrocorax Sulcirostris*

Small numbers were recorded at Puketutu Island, Lake Taupo and Kapiti Coast.

**(Australian) Pied Shag***Phalacrocorax varius varius*

Common at many sites including breeding colonies at Sandspit, seen from our boat.

**Great Shag***Phalacrocorax Carbo*

This large species was seen on seven dates.

**Rough-faced Shag (E)***Phalacrocorax. carunculatus*

We enjoyed great looks (on a rocky stack and some fishing) of at least twenty-seven birds on our boat trip in the Marlborough Sound. The whole population occurs only in this area and a recent survey estimated an increase to around 800 birds.

**Bronze Shag (E)***Leucocarbo chalconotus*

First recorded on our Bluff to Stewart Island ferry. We had many other good sightings of dark and pied phase birds around Stewart Island.

**KITE, HAWKS: Accipitridae****Australasian Harrier***Circus approximans*

A majestic and common species recorded daily in all habitats throughout New Zealand.

### **RAILS, CRAKES & COOTS :Rallidae**

#### **Weka (E)**

*Gallirallus australis*

First recorded on Kawau Island in the Hauraki Gulf, daily on Kapiti Island, at Blumine Reserve in the Marlborough Sounds and on Stewart Island.

#### **Buff-banded Rail**

*Rallus philipensis assimilis*

A singleton was seen exceptionally well in the morning at Snell's Beach, Warkworth.

#### **Australasian Swamphen**

*Porphyrio porphyrio melanotus*

Commonly seen in farmlands and forest edge throughout the tour.

*Note: Recently split four ways by the IOC. Not accepted as yet by Clements.*

#### **North Island Takahe (E)**

*Porphyrio. Mantelli hochstetteri*

After a fair search, two of these enigmatic birds were found at Tawharanui Regional Park much to our relief. The pair were seen crossing a hillside allowing great looks. No birds were found on Tiri tiri Matangi Island during our visit as they were suspected to be breeding at this time of year and can be very difficult to find. North Island Takahe have been introduced to several island sanctuaries where they are safe from introduced predators. A wild population of around 200 birds occur wild on the Murchison Mountains at Milford Sound. Total population estimate is 280+ birds.

#### **Eurasian Coot**

*Fulica atra*

Recorded at Lake Taupo and at Te Anau, in the Milford Sound.

### **OYSTERCATCHERS: Haematopodidae**

#### **South Island Pied Oystercatcher (E)**

*Haematopus ostralegus*

Recorded widely in pasturelands throughout the North and South Islands.

#### **Variable Oystercatcher (E)**

*Haematopus. Unicolor*

Recorded in good numbers at coastal areas especially at Waipu Cove where we saw birds in mixed plumage.

### **STILTS & AVOCETS: Recurvirostridae**

#### **Black-winged (Pied) Stilt**

*Himantopus himantopus*

Recorded at many wetland locations, throughout the tour.

#### **Black Stilt (E) (CE)**

*Himantopus novaeseelandiae*

After a desperate search visiting several pans and scanning braided riverbeds we eventually found single birds on two days in the Twizel area. Fabulous scope views were obtained of one of the rarest waders in the world, with a population of less than 300 birds.

### **PLOVERS: Charadriidae**

#### **Wrybill (E) (EN)**

*Anarhynchus frontalis*

We had great scope looks at thirty eight birds on the first day and sixteen the following day at Puketutu Island, Auckland. The tip of the bill is curved to the right, which helps it feed on invertebrates under rocks. The Wrybill breeds only on a handful of braided rivers on the South Island where the total population is estimated at 5000 birds!

#### **Masked Lapwing**

*Vanellus miles*

Recorded on every day of our tour. A species that colonised New Zealand as recently as 1938 and spread from the South to the North Island.

#### **New Zealand (Red-breasted Dotterel) Plover (E) (EN)**

*Charadrius obscurus*

We had great looks at ten birds in breeding plumage on the mud flats at Waipu Cove while looking for Fairy Terns. A further sighting of four birds on the flats opposite Sandspit.

Another threatened species with most of the population on the North Island and a small population in the far south which breeds in the hills of Stewart Island.

*Note: The South Island sub-species occurs only on Stewart Island with a population of 250 birds and is often treated as a full species by many authors.*

**Double-banded Plover (E)**

*Charadrius bicinctus*

Two birds in non-breeding plumage were seen briefly by some of the group at Otaki while further sightings of stunning breeding plumaged birds were at wetlands near Twizel.

**SANDPIPERS & SNIPES: Scolopaciidae**

**Bar-tailed Godwit**

*Limosa lapponica*

Recorded at Puketutu Island where we saw two 2,000+ birds and a further fifteen at Stewart Island.

**Ruddy Turnstone**

*Arenaria interpres*

Three birds were seen at Waipu Cove.

**Red Knot**

*Calidris canutus*

Good numbers amongst Bar-tailed Godwits at Puketutu Island.

**GULLS & TERNS: Laridae**

**Red-billed Gull (E)**

*Larus Scopulinus*

Commonly seen at coastal areas throughout New Zealand.

**Black-billed Gull (E)**

*Larus Bulleri*

First recorded at Puketutu Island with further sightings at Lake Taupo, en route to Arthur's Pass and in the Milford Sound area. Many birds were seen congregating in fields in the Twizel-Omarama area.

**Kelp Gull**

*Larus dominicanus*

Commonly seen throughout NZ.

**Caspian Tern**

*Sterna. Caspia*

This huge tern was seen on six dates including our first sightings at Waipu Cove.

**Fairy Tern (CE)**

*Sterna Nereis davisae*

We were ecstatic to find a pair of these rare breeding birds at Waipu Cove, on the North Island. Only about twenty pairs of this rare sub-species breed in NZ.

**White-fronted Tern (BE)**

*Sterna. Striata*

First recorded at Muriwai Gannet colony where we enjoyed great looks at many birds attending their nests. We saw this species several more times at the coast.

**Black-fronted Tern (E)**

*Chlidonias albostratus*

Up to fifteen birds were found on rivers near Omarama with further sightings at Twizel, en route to Te Anua and on a river near Lumsden en route to Bluff. This species breeds on rivers only on South Island.

**SKUAS: Stercorariidae**

**Brown Skua**

*Stercorarius antarcticus*

We enjoyed fantastic looks at two different pairs which would fly around the boat looking for scraps on our Stewart Island pelagic.

**PIGEONS & DOVES: Columbidae**

**Rock Pigeon**

*Columba livia*

Small numbers recorded in urban environments.

**Barbary Dove**

*Streptopelia roseogrisea*

Good views on both days at Kerikeri and further sightings around Warkworth.

**Spotted Dove***Streptopelia chinensis*

A couple of birds were seen en route to Muriwai and others near Snells Beach, Warkworth.

**New Zealand Pigeon (E)***Hemiphaga novaeseelandiae*

First recorded at Kerikeri where we had fantastic looks at a confiding bird feeding in a nearby fruiting tree. We enjoyed many other sightings on twelve days.

**CUCKOOS: Cuculidae****Long-tailed Cuckoo (BE)***Eudynamys taitensis*

Two birds were heard calling on Little Barrier Island and later fantastic looks at a single bird being chased by a Tui on Kapiti Island. Heard calling several times that evening.

**NEW ZEALAND PARROTS: Strigopidae****Kea (E) (TH)***Nestor notabilis*

Up to ten of these colourful, playful characters were enjoyed at Arthur's Pass Village. A further ten birds were seen at Milford Sound. This threatened species occurs in mountainous areas only on South Island, where the population is estimated to be as low as 3000 birds!

**New Zealand Kaka (E)***Nestor meridionalis septentrionalis*

Flight views of up to seven birds while having lunch on our boat off Little Barrier Island while on a pelagic tour. Further sightings included four confiding birds seen on Kapiti Island and lastly up to thirty birds on Stewart Island including on the balcony at our motel.

*Note: South Island sub-species, Nestor meridionalis meridionalis, was seen daily on Stewart Island including a regular group at our hotel allowing fabulous close looks and photos.*

**PARROTS: Psittacidae****Yellow-crowned (-fronted) Parakeet (E)***Cyanoramphus. auriceps*

Good but brief looks at four birds on Ulva Island, Stewart Island.

**Red-crowned (-fronted) Parakeet (E)***Cyanoramphus novaezelandiae*

Great views on our day trips to Tiritiri Matangi Island and Ulva Islands.

**Eastern Rosella (I)***Platycercus eximius*

Regular sightings of this introduced species were had on the first few days of our tour on the North Island.

**OWLS: Stigidae****Morepork (Southern Boobook) (E)***Ninox novaeseelandiae*

Distant but good looks in a forest near Kerikeri while we were searching for North Island Brown Kiwi. Heard calling on Kapiti Island and at Te Anua.

**KINGFISHERS: Alcedinidae****Sacred Kingfisher***Halcyon sancta*

Recorded on all days on North Island and a single bird was seen in Dunedin.

**FALCONS: Falconidae****New Zealand Falcon (E)***Falco novaeseelandiae*

A single calling bird flying opposite our hotel was seen by half the group at Franz Joseph Glacier.

**NEW ZEALAND WRENS: Acanthisitiidae****Rifleman (E)***Acanthisitta chloris granti*



We enjoyed multiple views of five birds at Arthur's Pass, four at Cascade Creek and four on Ulva Island.

**New Zealand (South Island Wren) Rockwren (E) (TH)** *Xenicus gilviventris*

We enjoyed great looks at a pair at the Homer Tunnel, Milford Sound. This species occurs on the rocky Sub-Alpine belt of the South Island.

**HONEYEATERS: Meliphagidae**

**New Zealand Bellbird (E)** *Anthornis melanura*

We enjoyed great looks at several duetting birds on Tiri Tiri Matangi Island. We had further sightings at Kapiti Island and on South Island at Moturua Island, Milford and on Stewart Island.

**Tui (E)** *Prosthemadera novaeseelandiae*

This colourful and showy species was first seen feeding on *Flax* flowers at Puketutu Island. It was seen and its wide range of calls heard daily thereafter.

**AUSTRALASIAN WARBLERS: Acanthizidae**

**Gray Gerygone (E)** *Gerygone igata*

Seen and heard on most days of the tour. Our first sighting was of a pair at Driftwood cottages, Kerikeri.

**NEW ZEALAND CREEPERS: Mohouidae**

**Yellowhead (E) (EN)** *Mohoua ochrocephala*

Fabulous close looks at a small flock on two occasions on Ulva Island and Stewart Island. Occurs only on South Island where it is declining rapidly due to introduced predators. It has been introduced to several predator-free islands to try save the species.

**Whitehead (E)** *Mohoua albicilla*

First seen at Tawharanui Regional Park with further good sightings on Tiritiri Matangi and Kapiti Islands. This species only occurs only on North Island.

**Pipipi (E)** *Mohoua novaeseelandica*

Very good looks at several confiding birds on Ulva Island and Stewart Island. Occurs only on South Island.

**NEW ZEALAND WATTLEBIRDS: Callaeidae**

**[North Island] Kokako (E) (EN)** *Callaeas cinerea wilsoni*

We enjoyed fabulous close looks at a pair feeding just above our heads on Tiritiri Matangi Island, situated offshore of North Island. Lee and Debbie saw a second pair further along the trail. This is a rare and endangered species occurring only on the North Island and with a population estimated at 1500+ birds.

*Note: The IOC recognises two species: North Island Kokako and South Island Kokako. Clements only recognises Kokako. C.c wilsoni.*

**[North Island] Saddleback (E) (EN)** *Philisternus carunculatus rufusater*

Great looks at Tawharanui Regional Park and on Tiritiri Matangi Island, where we saw several birds. This is a rare and threatened species, with a population of less than 3000 individuals!

**[South Island] Saddleback (E) (EN)** *Philisternus carunculatus carunculatus*

Excellent close looks at six birds on Stewart Island. This is a much rarer subspecies restricted to offshore islands on the South Island, with an estimated population at around 1500+ birds.

*Note: The IOC recognises both North and South Island Saddlebacks. Clements recognises only one species, Saddleback P.c rufasater.*

**STITCHBIRDS: Notiomystidae**

**Stitchbird (E) (CE)***Notiomystis cincta*

This very rare endemic was only seen on Tiritiri Matangi Island, where we enjoyed great looks at several birds including a male displaying his white ear-tufts. This is a rare and highly threatened species, with less than 2000 birds remaining on offshore, predator-free islands.

**FANTAILS: Rhipiduridae****New Zealand Fantail (E)***Rhipidura fuliginosa*

This delightful species was enjoyed as it often approached very close, searching for insects we would flush from the grassy areas. Recorded on ten dates.

**CROWS: Cracticidae****Australian Magpie***Gymnorhina tibicen*

Good numbers recorded throughout the tour.

**AUSTRALASIAN ROBINS: Petroicidae****Tomtit (E)***Petroica macrocephala toitoi*

Our first sighting was at Franz Joseph Glacier where we enjoyed great looks, with further sightings at Milford Sound and Ulva Island.

*Note: Only Tomtit is recognised by the IOC and Clements. Some authorities split this species as North and South Island Toms.*

**New Zealand Robin (E) (TH)***Petroica australis longipes*

We had good looks at three birds on Tiritiri Matangi Island, also heard calling on Kapiti Island.

**[South Island Robin (E) (TH)]***Petroica australis australis*

A pair were found at Cascade Creek in the Milford Sound and then six confiding birds on Ulva Island.

*Note: Only NZ Robin is recognised by the IOC and Clements. Some authorities split this species as North and South Island Robins*

**LARKS: Alaudidae****Eurasian Skylark (I)***Alauda arvensis*

Recorded on almost every day on tour. Its beautiful song was enjoyed by all.

**SWALLOWS: Hirundinidae****Welcome Swallow***Hirundo tahitica*

We recorded this species on every day on tour including several attending nests.

**GRASSBIRDS: Locustellidae****New Zealand Fernbird (E)***Megalurus punctata vealeae*

We enjoyed very close looks at a single calling bird at a marsh near Lake Taupo.

**WHITE-EYES: Zosteropidae****Silver-eye***Zosterops lateralis*

This common native was seen on most days of the tour.

**STARLINGS Sturnidae****Common (European) Starling (I)***Sternus vulgaris*

Very commonly recorded on all days throughout the tour.

**Common Myna (I)***Acridotheres tristis*

Recorded daily in the far north of the North Island.

**THRUSHES: Turdidae****Common (Eurasian) Blackbird (I)** *Turdus merula*

Seen on a daily basis throughout the tour and one of New Zealand's most common species.

**Song Thrush (I)** *T. Philomelos*

This attractive and common species was recorded on all days of the New Zealand tour.

**SPARROWS: Passeridae****House Sparrow (I)** *Passer domesticus*

Commonly seen on a daily basis.

**ACCENTORS: Prunellidae****Dunnoek (I)** *Prunella modularis*

First record was of a singing bird at Murawai Gannet Colony. Thereafter, seen daily on South Island, where it was common.

**PIPITS: Motacillidae****New Zealand (Australasian) Pipit (E)** *Anthus novaeseelandiae*

We had an excellent sighting of two birds on the Tongariro River at Turangi.

**FINCHES: Fringillidae****Common Chaffinch (I)** *Fringilla coelebs*

Commonly seen on most days.

**Eurasian Greenfinch (I)** *Carduelis chloris*

Recorded on five dates.

**Common Redpoll (I)** *Carduelis (Acanthis) flammea*

Has a preference for pine forests.

**Eurasian Goldfinch (I)** *Carduelis carduelis*

Fairly common throughout our tour.

**BUNTINGS: Emberizidae****Yellowhammer (I)** *Emberiza citronella*

This beautiful bunting with its catchy song was seen and heard almost daily throughout New Zealand.

**Mammals:****European Rabbit (I)** *Oryctolagus cuniculus*

Seen on at least five dates.

**NZ Fur Seal** *Arctocephalus forsteri*

Seen at Kaikoura and off Stewart Island.

**Hector's Dolphins** *Cephalorhynchus hectori*

Up to eighteen were seen in the Marlborough Sound.

**Dusky Dolphin** *Lagenorhynchus obscurus*

Recorded in the Marlborough Sound and off Kaikoura.

**Monarch Butterfly****White Cabbage Butterfly****Red Damsel fly**

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