



New Zealand
9th November to 4th December 2006

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Itinerary

7th & 8th November: Travelling from the UK

9th November: Mangere Lagoons near Auckland Airport was our first stop though the poor weather prevented us venturing to far from the hire car. Highlights being Sacred Kingfisher, Grey Duck, White-faced Herons, Silvereye, Little Shag and Masked Lapwings. We then drove 1½ hour drive north to Muriwai Beach, north of Auckland, and Australasian Gannet Colony where we spent a few hours photographing the gannets and scenery. Early afternoon travelled cross country to Waipu Cove, via Mangawhai, where the highlights were very showy New Zealand Dotterels, Variable Oystercatchers and Welcome Swallows. Overnighted at Central Motel Warkworth



10th November: Day on Tiritiri Matangi, overnighting at the island bunkhouse. Days highlights were Saddlebacks, Stitchbirds, 3 Kokakos, a couple of Takahe, New Zealand Robin, Red-crowned Parakeet, cute Whiteheads, Spotless Crake, Brown Teal, numerous Purple Gallinules, Tuis, Bellbirds and Fantails, Little Blue Penguins and Little Spotted Kiwi.

11th November: Majority of day again spent on Tiritiri Matangi with most of yesterdays species seen again providing further photographic opportunities. Late afternoon, back on the mainland, we returned to Warkworth via a short stop at Wenderholm Regional Park where Grey Warbler, New Zealand Dotterels, New Zealand Pigeon and Pied Oystercatchers were amongst the highlights. Again overnighted at the Central Motel Warkworth.

12th November: Departed early morning for the small town of Leigh, half hour north of Warkworth, for our all day pelagic into the Hauraki Gulf. Days highlights were many with 1 or 2 New Zealand Storm Petrels, Cooks Petrels, Fairy Prions, White-faced Storm Petrels, Flesh-footed, Fluttering, Little and Bullers Shearwaters, Black and Northern Giant Petrels, Australasian Gannets and White-capped Albatross giving much of the excitement. The attractive Leigh harbour held numerous Sacred Kingfishers and a small Pied Shag colony just out beyond the harbour mouth. Another night at Central Motel Warkworth.

13th November: Leisurely drive west to Trounson where we walked the loop trail at the forest and explored the Kai-iwi lakes road. Our night time exploration of Trounson Forest eventually produced excellent views of North Island Brown Kiwi as well as some other nocturnal critters such as the ridiculously long legged Rock Weta. Overnighted at Trounson Top 10 Holiday Park.

14th November: Early departure for the 4 hour drive to Miranda south of Auckland. Was slowed up in our progress at Auckland as we hit rush hour traffic. Spent much of day at Miranda with the mid afternoon high tide producing many waders and gulls from the hide. Highlights were the roadside Australasian Harriers, hundreds of Pied Stilts, the showy Wrybills, Sharp-tailed



Sandpipers, Red-necked Stints, Curlew Sandpipers and Black-billed Gulls. Late afternoon drove south to Rotorua where explored the lake front at the Government Gardens where we found a breeding colony of Little Shags next to the car park, where there was also a single Little Black Shag. In the bay here there were hundreds of Black Swans, 20+ New Zealand Pochards and New Zealand Grebe. There any many of motels found along Fenton Street, we stayed at the Redwood Holiday Park.

15th November: Early morning birding back at the Shag colony and nearby bay then visited the thermal springs at The Maori Arts & Crafts Institute before visiting the Agrodome for a bit of general tourist activities. The then travelled south with an hour spent at Lake Okareka Walkway looking for New Zealand Shoveler, New Zealand Grebes, Coot and other waterbirds. Further south we stopped at the excellent thermal area of Wai-O-Tapu. which was followed by Huka Falls just north of Taupo. We headed directly for Frethy Drive at the southern end of Lake Taupo where we successfully found three North Island Fernbirds. We then returned north and visited the Craters of the Moon where the highlights, bird wise, were the numerous California Quail out on the road in the late evening and the New Zealand Pipit along one of the trails. Overnighted at Rainow Lodge at Taupo.

16th November: Another pre-dawn departure for Pureora Forest where the morning was spent birding at and around the Canopy Tower and the forest trails near the DoC centre. Highlights here were the numerous New Zealand Robins, Tui's, Kaka, Yellow-fronted Parakeets, Whitehead and a Long-tailed Cuckoo. The afternoon was spent at the Waitomo Caves with a visit, firstly to the famous Glow Worm Caves, just amazing, and then the Aranui Cave with its many spectacular formations. We then headed south to Raetihi where we found a pair of Blue Duck along the river. We stayed over night at the Top 10 Holiday Park at Whanganui.

17th November: Mid morning departure for long drive south which was broken up with a stop at Manawatu Estuary where Royal Spoonbills, Pacific Golden Plovers, a couple of Cattle Egrets, many Knot and Masked Lapwings and Australasian Harriers were seen. We overnighted at the Foreshore Motor Lodge at Petone in the Hutt valley just outside Wellington.

18th November: Morning InterIslander ferry crossing from Wellington to Picton in rough weather. The crossing produced numerous Fairy Prions, Spotted Shags, many Fluttering Shearwaters, several Flesh-footed Shearwaters, a Sooty Shearwater, an Arctic Skua, a Northern Giant Petrel and pod of Dusky Dolphin. Excellent scope views of Fairy Prions when we entered the calmer waters of Marlborough Sound. A short lunch break in Picton and then a trip out in Queen Charlotte Sound with Dolphin Encounters where we had views of King Shags, Fluttering Shearwaters, Dusky Dolphins, Spotted Shags, Arctic Skuas and Fairy Prion. A short stop on a wet Motorua Island gave us a tame New Zealand Robin. Late afternoon drive south with a stop at Lake Elterwater which gave us a spread of wildfowl and excellent views of harriers. The coast road as we approached Kaikoura was spectacular. We overnighted at the Kaikoura YHA.

19th November: The 6am and 9am Albatross Encounters short range pelagics gave us some stunning birding with so many highlights. The sight of the first Wandering Albatross appearing in the wake of the boat is a memory that will never fade. It really is a big bird and nothing really can prepare you for the experience. Choice highlights from the pelagics were the stunning 'White Morph' Southern Giant Petrel, the first off Kaikoura (probably New Zealand) this year, Gibsons,



Snowy, Northern Royal, Salvins, White-capped and Black-browed Albatrosses, Northern Giant, Cape, White-chinned and Westlands Petrels, Bullers, Huttons and Short-tailed Shearwaters, Yellow-eyed Penguin, Kelp and Red-billed Gulls and Dusky Dolphins.

In the afternoon we spent 3 hours on a Whale Watch trip which gave us three Sperm Whales, called Little Nick, Manu and Big Nick respectively, and a pod of 300+ leaping Dusky

Dolphins. From land a flock of over 200 Huttons Shearwaters had gathered off the Whale Watch Visitor Centre beach and two or more pairs Banded Dotterels were nesting on the beach. We overnighted again at the YHA.

20th November: All three pelagics undertaken today which gave us pretty much the same species as yesterday plus Southern Royal Albatross and Hector's Dolphins. These trips are just so addictive and it doesn't matter if you keep getting the same species. A further night spent at the YHA.

21st November: Decided to skip the morning pelagic in favour of getting a head start on our long drive west. We made a short hour long stop at St Anne's Lagoon where a variety of wildfowl kept us entertained. We arrived at Westport mid afternoon and a visit to Cape Foulwind nearby gave us some Weka and a Great Egret in a roadside ditch. We then pressed north to Karamea and

after booking in at the 'Last Resort Motel' in the town, if it can be called that, we continued north to the start of the Heaphy Track. The coast is spectacular. We failed to find Kiwi.

22nd November: Arrived back at Cape Foulwind early and found a showy South Island Fernbird close to the car park and some inquisitive Weka at the top of the hill beyond the lighthouse. We then drove south to Punakaki stopping to book in at the Cottage Motel, with sea views. We walked the 'Pancake' rocks and then drove south to the uninspiring town of Greymouth. In the late afternoon and evening we tried Bullock Creek for Great Spotted Kiwi but only managed to hear several.

23rd November: Morning drive in more poor weather to Franz Josef Glacier village where the weather prevented views of the glacier itself. We booked in at the Rainforest Motel and drove south to Monroe Beach to try for the penguins. We failed to find any penguins in the stormy conditions though albatrosses and shearwaters streamed past offshore.

24th November: Slightly better weather today gave us decent views of Franz Josef Glacier though still not good enough for a hoped for scenic flight. Headed south to Jackson Bay, south of Haast, but again no penguins. Booked in at the Heritage Park Motel at Haast and with some local information tried Murphies Beach at 4pm where we were treated to many Fiordland Crested



Penguins in a stunning setting. To reach the beach we had to wade through four streams but it was worth it.

25th November: During the morning drive towards Queenstown we stopped at the Bridle Track near Haast Pass. This was a great forest and within 40 yards of leaving the car I had found a pair of nesting Rifleman, 1 or 2 excellent Yellowheads, Browncreepers, Fantails, Yellow-crowned Parakeet, Tomtits and Kaka. We then pressed on to Queenstown with a stop at Makaroa for an impromptu scenic Helicopter flight with Alpine Helicopters. At Queenstown we spent the rest of

the day exploring the town and going up the Gondola for the panoramic views across the town, lake and the Remarkables mountain range. We stayed overnight at the Top 10 Holiday Park.

26th November: Morning around town before the long drive to Te Anau where we checked in at the basic Te Anau Holiday Park. We explored the road up the Eglington Valley to Milford Sound. We searched the Homer Tunnel area for Rock Wren but found none though Kea were compensation. The poor weather prevented any decent views of the Sound. The Homer Tunnel area on the return drive experienced a blizzard and that was that. Black-fronted Terns along the valley and spectacular views on the return, hour long, drive.

27th November: Early morning at a snow covered Homer Tunnel brought us 8 Kea and no Rock Wrens. We decided to return later and was out on the first cruise of the day into the Sound. The weather was improving all the time and the views superb. Bottlenosed Dolphins riding the bow waves and several Fiordland Crested Penguins were the wildlife highlight. Back at Homer Tunnel gone midday and much of the snow had melted but it still took 1½ hours to find a Rock Wren which showed for only 20 seconds. Drove to Invergargill in the afternoon where we stayed at the Homestay Villa Motel.

28th November: Extreme weather prevented us from getting over to Stewart Island from Bluff in the morning and eventually the island trip was abandoned. A few hours seawatching from the southern end of Bluff Walkway resulted in tens of thousands of Sooty Shearwaters, several Broad-billed Prions, 2 Bullers and 1 White-capped Albatrosses, several unidentified distant 'storm petrels' and several Stewart Island Shags. We headed north through the Caitlans Region to Nugget Point where Yellow-eyed Penguins were watched coming ashore whilst shearwaters, petrels and albatrosses passed by. We overnighted at the Nugget View Motel at Kaka Point, where albatrosses were scoped from our rooms balcony, a most picturesque location.

29th November: Revisted the Nugget Point area before heading south to Oamaru where we stayed at the Top 10 Holiday Park. In the early evening a visit to Bushy Beach south of the town gave us Yellow-eyed Penguins but they were eclipsed by the family pod of Orcas just offshore. Later in the evening we visited the Blue Penguin colony close to town where upto 200 were watched gathering and coming ashore. Just offshore a Southern Right Whale made an appearance.

30th November: Drove inland towards Twizel with stops along the Ahuri River near Omarama



where Black-billed Gulls, Black-fronted and Caspian Terns were amongst the avian highlights. The only Great Crested Grebe of the trip was seen as we passed Lake Benmore. We took a long drive out to Lake Poaka but failed to find any Black Stilts though the views were excellent. We

checked in at the High Country Holiday Lodge in Twizel and, after some information, saw three Black Stilts well at Lake Pukaki just north of the canal north of the town. We took the road towards Mt Cook, along the shore of Lake Pukaki where several more Black Stilts were seen, distantly, at Glentanner, along with Pied and hybrid stilts. Mt Cook was cloud covered.

1st December: Spent day in around the Twizel and Mt Cook areas, visiting the Mt Cook village near the famous, but unattractive, Hermitage Hotel. Our planned scenic flight did not go ahead despite the slowly improving conditions, a further night spent at the High Country Holiday Lodge in Twizel.

2nd December: In the morning we returned to Mt Cook village where the clear skies allowed a stunning scenic ski plane flight over the Southern Alps. We were able to land on a glacier and stand in virgin snow in total silence. Ski planes can shut the motor down whereas helicopters do not. After the flight we took the long long drive south back to Kaikoura where we stayed at the Sierra Beach Front Motel. En-route we made a short stop at the Ashley river though a morning visit would probably have been better.

3rd December: Our 6am pelagic gave us a different perspective of the seabirds that use the offshore waters. Numbers of Giant and Cape Petrels were down where as the numbers of White-capped Albatrosses had more than trebled. This trip gave us Gibsons, Northern and Southern Royal, White-capped, Salvin's and Black-browed Albatrosses, Northern Giant, Cape, Westlands, White-chinned, Grey-faced (new) and Wilsons (new) Petrels as well as several Short-tailed Shearwaters as well as other seabirds. It was a great trip. We then spent a little time photographing the Banded Dotterels again on the beach before driving to Christchurch where we spent an hour around part of the city in the evening. We stayed at the Intercontinental motel.

4th December: Explored the city in the morning before driving out to Akaroa, on Banks Peninsula, for a boat trip with Black Cat Cruises. This gave us White-flipped Penguins, Pied and Spotted Shags and some excellent Hector's Dolphins. Returned to Christchurch for our evening flight back to the UK.

The Sites

North Island

Mangere Lagoons

A short drive from Auckland Airport these large tidal lagoons and marshy areas can hold many waders and wildfowl. There are several walkways along the shoreline. During our visit, in very wet and windy conditions, we noted White-faced Herons, Grey Duck, Pied Stilts, Paradise Shelducks, Little Shag, Sacred Kingfisher, Purple Gallinule, Masked Lapwing and Silvereye without having to leave the car, which was impossible due to the appalling weather.

Muriwai Beach

The main reason for visiting this clearly sign posted location is the Australasian Gannet colony. It is only a short walk from the car park to the viewing areas that look directly down onto the colony, which is split over the small headlands and a stack. Many birds were seen at close range riding the updrafts providing some excellent photographic opportunities though keeping the camera steady in the gale force conditions was a challenge.

The coastline here is spectacular with rising cliffs to the south and a beach that stretches off into the distance to the north. The beach below the car park held a small flock of about 50 White-faced Terns, which proved to be very photographic, sat out on the large rocks.

Waipu Cove

The best location to visit is just north of the small town of Waipu. From Waipu head north along Cove Road towards Mangawhai Heads and after several kilometres turn left onto Johnsons Pont Road and drive to the end where there is a small parking area. The estuary here has numerous waders with New Zealand Dotterels and Variable Oystercatchers only a few metres from the car park. There is a small track off to the left which will bring you to the deeper water channel which can be viewed from the raised embankment, this had Pied and Little Shags. The dunes on the far side of the mudflats have the only breeding colony of the rare New Zealand race of Fairy Tern with about 3-5 pairs present. You can access the dunes by wading the creek and viewing from outside the fence but we found this unnecessary as we had excellent views of the birds from the mudflats, which are solid and safe to walk on, as they fed in the small water filled channels.

Tiritiri Matangi

A must visit site. This small island a few kilometres off the coast is accessed via ferry, Kawau Kat, from either Auckland or Gulf Harbour. The Gulf Harbour option is better as it is a cheaper and quicker crossing. The crossing takes about 40 minutes and you have about 6 hours to walk the island. Overnight stays are possible at the basic bunkhouse near the lighthouse.

The island is predator free and many of the birds have been relocated here to save them from extinction. Species that can be found here and not on the mainland, or at least at only a few locations and chances are very low anyway are, Saddleback, Stitchbird, Red-crowned Parakeet, Kokako, Brown Teal, Takahe and Little Spotted Kiwi. In addition other species are easier to see here than most other locations on the mainland with excellent of Spotless Crake, at the small pond near the quay, Bellbird, Tui, Fantail, Purple Gallinule and Whitehead.

There are many walking trails though the best found were the Wattle Track, Wharf Road up from the quay, East Coast Track and the Ridge Track.

To get Little Spotted Kiwi an overnight stay is required. We heard at least 3 birds around the island after dark and superb views of one just behind the bunkhouse. To stay overnight contact Department of Conservation department, Tiritiri Matangi, for further details.

Wenderholm

This attractive, and popular, park has estuary, mangrove and open parkland habitats. A morning visit with a high tide would probably be better than the mid afternoon low tide visit we did. The higher tide would probably push out Banded Rails into the damper meadows and would be more visible. However we did have Grey Warbler, New Zealand Pigeon, lots of Tui's, Pied Oystercatcher and small numbers of New Zealand Dotterels. Wenderholm is about 40 minutes drive from Gulf Harbour or Warkworth.

Hauraki Gulf

Another essential for any birding trip to New Zealand. All day pelagic trips are undertaken into the Hauraki Gulf, most depart from Sandspit 5 minutes from Warkworth though we left from the small



town of Leigh, half hour north of Warkworth. These trips are run by Pterodroma Pelagics, and you can be at sea for up to 10 hours. There were five of us on our trip, out on a small fishing boat with our skipper Jordie Newman, which departed at 6am and arrived back at 5pm. Jordie is a fisherman by trade but has an excellent knowledge of the birds in the gulf. This trip followed the gale force conditions a few days prior which seemed to have had an effect of the birds present, i.e. not the numbers hoped for. These trips target the main prize, the recently

rediscovered and previously thought extinct, New Zealand Storm Petrel of which we managed to find one, perhaps two birds.

Some of the other seabirds seem to come in 'groups', i.e. most of the Cooks Petrels were nearly all seen at the same time, as were the Buller's Shearwaters. Although the numbers of seabirds were down on what had been present the previous weeks there was no denying that 50 or Cooks Petrels, 300 Buller's, hundreds of Fluttering and Flesh-footed Shearwaters, 10+ White-faced Storm Petrels, 10+ Black Petrels, several Northern Giant Petrels, Fairy Terns amongst others were excellent value.

Trounson Forest

This forest is one of the best places to connect with North Island Brown Kiwi. We stayed at the Trounson Top 10 Holiday Park, which is only about 10kms from Forest. The forest has many very large 'Kauri' trees, a species that was heavily logged and now very scarce, and a boardwalk loop trail. During the day the forest is alive with the song of New Zealand Robins and a New Zealand Pigeon can be seen in the canopy.

The holiday park also do 'nightly' Kiwi walks, weather dependant, at \$25 per person with a high success rate. Note though that the group can vary in size from a handful to about 10 or 12, which can limit the success in seeing Kiwi.

The previous night's trip out had resulted in three kiwi being seen but our large group managed to see zero. Probably due to the fact that there was quite a lot of noise being made. On returning from the excursion we immediately returned to search for ourselves, there is unrestricted access to the forest at any time of day or night. Several of the others in the group also returned and at about midnight we had superb views of a bird right by the boardwalk, memorable stuff.

Miranda

One of the best wader locations in New Zealand. There is a visitor centre which is meant to be open 9am-4pm but wasn't opened to well after 1pm when we were there. The centre should be able to provide details of tides and best areas to currently look for waders as well as obtaining a free map of the tracks and local area. We found the area from the hide, a rather worn out plywood hut, to be the best. A high tide is needed to push the birds up and onto the shingle banks to have any chance of seeing anything well. We arrived at 7am and found that high tide wasn't until 3pm so we had a long wait. Was it worth it, well yes. There were thousands of waders, mostly Bar-tailed Godwits and Variable Oystercatchers, as well as hundreds of Black-billed Gulls. As the tide comes up many of the smaller waders move to the 'stilt' pools just behind the hide and it is here that the best views can be obtained. Apart from the hundreds of Pied Stilts, excellent views were obtained of several Black-billed Gulls, at least 40 Wrybill, a number of Sharp-tailed Sandpipers, Knot, Red-necked Stints and Curlew Sandpipers.

The mangroves by the swing gate apparently hold Banded Rail and these are probably best looked for over a high tide when they get pushed out into the open though the tide wasn't high enough by the time we had to leave. However we did have several Grey Warblers, close views of White-faced Herons and a Great White Egret.

Further along the coast is the small town of Kaiaua where excellent Fish & Chips can be had whilst waiting for the tide to come in whilst the road and nearby car parks are close to the shoreline and some waders can be seen well.

Lake Rotorua

The main reason for visiting Rotorua is not birding but for the impressive thermal areas that are all around. Most of these thermal areas are pay to enter affairs though explosive geysers, bubbling mud pots, sink holes, hot springs etc are worth the entrance fees. For the birding we found two areas worth visiting, the waterfront at the Government Gardens at Lake Rotorua and Lake Okareka about 30 minutes drive to the north, which is dealt with separately below. For the Government Gardens access travel along Fenton Street and turn right into Queens Street, Arawa Street is on the opposite side. Follow Queens street through the archway and continue round to the end where the car park is. Check the lake anywhere along the road for New Zealand Grebe, we had two by the Red-billed Gull colony located on a small island. At the end of the road is a car

park with a Little Shag colony next to the boat ramp and many New Zealand Pochards. There is a walkway that goes along the lakeshore to Memorial Drive though we explored only a small part of this. We did have fine views of a couple of Fantails and many Silvereyes.

Lake Okareka

Driving from Rotorua on Highway 33 turn right at Lynmore and follow signs towards the Blue Lakes. Turn right, sign posted to Lake Okareka after about 15-20minutes and follow the road to the picnic site where there is a jetty and a BBQ. New Zealand Grebe and Coot were easy here. Continue along the road until you see the lake again and there is a pull over, this is the Lake Okareka Walkway. There are reed beds here and a hide. New Zealand Grebe, New Zealand Shoveler, Black Swans, Pied Stilts and other wetland birds were found.

Frethy Drive

Located at the southern end of Lake Taupo, about an hours drive south of the town of Taupo. Frethy Drive is on the right, about 7km from Turangi, and appears out of nowhere. When on Frethy drive search the first 100-200metres from the main highway, this is where the Fernbirds are with three birds seen well.

Pureora Forest

The main birding areas are at and around the Tower where you climb to canopy height. Here we had Kaka, Yellow-fronted Parakeet, numerous New Zealand Robins, Tui's, New Zealand Pigeon. Species such as Rifleman are in the area but are difficult. The section of track, Bismark Road, from the car parking area back to the junction is good, especially at the 'dip' where there is a small stream, here we had the only Tomtits seen on North Island.

The other area birded was the loop Totara Walk at the Department of Conservation (DoC) centre. The loop trail takes about an hour to walk and New Zealand Robin was common as was Silvereye. Tomtits and Rifleman are meant to be here but we found neither.

Manawatu Estuary

Located about an hour north of Wellington the small estuary held numerous waders, getting the tide right here is essential as many of the birds will distant. Finding the best area, by the jetties, is not easy and the 'Chambers' Locality Guide does not give adequate directions. Heading south along Highway 1 turn right at the first sign at Foxton to Foxton Beach. Keep heading towards the estuaries main channel and you should find a wide viewpoint. We found it as a matter of trial and error. Here we had plenty of Knot, Royal Spoonbills, Masked Lapwings, Pacific Golden Plovers, a couple of Cattle Egret and other wading birds. It is a convenient stop off and is designated a reserve.

South Island

Queen Charlotte Sound

My main reason for going out into the Sound was for King Shag. A species that only occurs here with several breeding rocks near the mouth of the sound. The inner sound was sunny and calm and Fluttering Shearwaters, Arctic Skuas and Dusky Dolphins were found. A single King Shag was watched for 20 minutes before we moved on. Some of those on the boat disembarked at Motorua Island as the weather again deteriorated whilst we and the other birders present headed out to try and reach one of the King Shag breeding rocks. The swell was quite bad so we could only try the closest rocks and hoe they were there. About 20 birds were present.

We returned to Motorua Island where the slippery and steep slope up from the landing stage held showy New Zealand Robins but no sign of the Saddlebacks.

Lake Elterwater

This lake is viewed only from the road where there are limited pull overs. I was able to find a position where about half the lake was visible through the surrounding trees and most wetland wildfowl species were seen with many Grey Teal and New Zealand Shoveler but no Chestnut-breasted Shelduck, the only likely place we were going to get them.

Kaikoura

The main reason for visiting Kaikoura are the pelagic trips. These are with Albatross Encounter, part of Oceanwings. These trips run 2-3 times a day depending on time of year and number of people going out. The boats only go out 2-3 miles but the birding experience is simply second to none. Albatrosses are guaranteed with all three forms of Wandering Albatross (Gibsons, Snowy and Antipodean) and both the Royal Albatrosses (Northern and Southern) possible. In addition Salvins, White-capped, Black-browed and Salvins regular depending on time of year. Both Giant Petrels can be found along with Cape, Grey-faced, White-chinned and Westlands Petrels and Huttons, Short-tailed, Sooty and Bullers Shearwaters all regularly encountered. Prions, Pterodromas and Storm Petrels have all put in appearances. In the winter months there are more of each species present than in the spring and summer, i.e. 100 Gibsons Albatrosses possible per trip in winter against 20+ in the spring per trip.

The best trips, in spring at least, are the early morning ones, departing at 6am, with the afternoon 1pm trip generally being the quietest trips. Each trip is a 2 person minimum, or at least 2 fares being paid minimum.



These trips are not cheap, about \$85 per person and should be booked a few days in advance if possible. Although expensive the trips are something special, I did seven in total. Majority of the aforementioned species can be watched at arms length from the back of the boat. The trips vary from millpond calm conditions to choppy head over the side trips, thankfully I wasn't to scream huey on any trip.

Oceanwings also do swimming with Dolphins

and Seals whilst another firm, Whale Watch, have a large catamaran which spends at least 3 hours at sea, again sea sickness for the prone is possible. Our afternoon trip out was a success with three Sperm Whales and a pod of 300+ Dusky Dolphins. These trips cost about \$65 and arrangements can be made in advance.

Back on dry land the coast road passes several areas where Seals, gulls, terns, egrets and shags gather. We found 3+ pairs of nesting Banded Dotterels on the beach directly opposite the Whale Watch centre. These birds were approachable though take care not to disturb these birds to much as they will either have eggs or young nearby.

There are plenty of motels along the beachfront so there shouldn't be a problem finding somewhere to stay. We stayed at the YHA, which had been booked in advance and one of the motels when returned at the end of the trip. The view across the bay to the Kaikoura mountain range at dawn was stunning.

St Annes Lagoon

A picturesque, lightly wooded, lake which had a variety of wildfowl with Grey Teal, New Zealand Pochard, suspect Cape Barren Geese, Paradise Shelduck and Coots as well as a spread of passerines. The lake is about an hour and a half north of Kaikoura.

Karamea

A spectacular area which was well worth visiting for the scenery alone, which was the case as we didn't get any Great Spotted Kiwi. Karamea is a small town on the top of the north west side of South Island and was used as base to search the Heaphy Track for the kiwi. The track itself is further on from the town with superb wooded hillsides. The Heaphy track has steep sides, either climbing up on one side or dropping away on the other, and we saw and heard no bird's which was not surprising. A better bet is the loop track nearer the river and car park which passes through some likely looking habitat. We heard several 'somethings' in the undergrowth though most turned out to be either Possums or a rodent though at least two were suspected as being Kiwi. We stayed out here till at least 1am before turning it in.

Cape Foulwind

Cape Foulwind is clearly sign posted when travelling south from Westport. At the car park follow the main track up the hill. On the first bend and just as the track begins up hill we had a showy Fernbird in the brambles here in the early morning. Weka are best looked for at the top where they often come out on the path, early morning is best.

Bullock Creek

Just north of Punakaiki the long Bullock Creek Track is unsuitable for anything other than a car. It winds its way along the valley for at least half an hour before you reach the parking area. The surrounding countryside is impressive with Tomtits, New Zealand Robins, New Zealand Pigeons and Tui's being seen. The best area for Great Spotted Kiwi: go through the gate and follow main path through the wetland area, Weka and Fernbirds here, to the first fork. Take the right path. Follow to where the path again splits and take the left fork. Anywhere around here is likely to have the kiwi, we heard three but saw none. Morepork also heard but again not seen despite being pretty close to the birds. The kiwi began calling about an hour after dark.

Franz Josef and Fox Glaciers

Not really a birding location but worth stopping to see the impressive glaciers. We had views, through sheets of rain of Fox Glacier and better views of Franz Josef Glacier. At both glacier villages it is possible to arrange scenic flights or hikes actually on the glacier ice and there is plenty of accommodation. There is a short walk from the car park to Sentinal Rock to get excellent views of Franz Josef glacier but it also possible to hike out the terminal ice face.

Monroe Beach

Located approximately an hour north of Haast it is sign posted on a sharp bend. It is a 40 minute easy walk to the beach where Fiordland Crested Penguins come ashore from about 4pm onwards though poor weather kept us staying long enough to see any.

Murphys Beach

A stunning beach which is not sign posted and is a little tricky to find. We were given this location by a local and, although you have to wade through 4 very cold streams and walk a very muddy track, it only takes 20 minutes to reach the beach. The beach is really stunning and we had it to ourselves, that is apart from the 15 or so Fiordland Crested Penguins.

If travelling from Haast you past the Knights Point lookout and there are three laybys spread out along the road beyond the bend. You will need the second large layby. The track is at the far left side of the layby which will be partly covered by bushes. Follow this and expect to either take your shoes and socks off for the icy streams or have wet footwear.

Bridle Track, Haast Pass

Travelling from Haast the Bridle track is found on the left side of the road after about an hour. There is a large layby on the other side of the road. This is perhaps the best forest we visited with Yellowheads, Brown Creepers, nesting Rifleman, Kaka, Yellow-fronted Parakeets etc all being found within the first 40 metres.

Milford Sound

This is a stunning location with the approach through the Eglinton Valley providing early photographic opportunities. The plains and river has Black-fronted Tern and many harriers. The spectacular Sound is worth exploring by boat and there are several operators that run trips several times a day. Bottlenosed Dolphins and Fiordland Crested Penguins were seen. To reach the sound you have to pass through the Homer Tunnel. This itself can be entertaining. Traffic lights allow traffic to move one way though these only operate between 9am and 5pm. Outside this time you could find yourself passing vehicles coming the other way in the pitch black.

Homer Tunnel is also the best chance of Rock Wren. When you arrive at the tunnel entrance park at the far side of the large layby on the tight by the largest boulder. We found that Kea will leave your car alone in favour on the new arrivals. Take the Alpine Track and search for Rock Wrens here. It took two visits and 5 hours to get a 20 second view at the top of the 'garden' loop. It can still be very cold here in the spring as the valley acts like a cauldron, trapping cold air. We had a blizzard the approach side of the tunnel but rain on the other 10 minutes away.

Bluff

Bluff is the point where you travel to Stewart Island though excessive weather meant that both morning ferry sailing's had been cancelled. Although the afternoon sailing was due to go, even though the weather and the sea conditions had not changed, a call to the island proved our worst fears. The planned Kiwi trips would not go ahead because of the weather and even getting over to Ulva Island, where some of the regions special birds are, would prove to be difficult. We would thus be stuck in Oban not being able to do much.

We decided not visit Stewart Island, which was very disappointing, and decided to use these days on mainland South Island. We drove to the southern end of Bluff where I spent a few hours doing a seawatch from southern tip of the Foveaux Walkway. At the end of Gunpit Road there is parking and it possible to seawatch from here. Tens of thousands of Sooty Shearwaters were seen streaming past as well as the odd Northern Giant Petrel. I managed to pick out a few Prions, which were identified as Broad-billed, as well as several unidentified Storm Petrels. Three albatross were seen with two of these being the only Bullers Albatrosses of the trip with the other being a White-capped. The surrounding bush had Bellbirds, Tui and Silvereyes whilst a few pairs of Spotted Shags were on the rocks.

Nugget Point / Kaka Point

There is a Yellow-eyed Penguin colony at thebay on the south side of Nugget point which is clearly sign posted on arrival. There is a track that takes you to a simple hide, 10 minutes from the car. The penguins begin to come ashore from about 4pm onwards. Seawatching from the lighthouse can result in many seabirds, we had Sooty Shearwaters, Albatrosses and Cape Petrels passing the bay itself.

Kaka Point is actually a small seaside resort with stunning beaches a few people and it a convenient place to stop over night, the views alone make it worthwhile.

Otago Peninsula: Royal Albatross Colony and Penguin Place

There are two reasons for visiting the peninsula, about an hours drive from Dunedin, the Royal Albatross colony and Penguin Place. The Albatross colony is the only one in the world that is on the mainland. I found the colony a little disappointing and not as exciting as watching the birds at sea. You view the nesting birds, at range, through darkened glass. Nesting birds tend to sleep a lot. Also there was a large Stewart Island Shag colony. Below the car park are seabird cliffs with nesting Spotted Shags and Red-billed Gulls whilst the odd albatross would make a brief fly by.

Penguin Place is a private concern that allows visitors to view nesting penguins at close range. Although the birds are wild there is no denying there is a still zoo feel to the place. Penguin nest boxes and net covered, eye level, walkways and hides. No matter how hard you try it still seems very artificial but if it helps protect this rare bird then artificial is good.

Oamaru; Bushy Beach and Little Penguin Colony

A small town on the coast was visited due the fact it has colonies of both Yellow-eyed and Little Blue Penguins. Bushy Beach has regular penguin watches which you either pay a DoC guide to take you to or can look from the hide for free. Bushy Beach is located 10 minutes south of the town and penguins begin to arrive from 4pm onwards. View only from the cliffs and don't go onto the beach. Little Blue Penguin colony is a rather tourist set up where you all sit in a grand stand and watch the birds arriving en-mass and waddle up the beach to their nest burrows. You need to be here for about 7pm. It maybe touristy but it's actually rather fun.

Ahuriri River, Omararama

We search the river Ahuriri west of Omararama along the minor road off the sharp bend along Highway 8. This didn't bring us any Black Stilts but a number of Black-fronted Terns, Black-billed Gulls and Caspian Terns showed well.

Twizel and Mt Cook

Twizel is a small town near to the Southern Alps with snow covered peaks just across the nearby plains. We had 3 Black Stilts at the pleasant Lake Pokoa which is located north of the town. Turn left immediately after crossing the canal and followed the unmade track to the lake.

Highway 80 splits off from the Highway 8 north of Twizel and it's a further hours drive to Mt. Cook



from there though the scenery gets more spectacular the further you go. You will eventually arrive at the Mt Cook Village with its centre piece being The Hermitage though it looks out of place in such a location. The airport about 10

minutes from the village is the location for the Ski Plane scenic tours which are thoroughly recommended if you have the budget. Further along the road, about half way, is the Glentanner airstrip where several helicopters operate from. We had more Black Stilts as well as hybrids on the wetland here. View from the bend north of the airstrip just by the track that runs to the end of the runway. The birds here are scope jobs.

Banks Peninsula: Akaroa

We had our last boat trip out from Akaroa into Akaroa Harbour with Black Kat cruises in the afternoon. This gave us the last penguin of the trip, White-flipped, and it's the only likely place you'll get them. You are also virtually guaranteed Hector's Dolphins at close range.

SPECIES ACCOUNTS

1. North Island Brown Kiwi

We successfully located a single bird, after an earlier failed attempt, at about midnight on 13th November. This bird was seen very well close to the boardwalk and was one of the birds of the trip. The Top 10 Holiday Park run kiwi trips out nightly, weather dependant, but numbers can vary and have an influence on the success rate. The previous evening they had seen 3 birds.

2. Great Spotted Kiwi

Unfortunately this species was not seen but is included as it was heard at Bullock Creek just north of Punakaiki on 22nd November. At least 3 birds were heard calling an hour after dark but the quality of the recording that I had taken was not sufficient to entice any bird close enough to even have a chance of. The species was also searched for the previous evening at Heaphy trac, north of Karamea, where one was heard off in the distance once only. Either side of the Heaphy side is steep and it would a better bet searching the loop trail closer to the car park. We thought our luck was in here when something moving through the undergrowth nearby seemed to respond to the tape but after three quarters of an hour the activity had ceased and we were out of luck.

3. Little Spotted Kiwi

Only encountered on Tiritiri Matangi on the night of the 10th November. We spent some time wandering the trails over the central area of the island and had heard several distant birds only. At 10.30pm a bird was heard at close range behind the bunkhouse as we approached. We found an opened area at the back of the bunkhouse where a quick blast from the tape had an immediate response of crashing feet in the undergrowth. Several blasts of the tape and responses from the bird resulted in hearing the birding running through the undergrowth and appearing right out in the open on the short grass. It approached close to another observer nearby where it took one niff of their feet before turning around and ran for cover. It was seen a few more occasions as it made its way through the bushes.

Apparently there is one often seen near here. Staying overnight on Tiritiri or Kapiti Islands further south are the only chance of getting this species.

4. New Zealand Grebe

1 was at Lake Rotorua in the evening of 14th November with 2 together the following morning. In excess of 12 were found at Lake Okereka, north of Rotorua, on the 14th November.

5. Great Crested Grebe

One only at Lake Benmore on 30th November

Albatrosses: The Royal Albatross is split into two forms, Northern and Southern, whilst Wandering has three, nominate Gibsons as well as Snowy and Antipodean. Shy Albatross also has three forms, nominate Shy, which does not occur in New Zealand, Salvin's and White-capped. For the purpose of this report these forms have been split out.

6. Northern Royal Albatross

Most birds were seen from the short range Kaikoura Pelagics with adult on both the 6am and 9am trips on 19th November, adult on the 6am trip and 3 adults on 1.15pm trips on 20th November. 2 were on the 6am trip out on the 3rd December.

Several nesting birds were seen from the observation hide at the Tairora Head, Otago breeding colony near Dunedin on 29th November. This is the world's only mainland breeding colony of albatrosses. Here a single bird was seen flying over the shag nesting cliffs on several occasions.

7. Southern Royal Albatross

Only noted, positively, on one day at Kaikoura, 4th December. At least two adults were present amongst the albatross mellie and was seen sat on the water next to both Northern Royal, Gibsons Wandering, White-capped and Salvin's Albatrosses.

8. Wandering Albatross

Only encountered from the Kaikoura short range pelagics with two forms noted. A spectacle not to be missed.

'Gibsons' Albatross was the commonest encountered. I will never forget the first one seen as it appeared in the wake of the boat as we motored away from shore. You just don't realise just how big they actually are until you see one.

Pelagic Maximums:

19th November: 6am – 17

19th November 9am – 20

20th November: 6am – 12

20th November: 9am – 18

20th November: 1pm – 23

3rd December: 6am – 6

A 'Snowy' Albatross was found close to a fishing boat during the afternoon pelagic on the ?? December. It was watched at close range but was never seen to fly.

9. White-capped Albatross

Our first was in the Hauraki Gulf during our pelagic, a lone and distant bird that appeared at the same time as were trying to relocate the New Zealand Storm Petrel

Most were noted from Kaikoura with totals given below:

19th November: 6am – 2

19th November 9am – 0

20th November: 6am – 3

20th November: 9am – 1

20th November: 1pm – 1

3rd December: 6am – 6

Additional birds were noted at the following locations:

Hauraki Gulf Pelagic: a lone and distant bird.

Monroe Beach during the strong onshore winds with several seen heading south on 24th November.

Bluff: Of the three albatrosses picked out during a seawatch on 28th November one was this species.

Nugget Point: 20+ seen from the Yellow-eyed Penguin hide on 28th November.

Kaka Bay: several in the bay viewed from the balcony of our accommodation on 28th November.

10. Salvin's Albatross

First encountered from the short range pelagics out of Kaikoura where many birds were seen very well at point blank range. Kaikoura pelagic summeries:

19th November: 6am – 15

19th November 9am – 15+

20th November: 6am – 17

20th November: 9am – 34

20th November: 1pm – 25

3rd December: 6am – 7

An additional 6+ birds were seen at Monroe Beach on 24th November and 1 at Bushy Beach, Oamaru 29th November.

11. Buller's Albatross

After the weather prevented us from getting over to Stewart Island on 28th November I spent several hours seawatching from the southern side of Bluff where the visibility was often poor. Amongst the tens of thousands of Sooty Shearwaters streaming past three albatrosses were seen, two of which were Buller's, the other was a White-capped.

12. Black-browed Albatross

Only recorded at Kaikoura with the presumed same sub-adult noted on the 9am trip on 19th November, the 1.15pm trip on the 20th November and the 6am trip on the 3rd December.

13. Northern Giant Petrel

19th November: 6am – 15

19th November 9am – 15+

20th November: 6am – 9

20th November: 9am – 35

20th November: 1pm – 37

3rd December: 6am – 28

Additional birds were seen at the following locations:

Hauraki Gulf Pelagic: 3 on 12th November

Cook Strait Ferry: 1 on 18th November

Bluff: a single bird during a sea watching on 28th November

Kaka Point: 2 close in shore, scoped from the balcony of our motel room on 28th November

14. Southern Giant Petrel

Only seen during the short range pelagics out of Kaikoura and certainly not as common as Northern Giant Petrel. Summary of bird days given below. On ?? November a white-morph was found which proved to be the first of this colour phase for the year. It is understood that only one or two of this form are encountered each year so we were fortunate to see this bird on most of the trips out.

Kaikoura pelagic summeries:

19th November: 6am – 2 (including a White Morph)

19th November 9am – 2 (including the White Morph)

20th November: 6am – 2 (including the White Morph)

20th November: 9am – White Morph only

20th November: 1pm – 2 (including the White Morph)

3rd December: 6am – 2 (excluding the White Morph)

15. Buller's Shearwater

Only seen at two localities with at least 300 noted from the Hauraki Gulf Pelagic. Numbers were initially low with only singletons seen occasionally. Numbers went up once we motored out past Little Barrier Island where good numbers streamed past the boat for an hour before we moved out of the area where they were feeding. Singletons, may be the same bird, was seen from the short range Kaikoura pelagics on 6am trip 19th November and the 6am trip on the 20th November.

16. Sooty Shearwater

The first birds noted were during the Cook Strait ferry crossing with 3 seen whilst off Monroe Beach on the 23rd November during a storm over 40 were noted in between wiping the lens and many were off Murphy's Beach next day. It was not until a sea watch off the southern end of Bluff that really big numbers were seen. On 28th many thousands, probably no fewer than 8,000, passed by close inshore during another storm. The same storm front probably resulted in the estimated 9,000 that were noted in 1½ hours passed Nugget Point, they were simply everywhere and was a spectacular sight.

17. Short-tailed Shearwater

Only noted during short range pelagics out from Kaikoura::

19th November: 6am – 0
19th November 9am – 2
20th November: 6am – 2
20th November: 9am – 4
20th November: 1pm – 1
3rd December: 6am – 2

18. Flesh-footed Shearwater

At least 150 during the Hauraki Gulf pelagic on 12th November with birds were seen in direct comparison with Black Petrel.

19. Fluttering Shearwater

During the Hauraki Gulf Pelagic on 12th November an estimated 200+ passed the boat close inshore. At least 200 were seen during a stormy Cook Strait Crossing on the 18th November with many well in the Marlborough Sound. 230+ were seen during the Dolphin Watch cruise into Queen Charlotte Sound same day with numerous 'flocks' being noted. At least 10+ were noted past Knights Point Lookout north of Haast during stormy conditions on 24th November.

20. Huttons Shearwater

Probably seen during the Cook Strait crossing on the 18th November the first confirmed birds were during the short range pelagics out of Kaikoura on the 19th. Numbers varied during these trips though a summary below details the sightings

19th November: 6am – 60
19th November: 9am – 3
20th November: 6am – 0
20th November: 9am – 10
20th November: 1pm – 300
3rd December: 6am – 3

In addition a raft of 300+ were viewed from the Whale Watch visitor centre at Kaikoura on 19th November and further birds were seen off Bushy Beach, Oamaru with 4 on 29th November

21. Little Shearwater

Four were seen from the Hauraki Gulf pelagic as we began our return leg of the trip.

22. Common Diving Petrel

Very scarce with only three noted from the Hauraki Gulf Pelagic on 12th November. Against a species that was present the week before in the hundreds!

23. White-chinned Petrel

Only seen from the short range pelagics out of Kaikoura with less than five seen per trip, generally outnumbered by the similar Westland Petrel.

Kaikoura pelagic summary:

19th November: 6am – 0
19th November: 9am – 2
20th November: 6am – 5
20th November: 9am – 5
20th November: 1pm – 0
3rd December: 6am – 4

24. Westland Petrel

Only noted during the short range Kaikoura pelagics. Very similar to Black Petrel found further north. Pelagic summery as follows:

19th November: 6am – 10+

19th November: 9am – 20+

20th November: 6am – 40

20th November: 9am – 80

20th November: 1pm – 60

3rd December: 6am – 30

25. Black Petrel

Seen very well from the Hauraki Gulf Pelagic on 12th November with at least ?? being seen, often just off the end of the boat with direct comparison being made with the superficially similar Flesh-footed Shearwater.

26. Cape Petrel

One of the southern birds, which more extensive white present on the upper-parts was seen in the Hauraki Gulf on 12th November.

Short range Pelagics out of Kaikoura produced the following totals:

19th November: 6am – 100+

19th November: 9am – 30+

20th November: 6am – 12

20th November: 9am – 200+

20th November: 1pm – 100+

3rd December: 6am – 25

Additional birds were noted at Kaka Point with 7+ inshore on 28th November and 1 off Bushy Beach, Oamaru 29th November.

27. Fairy Prion

First seen from the Hauraki Gulf pelagic on 12th November with 4 being seen. Up to 30 were seen from the Cook Strait ferry, 18th November, which included at least a dozen well into the Marlborough Sound, where the calmer conditions allowed scope views from the deck of the ferry. 1 was seen during the Queen Charlotte Sound trip same day.

28. Broad-billed Prion

3 were seen from Bluff on 28th November during a seawatch. Fairy Prion was eliminated by the amount of black on the tail tip and upper-parts.

29. Cooks Petrel

Only noted from the Hauraki Gulf pelagic on the 12th November with at least 60 birds seen. Apparently this total was well down from before the storm were 'hundreds' had been present.

30. Grey-faced Petrel

Was seen on the last Kaikoura pelagic undertaken on 4th December with at least three birds seen at close quarters.

31. New Zealand Storm Petrel

One, possibly two, were seen during the Hauraki Gulf pelagic on 12th December. The first was distant and brief and it was not known if we had had one or not. After seeing the second bird with prolonged views at 50 yards range it was considered that the first sighting was a New Zealand Storm Petrel, if it was a different bird is debatable but there had been some distance travelled between sightings.

32. Wilson's Storm Petrel

One was seen from the 6am short ranged pelagic out of Kaikoura on 4th December. This was a write in for the daily species list as not commonly encountered here.

33. White-faced Storm Petrel

Only seen during the Hauraki Gulf pelagic on 12th November. Another species which had dropped in numbers from a week prior with only around 10-12 seen as apposed to the 100+ that should normally be out here. Still 10 is better than none.

34. Yellow-eyed Penguin

One was seen on the rocks at Kaikoura from the Oceanwings Albatross Encounters trips early morning on 19th November and / December. Further Yellow-eyed's were seen at Nuggett point near Kaka Point on the Caitlans Coast with 4 coming ashore between 6-7.30pm on 28th November. About 8 were seen with chicks at Penguin Place, Otago Peninsula on 29th November with a juvenile out on the path blocking our way. Out last Yellow-eyed Penguins were at Bushy Beach colony on 29th November where several birds were seen from the viewing hide and upto 11 arriving on the beach in the evening.

35. Little Blue Penguin

Our first were upto a dozen that were seen gathering off the quay at dusk on Tiritiri Matangi on 10th November. At least five were seen after they had come ashore amongst the rocks further along the coastal track past the toilet block where the path opens out.

One was seen from Dolphin Encounters boat out of Picton, South Island 18th November, when returning from the King Shag Islands.

No further birds were encountered until we arrived at Penguin Place on the Otago Peninsula with about three birds noted in nest boxes. At Oamaru 29th November we enjoyed the spectacle of groups of birds arriving on the beach at the Penguin Colony north of the town. At least 170 came ashore just prior to and at dusk in groups of thirties and forties. Penguin watches are organised each evening where birds can be watched from the viewing 'grand stand'.

36. White-flipped Penguin

Only encountered from the Black Cat wildlife cruises out of Akaroa on Banks Peninsula 1 hour east of Christchurch on 5th December with at least eight birds were noted.

37. Fiordland Crested Penguin

We failed to find any birds at Monroe Beach, north of Haast, but this is more to do with the weather be atrocious rather than no birds being present. No birds were found at Jasckon Bay the next afternoon, 24th November, but after some local information we had at least 15-20 at the stunning Murphy's Beach. This involved crossing four very chilly streams, shoes and socks off as they were swollen after all the rain, and a muddy track but the encounter with the Penguins in such a stunning setting was fantastic.

Four birds were seen on rocks from the first Milford Sound cruise of the day on 27th November but the views were now were as good as those at Murphy's Beach.

38. Australasian Gannet

We visited the breeding colony at Muriwai on 9th November withat least 300 pairs on the headland and nearby stacks. 100+ were noted during the Hauraki Gulf Pelagic on the 12th November, 3 from the Cook Strait Ferry on the 18th November, 40+ in Queen Charlotte Sound on 18th November and 1 off south Bluff during a seawatch on 28th November

39. Great Cormorant

Definitely under recorded no where common with singletons noted at Nugget Point and Kaikoura

40. Pied Shag

Fairly widespread around the coasts with mainly 1-2 being found though a small colony was were noted off Leigh, North Island, 12th November. Otherwise 12 at Waipu on 13th November and 5+ off Akaroa were the largest single gatherings.

41. Little Black Shag

Only one was seen at Lake Rotorua on 14th November, surely more went unnoticed.

42. Little Shag

Locally common with numerous birds being noted at several coastal and inland locations. The most notable concentration was of a breeding colony at Lake Rotorua on 14th November

43. Spotted Shag

Note encountered on North Island until we reached Wellington when 4 were in the harbour on 18th November. The species was commoner and more widespread on South Island though not in any significant numbers: small breeding colony in Queen Charlotte Sound 18th November, many past Punakaki Rocks in the evening of the 22nd November, 10+ at Jackson Bay 24th November, 15+ at Kaka Point on 28th November, a large breeding colony at the Royal Albatross colony, Otago, on 29th November, many past Bushy Beach near Oamaru on 29th November and a small colony at Banks Peninsula on 4th December.

44. King Shag

Queen Charlotte Sound: this is the only place you are likely to get this species. We had a singleton on our trip out to Motorua Island with Dolphin Encounters on 18th November before heading out to one of the closer breeding stacks where at least 30 were found.

45. Stewart Island Shag

The first birds found were at Bluff where 3+ were seen on the 28th November during a seawatch during stormy conditions. A colony was observed at the Royal Albatross Colony, Otago 29th November with 2 at Bushy Beach near Oamaru and 50+ seen from the Blue Penguin viewing platform same day.

46. Great Egret

Only two were seen, both singles; 1 at Miranda, flushed from the Mangroves 14th November and 1 just south of Westport on 21st November.

47. Cattle Egret

17th November – 2 at Manawatu Estuary, south North Island were the only ones of the trip

48. White-faced Heron

Widespread and quite common, found on both the coast and inland wetland areas, peak count for a single locality was 15+ at Miranda on 14th November.

49. Australasian Bittern

9th November – one flew over the road near Mangawhai, North Island

50. Royal Spoonbill

3 at Manawatu Estuary, an hour or so north of Wellington, on 17th November were followed by 3 during a short range pelagic out of Kaikoura on 19th November and singles at Bluff, on a roadside lagoon, on 28th November and flying across Kaka Bay same day.

51. Black Swan

Common on larger bodies of water, for instance several hundred at Lake Rotorua on 14th & 15th November though generally smaller numbers, up to a dozen at a time, encountered elsewhere.

52. Canada Goose

A little under recorded but the following counts were made: 2 at Lake Okereka Walkway on 15th November were the first of the trip on 15th November, 50+ along the Lake Pukakai Road to Mt Cook on 30th November and 150+ during the drive out onto Banks Peninsula from Christchurch on 4th December.

53. Cape Barren Goose

2 or 3 at St Annes Lagoon, South Island south of Kaikoura on 21st November had a distinctively plastic feel to them.

54. Paradise Shelduck

Common and widespread though generally encountered in pairs though some small flocks were noted, 8 at St Annes Lagoon 21st November and 15+ at Milford Sound on 27th November.

55. Blue Duck

A pair seen in damp conditions along the Manganuioteao river, approximately 20km west of Raetihi, North Island on 16th November. This is perhaps the best place to find this species in New Zealand.

56. Mallard

Fairly widespread and abundant at most suitable habitats from small roadside ponds to larger lakes on both North and South Islands

57. Grey Duck

2 at Mangere, 2 in fields at Waipu, 20+ at Mangawhai 9th November, 1 at Karamea, apparently paired with a drake Mallard, on 21st November; 2 on the road side south of Fox Glacier 23rd November, 4 on the Ahuri River near Omarama 30th November and 25+ along from the Lake Pukakai Road to Mt Cook on 1st December.

It must be noted that there are a lot of hybrids, Grey DuckxMallard, present and those noted above were the only birds regarded as pure.

58. Australasian (New Zealand) Shoveler

Another species that was only found on a few occasions with 2 drakes and female, with 4 ducklings, at Lake Okereka on 15th November and 40+ at Lake Elterwater on 18th November.

59. Grey Teal

Surprisingly only noted twice during the entire trip with 100+ at Lake Elterwater north of Kaikoura on 18th November and 10+ at St Annes Lagoon south of Kaikoura on 21st November.

60. Brown Teal

Two females on the pool above the quay on Tiritiri Matangi on 10th and 11th November

61. New Zealand Pochard

Several sizable flocks were found, 30+ at Lake Rotorua on 14th November, 40+ at Lake Okereka on 15th November, 15+ at St Annes Lagoon 21st November and 40+ at Lake Benmore.

62. Australasian Harrier

Common and widespread, encountered most days, for instance 8 on 9th November around Waipu, 9 en-route to Trounson on 13th November, 15 along the highway between Waitomo Caves and Raetihi on 16th November.

63. Pheasant

Only 1 noted, at Waipu on 16th November

64. Blue Peafowl

4 were seen from the car 35km north of Wanganui on 16th November

65. 'Wild' Turkey

Noted only once with 3 seen on North Island, location unknown.

66. California Quail

Up to 20 or more were out on the road in the evening on 15th November at the Craters of the Moon after the gate had been closed along the approach road and most visitors had left. 2 were at Pureora Forest 16th November.

67. Brown Quail

Only found on Tiritiri Matangi with 5 on the 10th and 11th November. Most birds were rather confiding.

68. Weka

3 or 4 were at Cape Foulwind, South Island, mid afternoon of the 21st November though the show really was best the next morning when 5+ showed very well. Here the best place to search is above the car park along the track beyond the lighthouse where birds can be very tame. One was seen along the road to the seal colony to the south of Cape Foulwind same day. 3 were along the road at Karamea on 22nd November though were more prone to avoiding people. 4 were at Bullock Creek near Punakaki in the evening of the 22nd November. Apart from one in the woodland where in the dull light we did our best to turn into a Kiwi the rest were in the sedge area near to the car park.

69. Spotless Crane

One was seen on the pool just above the quay on Tiritiri Matangi on 10th and 11th November.

70. Takahe

Tiritiri Matangi was the place with a pair just above the bunkhouse on the 10th November feeding out on the short grass below the lighthouse. These same birds were again present the next day around the lighthouse with an additional pair seen along the East Coast Track near the two pools. One of the second pair of birds was really fearless attacking myself, clambering up onto my back and nipping my ears as I attempted to photograph Paradise Shelducks.

71. Purple Gallinule / Pukeko

Fairly common and widespread, found in good numbers in most suitable wetland areas. Birds on Tiritiri Matangi are particularly common and approachable and double figures were noted on 10th and 11th November.

72. Coot

Probably under recorded during the trip. The only records noted were 60+ at Lake Okereka on 15th November, 40+ at Lake Elterwater on 18th November and 4 at St Annes Lagoon 21st November.

73. Pied Oystercatcher

Generally found where Variable Oystercatcher was not. 6 at Wenderholm on 11th November and 30+ at Miranda on 14th November were the only birds found in an estuarine habitat. Numerous breeding pairs were found throughout South Island on inland fields and wetlands whilst concentrations included 30+ birds from the Lake Pukakai Road to Mt Cook on 1st December.

74. Variable Oystercatcher

Common and widespread on the coast. Mostly individuals or small groups encountered though several flocks were noted: 30+ at Waipu (which showed the full spectrum from completely black to Pied Oystercatcher look-alikes), on 9th November with 20+ again on the 13th November, 250+ at Miranda on 14th November and at least 10 on the beaches at Kaka Point on 28th November.

75. Masked Lapwing / Spur-winged Lapwing

The most widespread wader encountered, found on the coast to inland fields and wetlands, i.e. 17 at Waipu infields on 9th November and 25+ at Manawatu estuary on 17th November

76. Pied Stilt

The largest gather was of 300+ on the stilt ponds at Miranda on 14th November with numerous breeding pairs on the fields and wetlands just inland of the road. Small numbers were noted at various wetlands but the only other reasonable counts came from the Ahuri River near Omarama where 15+ were found and the Lake Pukakai Road towards Mt Cook where 10+ were noted, both on 30th November.

77. Black Stilt

Three radio tagged birds were noted at Lake Poaka, just north of Twizel, on 30th November. Heading north out of Twizel take the track on the left immediately after crossing the canal bridge. After half a mile tack the track down to the scenic lake.

3 immatures were scoped from Lake Pukaki Road, road to Mt Cook, at Glentanner on 30th November and were still present here next morning. These birds were in the presence of clearly hybrid birds.

78. Banded Dotterel

At least three nesting pairs were present on the beach directly opposite the Whale Watch centre at Kaikoura with several new hatched chicks present during our stay 19th – 21st November and again 3rd December.

Lake Pukaki Road, road to Mt Cook, at least 15 were noted distantly from Glentanner.

79. New Zealand Dotterel

At least 10 were at Waipu on the 9th November which included some very confiding birds close to the car park. On the 13th November 5 were seen again around the car park at Waipu. The only other sightings were of 5 on the estuary at Wenderholm on 11th November and a fly over bird near the hide at Miranda on the 14th November.

80. Pacific Golden Plover

The only birds found were 8 at the Manawatu Estuary north of Wellington on 17th November.

81. 'Red' Knot

A singleton, with a limp, on the Stilt pools behind the hide at Miranda on 14th November and 300+ were at Manawatu Estuary, about an hour north of Wellington, on 17th November.

82. Curlew Sandpiper

A singleton on the Stilt pools behind the hide at Miranda on 14th November

83. Wrybill

One noted at Miranda, did not search for them elsewhere. At least 40 came in on the rising tide and showed well on the Stilt pools behind the hide on 14th November.

84. Turnstone

At Waipu 2 were present on 9th November with 1 on the 13th November. The only other birds noted were at Miranda where 8+ were seen on 14th November.

85. Sharp-tailed Sandpiper

6 fine birds on the stilt ponds near the hide at Miranda on 14th November were the only birds of the trip.

86. Red-necked Stint

5 on the stilt ponds near the hide at Miranda on 14th November were the only confirmed birds of the trip

87. Bar-tailed Godwit

At least 50 were at Waipu on 9th and 13th November, 40+ at Mangawhai on 9th November, at least 400+ at Miranda from the hide on the rising tide and 100+ at Manawatu Estuary, 1 hour north of Wellington.

88. Arctic Skua

Only five birds seen: singles unless indicated otherwise: off the quay at Tiritiri Matangi on 11th November, from the ferry across the Cook Strait on 18th November, two in Queen Charlotte Sound 18th November and from a short range pelagic out of Kaikoura on 20th November.

89. Kelp / Southern Black-backed Gull

A common and widespread species with flocks encountered on inland fields as well as the coast.

90. Red-billed Gull

Commonest and most widespread gull encountered, often in large numbers. Several breeding colonies noted; Hauraki Gulf, Lake Rotorua, Kaikoura etc, feeding flock of several hundred just off coast opposite the Whale Watch centre at Kaikoura

91. Black-billed Gull

Locally abundant. Large numbers were encountered at Miranda where several hundred came in on the tide with a few moving to the Stilt Pools and 50+ at Makaroa, South Island. A scattering of nesting colonies were encountered around the abraided streams and rivers on South Island, i.e. Ahuri River near Omarama, otherwise single figures at other locations.

92. Caspian Tern

1 at Waipu on the 9th November was followed by 1 at Mangawhai, also on the 9th November, 3 on the shingle from the hide at Miranda 14th November, 2 off Oamaru, 1+ along the Ahuri River near Omarama on 30th November and 4+ at the Ashley River 2nd December.

93. White-fronted Tern

Commonest tern seen with several colonies, Tiritiri Matangi, Kaikoura and Banks Peninsula, visited. Other flocks encountered were 30+ on the beach at Muriwai on 9th November

94. Black-fronted Tern

Only seen on South Island. 20 were feeding over fields along Mossburn Road near the town of Mossburn on 26th November; 12-15 were along the Eglington Valley road on the way to/from Milford Sound on 26th and 27th November; 30+ along the Ahuri River near Omarama and 25+ at Lake Pukakai en-route from Twizel to Mount Cook on 30th November.

95. Fairy Tern

Four birds of this endangered New Zealand race were seen well at Waipu Cove colony on 13th November.

96. New Zealand Pigeon

Widespread with 1-3 encountered at numerous locations such as Waipu, Wenderholm, Lake Taupo, Wanganui, Queen Charlotte Sound, Karamea, Punakaki, Murphys Beach, the Bridle Track and Banks Peninsula.

97. Kea

26th November saw three birds at Homer Tunnel attempting to strip the car of its rubber. The following morning 8 were present around the car park area where they descended on the car and it was a challenge to get them off and to stay off whilst we went in search of Rock Wren. The tip was to park as far away from the road as possible, by the obvious large boulder by the start of the trail and wait for other cars to begin to arrive. They are more interested in the new arrivals than your car parked away from it all.

A single bird was seen flying over the Hermitage at Mt Cook on 2nd December.

98. Kaka

5 were seen from the Canopy Tower at Pureora Forest on 16th November and 1 or 2 were at the Bridle Track, Haast on 26th November.

99. Eastern Rosella

Two at Gulf Harbour marina on 10th November were the only birds of the trip

100. Yellow-fronted Parakeet

3 were noted from the Pureora Forest Canopy tower on 16th November and 10+ were at the Bridle Track at Haast on 26th November.

101. Red-crowned Parakeet

Only encountered on Tiritiri Matangi with 5 on 10th November and at least 12 the following day

102. Long-tailed Cuckoo

Two singletons were noted flying across the various trails at Pureora Forest on 16th November

103. Morepork

Widespread, often vocal and difficult to see with only one briefly noted in car headlights south of Trounson on 14th November

104. Sacred Kingfisher

Noticeably common and more widespread on North Island than on South with multiple birds being noted at several locations, i.e. 8 along the Kai-iwi Lakes Road 13th November

105. Welcome Swallow

Widespread and relatively common. Mostly small numbers encountered but several small flocks noted, i.e. 40+ at Waipu on 9th November and 25+ on Tiritiri Matangi on 11th November.

106. Rifleman

The Bridle Track, Haast Pass on 25th November. Pair found nesting in a tree close to the path some 70 yards from the car park. Birds showed well as they regularly returned to the nest hole.

107. Rock Wren

A single bird at Homer Tunnel on 27th November. Blizzard conditions hampered finding any birds on the 26th and I was not expecting to find one the following morning when arrived to find a least a foot of snow on the ground. We returned at about midday, after a cruise around Milford Sound, to find much of the snow had melted but it still took a further two hours of searching the 'rock garden' to get a 30 second view a fine bird.

108. Silvereye

Widespread and locally common with small flocks often encountered, i.e. 10+ Pureora Forest on 16th November, Nugget Point on 28th and 29th November and Ashley River on 2nd December

109. Grey Warbler

Singles were in the mangroves at Wenderholm on 11th November, Kai-iwi Lakes 13th November and in Mangroves at Miranda on 14th November. 2 were at Frethy drive on 15th November whilst 6 were along the road to the Craters of the Moon same day.

110. European Blackbird

Very common and widespread European introduction, found virtually everywhere in good numbers

111. Song Thrush

Very common and widespread European introduction, found virtually everywhere in good numbers

112. Skylark

Very common and widespread. Many seen, and heard, in all suitable grassland and cultivated habitats

113. Dunnock

Common and widespread European introduction, regularly encountered in small numbers at many locations

114. New Zealand Pipit

One very confident bird was found sat on a signpost along a track at the Craters of the Moon, just north of Taupo, on 15th November. The species was not searched for extensively hence only the one sighting

115. Fernbird

North Island: 3 birds were found after some searching at Frethy Drive on the south-east side of Lake Taupo on 15th November

South Island: A confident bird was found just above the Cape Foulwind car park, in scrub just where the track begins to head uphill early in the morning on 22nd November. A vocal bird was heard at the end of the Bullock Creek 'road' as it was getting dark on 22nd November.

116. Brown Creeper

The Bridle Track, Haast Pass. 2, perhaps 2, found some 70 yards from the car park showed well on 25th November

117. Whitehead

Apart from a singleton at Pureora Forest on 16th November all other sightings came from Tiritiri Matangi with 3 on 10th and at least 20+ the following day. An engaging species

118. Yellowhead

The Bridle Track, Haast Pass. 1 – 2 found some 70 yards from the car park showed well on 25th November.

119. New Zealand Fantail

Quite widespread but not particularly numerous. 1 on Tiritiri Matangi, near the visitor centre, on 10th and 11th November was probably the same bird. Singles were at Pureora Forest on 16th November; Franz Joseph Glacier on 24th November, Banks Peninsula on 4th December. 2 were at 2 were at Lake Rotorua on 14th November; along the road to the Craters of the Moon and at Frethy Drive on 15th November.

120. Tomtit

North Island: Scarce on North Island with the only birds found being at Pureora Forest where a pair were seen briefly from the car.

South Island: 2 were along the dry river bed at Bullock Creek near Punakaki on 22nd November, 2 males were along the road between Franz Josef and Fox Glaciers on 23rd November with 2 in the Car Park at Franz Josef Glacier on 24th November. Singles were at Jackson Beach Road on the 24th November and at the start of the Bridle Track on 25th November. The final bird of the trip was at Mt Cook on 1st December.

121. New Zealand Robin

North Island: On Tiritiri Matangi 5 were seen on the 10th November, Pureora Forest had 8 or more on the 16th November. Singing birds could be heard at Trounson Forest on 14th November.

South Island: 2 were along the track from the landing stage on Motorua Island in Queen Charlotte Sound on 18th November, 1 was at Karamea on 22nd November, a very inquisitive pair at Bullock creek on 22nd November and 3 along the Eglinton Valley Road towards Milford Sound on 26th November.

122. Kokako

Only noted on Tiritiri with three birds along the Wattle track on the 10th and 11th November with a further single in the centre of the island.

123. Tui

Widespread and relatively abundant in the appropriate habitat, birds on Tiritiri Matangi were particularly obliging with 8+ on 10th November and 6+ next day. The species was common at Wenderholm and Bullock Creek near Punakaki.

124. Stitchbird

Only noted on Tiritiri Matangi where they were coming to feeders located along the Wattle Track and along the Kawerau Track. 2 males and a female were seen on the 10th November at the Wattle Track feeder whilst there was an impressive showing at the Kawerau feeder, where at least a dozen were in attendance, on the 11th November.

125. Bellbird

Fairly common and widespread, noted at many locations. The most visible and numerous were on Tiritiri Matangi where 25+ were seen on 11th November, most visiting the Stitchbird feeders and 10+ were along the road to the Craters of the Moon on 15th November.

126. Saddleback

Only seen on Tiritiri Matangi, with 4 noted on the 10th November and 7 there the following day.

127. House Sparrow

Common and widespread European introduction, found at many locations

128. Chaffinch

Common and widespread European introduction, found at many locations

129. Redpoll

Locally common European introduction being noted in numbers in several locations, i.e. around Rotorua and Taupo with smaller numbers elsewhere

130. Goldfinch

Very common and widespread European introduction, found virtually everywhere in good numbers

131. Greenfinch

Common and widespread European introduction, regularly encountered in many locations

132. Yellowhammer

Very common and widespread European introduction, found virtually everywhere in good numbers

133. Starling

Common and widespread European introduction, found at many locations

134. Common Myna

Common and Widespread in north North Island as far south as Rotorua becoming scarcer south to Wanganui and then becoming absent further south to Wellington. Not encountered on South Island.

135. Australasian Magpie

Rather widespread and abundant, many being seen from the car though never in flocks, twos and threes only.

Mammals

Sperm Whale

A total of three seen well during the Whale Watching trip on 19th November. Named Whales seen were 'Little Nick', 'Manu' and 'Big Nick'

Southern Right Whale

A singleton very close inshore at Oamaru on 29th November whilst we waited for the Little Blue Penguins to arrive

Orca

Kaikoura – one seen surfacing three times in the bay viewed from the Oceanwings building on 20th November

Bushy Beach, Oamaru – family pod consisting of a male, female and calf on 29th November

Dusky Dolphin

Several large pods were noted. 30+ were noted during the Cook Strait ferry on 18th November and a further family pod of 12+ in Queen Charlotte Sound the same day. 300 or more were seen during the Whale Watching trip out from Kaikoura on 19th November and what was presumably the same pod during a short range pelagic the following day.

It must be noted that this species was the most 'acrobatic' of the dolphins we came across with many in the air at the same time, superb stuff.

Bottle-nosed Dolphin

15-20 were seen riding the bow of the boat during the Milford Sound cruise on 27th November.

Hectors Dolphin

4+ were found around the boat during the after short range pelagic out of Kaikoura on 20th November; 4-6 off the Punakaki Rocks on 22nd November and 8+ off Akaroa on 4th December where they put on a show around the boat and some divers.

New Zealand Fur Seal and Seal Lions

Queen Charlotte Sound 1 on 18th November

3 in Milford Sound on 27th November

Colonies observed from Knights Point Lookout north of Haast on 24th November and at Kaikoura on several dates from 19th-20th November.

Possum

Common and widespread, many a possum was found in the bush at night when searching for Kiwi, especially at Bullock Creek where they were particularly numerous along the track.

Contacts:

Pterodroma Pelagics:

Website: www.haurakigulfseabirds.co.nz

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Cost: \$250pp

Dolphin Watch Ecotours:

Website: www.dolphonwatchmarlborough.co.nz

E-mail: info@naturetours.co.nz

Cost: \$95pp

Interislander Ferries:

Website: www.interislander.co.nz

Kawau Kat:

Website: www.360discovery.co.nz

E-mail: info@kawaukat.co.nz

Cost: \$35.00

Miranda Shorebird Centre:

Website: www.miranda-shorebird.org.nz

Oceanwings:

Website: www.oceanwings.co.nz

E-mail: info@oceanwings.co.nz

Cost: \$80pp

Penguin Place:

Website: www.Penguin-place.co.nz

Royal Albatross Centre:

Website: www.albatross.org.nz

Tiritiri Matangi:

Website www.tiritirimatangi.org.nz

Whale Watch Kaikoura:

Website: www.whalewatch.co.nz

E-mail: res@whalewatch.co.nz

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