

New Zealand

Comprehensive III

14th November to 30th November 2022 (17 days)

Trip Report



Wrybill by Erik Forsyth

Images and Trip report compiled by Tour Leader: Erik Forsyth

Tour Summary



Malherbe's Parakeet

We kicked off the tour at Puketutu Island where we quickly added several endemics such as the attractive Paradise Shelduck, a lone New Zealand Grebe and a female New Zealand Scaup. As scan out onto the mudflats revealed newly arrived Bar-tailed Godwit and Red Knot from their epic flight from Alaska direct to New Zealand and best of all, a few of the endemic South Island Oystercatchers. Later we spent some quality time at the Muriwai Gannet colony where we enjoyed close looks at adults and chicks as well as many others flying to and from the colony. We also had close looks at a small colony of the endemic White-fronted Tern and Silver Gulls.

An evening visit to Tawharanui Regional Park produced several quality birds including New Zealand Kaka, a large noisy parrot, the endangered Brown Teal and a family group of Buff-banded Rail showed well. After dark we had a flyby Morepork (a species

of owl) and heard several calling but better looks were desired as it was getting dark.

We did however have prolonged, good, views of a male North Island Brown Kiwi (an endemic family) much too everyone's delight and we heard several other birds calling throughout the valley.

On our second visit to Tawharanui Regional Park was also exciting with several new birds added. First off, we enjoyed close looks on the beach at the endemic New Zealand Plover, often down to a few metres as well as as a few Variable oystercatchers. In the forest we added the Whitehead belonging to the endemic Mohua family. Noisy family groups were found regularly along with New Zealand Bellbird, Grey Gerygone, Tui and two brief North Island Robins. Best of all were close looks at the much sought-after North Island Saddleback after several frustrating glimpses, the latter belonging to the endemic wattlebird family. Later in the afternoon we popped into Pakiri Beach to look for one of New Zealand's rarest breeding birds, a sub-species of the Australian Fairy Tern of which only nine pairs still breed in the country.

Our pelagic off the Hauraki Gulf was very enjoyable due to all our targets being found and the sea conditions and weather were in our favour. Highlights included close looks at three individuals of the very rare New Zealand Storm Petrel and two Black (Parkinson's) Petrels. The supporting cast included Buller's and Flesh-footed Shearwaters, White-faced Storm Petrel and Fairy Prion.

A visit to the pest-free island of Tiritiri Matangi was also a great success for endemics. First, we located the beautiful Stitchbird and heard its unusual high-pitched call on several occasions. Our next target was the rare North Island Kokako and although we heard a pair calling to each other but could not locate them



Black Stilt



Kea

after a thorough search. After a long wait, we decided to continue our walk, it was then that we found a second pair right next to the trail much to everyone's delight and relief. We enjoyed close views and then continued to the lighthouse area to search for the South Island Takahe. Our initial search was unsuccessful but after lunch we walked a grassland area and came up trumps with a close pair with a juvenile. Wow! we were ecstatic, as we had almost written this species off!

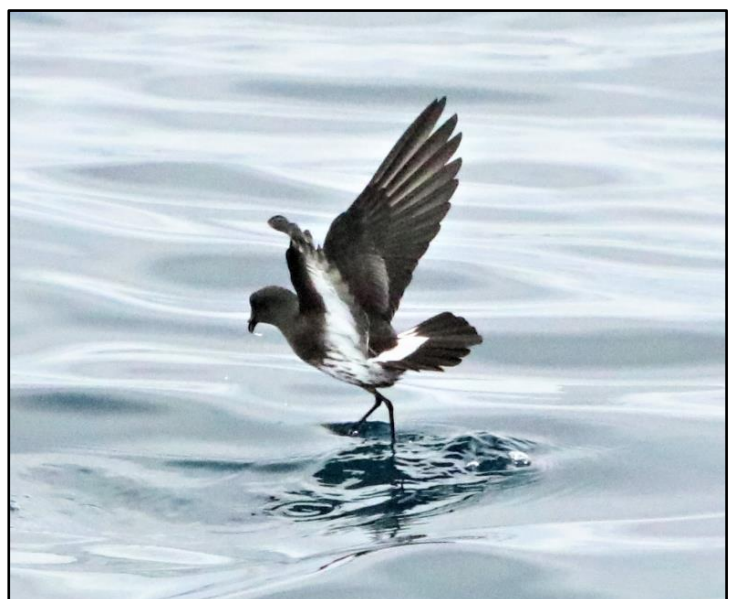
A brief visit to Miranda unfortunately coincided with the low tide and very few birds were around the hides, although a visit to Rays Rest to the North produced our target in the form of 50+ of the highly sought-after Wrybill, allowing close looks. Other notable species included Ruddy Turnstone, Bar-tailed Godwit, Red Knot and White-fronted Terns.

Our stay on Kapiti Island was very enjoyable despite not seeing a Little Spotted Kiwi. We did however see many confiding birds including Weka, Red-crowned Parakeets, playful New Zealand Kaka, a pair of vocal New Zealand Falcon chasing away a Swamp Harrier and we heard several Little Spotted Kiwi calling after dark!

Crossing by ferry from the North to the South Island produced our first albatross species of the tour which included the huge Northern Royal, beautiful Salvin's and White-capped. Other highlights were Westland Petrel and Fairy prions. Our visit to the Marlborough Sounds was also notable with a boat tour. Here we enjoyed close looks at the rare New Zealand King Shag and the stunning Spotted Shag. Other highlights were seeing the critically endangered Malherbe's (Orange-fronted) Parakeet and brief looks at the very rare Hector's Dolphin.

Our epic Pelagic off Kaikoura was simply fabulous with a few thousand birds found around a distant fishing trawler. These included hundreds of Salvin's Albatrosses, as many as 10-15 (Northern) Royal Albatross, 6 (Southern) Royal Albatross, two (Gibson's) Wandering Albatross, small numbers of White-capped and singles of Black-browed and Buller's Albatross. Other good birds included White-chinned, Cape, Northern Giant and Westland Petrels and Fairy Prions. A special mention must be made of the huge swarms of krill we encountered alongside the boat, a spectacular sighting!

Arthur's Pass gave us our last New Zealand endemic family in the form of a close pair of the diminutive Rifleman. We enjoyed close views of the latter and added Pipipi (Brown Creeper), Tomtit of the South Island race with yellow breast, and best of all several close encounters with the mountain dwelling Kea, a large endemic parrot. Our visit to the Mackenzie country around Twizel and Mount Cook gave us fabulous looks at a pair of critically endangered Black



New Zealand Storm Petrel



Black-browed 'Campbell' Albatross

Stilt, surely the rarest wader in the World with less than 200 birds! The scenery was fantastic here with the mountaintops covered in a late snowfall.

Although our search for New Zealand Rockwren was thwarted by rain and a cold wind, we soldiered on in the surrounding forests and streams finding several friendly Kea, pairs of South Island Robin, a pair of the rare Blue Duck on a fast-flowing stream and best of all a pair of the endangered Yellowhead in a Beach Forest. From here we headed to Stewart Island and on the crossing, we saw several Fiordland Penguins torpedoing across the water much to everyone's delight!

Our visit to Ulva Island was a real treat and we managed to find two more Fiordland Penguin at a cave near Oban and then the last of our targets on Ulva with good views of South Island Saddleback and Yellow-crowned Parakeets. Other great birds included the endangered Yellowhead and Pipipi (Brown Creeper). A night-walk to look for kiwi was highly successful, with not one but three Southern Brown Kiwi seen very well and with walk away views. Our last sighting was a bird crossing the road 200m from our hotel!

On our penultimate day, we had a pelagic tour off Stewart Island. A fair bit of drama the day before as our boat had engine trouble so we were relieved when another skipper and boat came to our rescue. Highlights included very close looks at the huge Southern Royal Albatross, White-chinned Petrel, many Salvin's and White-capped Albatrosses and best of all a Campbell Albatross, its 'honey-coloured eyes' quite noticeable as it idled along the side of the boat. We also had a few Cook's Petrels, Sooty and Buller's Shearwaters, Fairy Prion and many Cape Petrels (Pigeons).

Our last port of call on the tour was a visit to Taiaroa Head on the Otago Peninsular where we found our final endemic, the Otago (Stewart Island) Shag, as well as a few Royal Spoonbill, a fitting end to a very enjoyable tour!

Our Top 5 birds as voted by our group were:

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|---------------|------------------------|
| 1) Wrybill | 2) Southern Brown Kiwi |
| 3) Tui | 4) Campbell Albatross |
| 5) Stitchbird | |

Annotated List of species recorded

For the species list and more photos, please see the eBird Trip Report: <https://ebird.org/newzealand/tripreport/84412>

Rockjumper Birding Ltd
The Hive, Lot 23
Centre Commercial du Barachois
La Place Cap, Tamarin, Mauritius

Tel: (USA & Canada) toll-free: 1-888-990-5552
Email: info@rockjumper.com
Website: www.rockjumperbirding.com