



ROCKJUMPER

Worldwide Birding Adventures

New Zealand

Comprehensive III

16th November – 2nd December 2017

Trip Report



Gibson's Wandering Albatross off Kaikoura by Erik Forsyth

Trip Report compiled by Tour Leader Erik Forsyth

Daily Diary

New Zealand is a must for the serious seabird enthusiast. Not only will you see a variety of albatrosses, petrels and shearwaters, but there are good chances of getting out on the high seas and finding something unusual. Seabirds dominate this tour, and views of most birds are right alongside the boat. There are also several land birds which are unique to these islands: the kiwis – terrestrial nocturnal inhabitants; the huge swamp-hen like takahe – prehistoric in its looks and movements; and then the wattlebirds (the saddlebacks and kokako) – poor flyers with short wings, which bound along the branches and on the ground. We had so many highlights on this tour, including close encounters with Little Spotted Kiwi, walk-away views of a pair of North Island Kokako, both North and South Island Saddlebacks and a pair of the impressive South Island Takahe. With many boat trips, the pelagic list was long, with Wandering, Northern and Southern Royal, Salvin's, Black-browed, Campbell and White-capped Albatrosses, Westland, Cook's and White-chinned Petrels, Buller's, Flesh-footed and Hutton's Shearwaters, and Common Diving Petrel being a few of the highlights. Other major highlights included twelve New Zealand King Shag, a pair of Blue Duck with one chick, nine of the critically endangered Black Stilt, the rare Stitchbird, New Zealand Kaka, the entertaining Kea, range-restricted New Zealand Rockwren, the tiny Rifleman and lastly the striking Yellowhead, to name a few.



New Zealand (Red-breasted) Plover by Erik Forsyth



The impressive Tui by Erik Forsyth

From our hotel near Auckland Airport, we headed north to the Muriwai Gannet Colony, arriving mid-morning. The breeding season was in full swing, with many Australasian Gannets feeding small chicks. Nearby, White-fronted Terns and Red-billed Gulls were also nesting in small numbers; while Kelp Gulls patrolled overhead. After an enjoyable stop here, we continued to Waipu Cove and visited a local reserve. Here we walked out onto the mudflats, where a short walk to the shoreline produced several Variable Oystercatchers and Caspian Terns but, best of all, several endemic New Zealand (Red-breasted Dotterel) Plovers – some in fine breeding plumage, allowing great scope

looks. After careful scanning, we eventually found a Fairy Tern hunting over the lagoon – *the sub-species here in New Zealand reduced to twenty pairs!* With a fair drive ahead, we continued to Kerikeri, our destination for the night. Arriving at our lodge in the late afternoon, we had time to rest and prepare for our night walk. After dinner, we headed out after dark to a nearby valley to look for

North Island Brown Kiwi. Heading down into the valley bottom, we heard several calling pairs of kiwi, the male with his high-pitched whistle followed by the females' guttural reply. After a couple of hours of searching, only two of us had brief looks. We headed back soon afterwards. *We would have to try elsewhere in the coming days.*

The following morning, after a late breakfast (we got back from the kiwi excursion after midnight), we headed south. We stopped at Waipu Cove for lunch and better looks at Fairy Terns. Again, they were distant, but the head-pattern and orange bill colour could be seen well through the scope. From here, we drove to a regional park near our hotel which produced many great birds during our visit, including great looks at four Buff-banded Rails, good numbers of Brown Teal, Tui, New Zealand Bellbird, Whitehead, Grey Warbler, New Zealand Fantail, flight views of New Zealand Kaka, Eastern Rosella, close looks at the impressive North Island Saddleback; but best of all was a pair of South Island Takahe! These large flightless swamphens showed really well, and we were delighted to find them early in the tour. The latter, a rare bird and difficult to locate during the breeding season. After all these fantastic birds, we headed to our hotel for an early dinner. It was around the early evening that we received a call that our planned Hauraki Gulf pelagic was cancelled due to high seas.



Mount Tongariro by Erik Forsyth

The next morning we drove to a series of ponds, where we added New Zealand Scaup, Canada Goose and a few Masked Lapwings. With the pelagic being cancelled, we returned to the regional park, seeing all the species of the previous day, including the South Island Takahe. An evening visit to the regional park gave us fantastic close looks at the endemic Morepork, of which we saw three. We also found



The Critically Endangered Stitchbird on Tiritiri Matangi Island by Erik Forsyth

Brown Teal active at a stream in the forest and a Long-finned Eel, but the much hoped-for kiwi failed to show. Early the following morning, an excited group headed to Gulf Harbour to catch our ferry over to Tiritiri Matangi Island. After arriving at the jetty, we soon boarded our large ferry and headed to the island. After a quick briefing by a conservation officer, we walked to the forest, seeing several Tui and New Zealand Bellbirds. A high-pitched call drew us over to where it sounded, and soon we were watching a male Stitchbird. Very happy with our views, we continued on the trail and soon found a group of New Zealand Bellbirds and several more Stitchbirds

feeding at a supplementary feeder. Stitchbirds are very rare endemics, occurring on a few islands and only at this site on the tour, so we were happy to get fantastic looks. Further up the trail, we stopped and rested at some benches where a water tray was situated. It wasn't long before our second big target was found, the North Island Kokako. After a careful approach, we found them feeding quietly at close range, much to our delight. They hung around, giving great looks. This is a very rare species which occurs at only a handful of sites. Their numbers are less than 2,000 birds. We celebrated having seen our target birds – *especially the latter, as this species was very difficult to find elsewhere.*

With our targets in the bag, we could relax and enjoy the trail to the education centre. During the walk, we recorded several species, including fabulous close looks at North Island Saddlebacks hunting for grubs on the ground among the leaves and ferns, several stunning Stitchbirds, North Island Robins feeding on the paths, Grey Gerygone, huge New Zealand Pigeons, and Red-crowned Parakeets were numerous. After lunch we took a longer trail, finding several Brown Quail, as well as all the usual suspects, and brief views of Riflemen for some.



**Blue Duck pair with chick on the fast flowing Tongariro River
by Erik Forsyth**

The following day we headed south to Turangi, first stopping at Miranda Shorebird Centre, where we had fabulous scope looks at the endemic Wrybill – fifteen or so were feeding in a tidal lagoon near the road. Many Bar-tailed Godwits and Red Knots were also seen. After lunch, we drove down to Lake



New Zealand Pigeon by Erik Forsyth

Taupo. A flock of endemic Black-billed Gull greeted us at the carpark, and a nearby lagoon had a flock of New Zealand Scaup. After enjoying good looks and a welcome stretch, we drove on to Turangi. Arriving at Turangi, we drove straight to the Tongariro River, where we searched in earnest for the endemic Blue Duck – a resident of fast-flowing streams. After a bit of a run-around, visiting two sites, Lisa spotted a pair on the bank hidden amongst overhanging branches. We enjoyed excellent scope looks at a pair plus a chick – *a huge relief all round.* Early the following morning, we headed to Tokaanu Wharf and, scanning the reed-beds, we came across a pair of the endemic Fernbird,

which showed really well. A short while later we heard a Spotless Crake, which was well hidden in the reeds. We also heard the “booming” call of an Australasian Bittern. In the open water alongside the reed-beds, we saw New Zealand Grebe, a few Little Black Cormorants, New Zealand Scaup,

Australasian Shoveler, and Californian Quails; while Common Redpolls and Common Goldfinches called as they flew overhead.

After breakfast, we packed the vehicle up and drove to Paraparaumu, where we would catch our ferry over to Kapiti Island for a night's stay. After a fairly-uneventful drive, we arrived at the dock in the early afternoon. Several Spotted Shags were seen flying off-shore, and a group of Red-billed Gulls and White-fronted Terns were roosting on the beach. The ferry crossing was calm, and after a short walk to the lodge, we settled into our rooms. While enjoying a cup of tea and some biscuits at the lodge, the resident Weka approached us for handouts. A little later, we took a walk into the valley behind our rooms. The Island was busy with birdsong, and we were soon watching New Zealand Bellbird, Tui and flocks of Whitehead; while several New Zealand Kaka were seen flying and heard calling overhead. After hearing a Long-tailed Cuckoo calling, we were very lucky to see a bird flying over the woodland on two occasions. Best of all was a New Zealand Falcon, showing really well as it glided along a ridge nearby on two occasions. *The latter was a great pickup, as they can be very difficult to find. Wow!* At a nearby freshwater lake, we found Black Swan, Paradise Shelduck and Pied Stilts. Later, we enjoyed close looks at New Zealand Kaka on the deck, while having a glass of wine.



Paradise Shelduck by Forrest Rowland

After dinner, we took our guided walk for Little Spotted Kiwi. We could hear a few birds calling. It took a while and a fair bit of walking, but eventually, we bumped into our target, getting fabulous close



Salvin's Albatross off Kaikoura by Erik Forsyth

looks. A second bird was found, also giving great looks along a wooded trail. The following morning, we packed up after breakfast and headed for the ferry. A search along a rocky coastline failed to find the endangered Shore Plover before heading to our ferry for the inter-island crossing from Wellington to Picton. The ferry crossing was pleasant as the ship was large, and even though the winds were high the ship was stable. On the crossing, we recorded Shy (White-capped) Albatross, Flesh-footed Shearwater, Fairy Prion and several Westland Petrels.

We arrived at our hotel in Picton in the early evening and settled into our hotel for the night. The following morning, we went out by boat with E-Ko Tours and headed into the Marlborough Sound, stopping for good looks at flocks of Fluttering Shearwaters and Little Penguins. Further into the sound, we stopped at an exposed headland and were soon delighted to be watching

twelve of the very localised Rough-faced (New Zealand King) Shag. This is a threatened species with a small population, and a recent survey estimated the population at 800 birds. In the afternoon, we drove to Kaikoura, further south along the coast. This took us most of the day, as much of the road had been damaged by the earthquake in November 2016. A bonus on this long drive was a field which held several beautiful Black-fronted Terns.

We arrived at Kaikoura in the evening, and settled into our hotel for the night. Early the next morning we assembled at the Albatross Encounter office and met our skipper, Gary – a well-known seabird expert. Soon we were off, and not far from the harbour, loads of albatrosses and giant petrels could be

seen riding the wind following our boat. Gary found a spot and threw out the chum bag, and many seabirds soon appeared. Fairly numerous and argumentative were the many Northern Giant Petrels, squabbling with huge and impressive Gibson's Wandering Albatross; while many smaller Shy (White-capped) and a few Salvin's Albatrosses joined in. A Southern Royal Albatross also arrived, and then a single Northern Royal Albatross made a fly past before settling within a short distance from our boat. We were a very happy group of birders, as we had only left the harbour 30 minutes ago and were watching five species of albatross! Other species recorded were the range-restricted Westland Petrel, smart Cape and White-chinned Petrels and a constant flyby of the highly sought-after Hutton's Shearwaters – *the latter at its only breeding area in New Zealand*. Before we knew it, our time was up, and we headed back to shore a happy as can be.



Northern Royal Albatross by Adam Riley



Cape Petrel by Adam Riley

After a late breakfast, we headed further south, our destination: Arthur's Pass. We arrived in the late afternoon and checked into our motel. Here we found a pair of Riflemen attending chicks in a nest box, allowing great looks at this tiny creature! We then drove through the small town, looking for our target bird, the endemic and Alpine-dwelling Kea – a large parrot. It took a bit of tracking, but we eventually found two birds visiting a house, for food, in the area. The following morning, after a short search, we located three Keas within the village. We enjoyed excellent looks at this huge playful parrot as it scratched for food

around a local house and even on top of the post boxes, calling as they flew overhead. Further along the road, we took a trail through some Beach Forest and after careful scanning and listening, we found a group of the tiny Rifleman and a single Pipipi – a member of the endemic Mohua family. From here we

continued south to Franz Joseph, our destination for the night. We arrived at our hotel in the afternoon and walked out to the Franz Joseph Glacier, enjoying good views of the glacier on a beautiful sunny day. Tomtits and Kea were noted on the walk.

The following morning, we started our long drive to Omarama via the Haast Pass. During the drive, we enjoyed fabulous looks at scenery through the pass, Lakes Wanaka and Hawea, and eventually over the desolate Lindis Pass to Omarama in the Mackenzie Country. En route to our hotel, we stopped briefly at the Ahuriri River to enjoy a small flock of Black-fronted Terns hawking insects over the braided riverbed. These are stunning birds and their orange bills glowed in the sun. From our hotel, we headed straight for Twizel, arriving in the late afternoon to begin our search of the critically endangered Black Stilt. At some wetlands, we found several Double-banded Plovers as well as a few Grey Teal and several White-headed (Pied). We decided to check another pan nearby, but no birds were found.



The critically endangered Black Stilt (juvenile) at the Tasman River Delta, by Erik Forsyth

We then headed north to Mount Cook, where we entered a Nature Reserve. After scanning, we saw several distant juvenile Black Stilts! At last, heading in their direction, we got close enough for brilliant looks and excellent photo opportunities. After some more scanning, we found a distant adult and could see the all-black body through the scope. It was a bittersweet moment to see these highly endangered young birds going about their daily activities. *Here's hoping they can boost the population and eventually move out of the endangered zone!* Also in this area were smartly-plumaged Double-banded Plovers and Black-fronted Terns. A brief stop at a series of lakes south of the town produced Black Swan, New Zealand Scaup and a stunning pair of Great Crested Grebe; and we enjoyed great looks at

Common Redpoll. The following morning, after a brief stop at the Ahuriri River where we saw the endemic Black-billed Gulls and Black-fronted Terns and their nesting grounds, we navigated the car towards Te Anau. It was a fair drive, with more Swamp Harriers, White-faced Herons, Black-billed Gulls and Black-fronted Terns noted before we arrived in the late afternoon.



The entertaining Kea at the Homer Tunnel by Erik Forsyth

Early the following morning, we drove from Te Anau to the Milford Sound to join a ferry cruise through the beautiful sound. Our first stop en route was filled with anticipation as we pulled over next to the Homer Tunnel. Here we would search for the New Zealand (South Island Wren) Rockwren on a boulder-

strewn hillside. The weather was perfect, and it wasn't long before Bob B found a pair. Soon we were enjoying fabulous looks at this tiny little mite with no tail! After enjoying several looks and getting pics of several confiding Kea, we headed through the Homer Tunnel down to the ferry. Soon boarding our cruise boat and heading out. Visibility was excellent, and the sound was very dramatic with sheer cliffs on either side and huge waterfalls. Distant views of Fiordland Penguins were had by most, but a lucky few saw them closer on the water. Afterwards, we took a walk through a woodland, seeing Rifleman and South Island Robin.

Early the following morning, we packed up and headed to Stewart Island. The ferry crossing was calm and so only a few birds were noted, such as Shy (White-capped) Albatross, Cape Petrel, Foveaux Shag (recently split from Bronze/Stewart Island) and Sooty Shearwater. After lunch, we caught a water taxi to Ulva Island, a predator-free conservation area a few kilometres off the coast. We had a fabulous walk here and enjoyed the plentiful birds, plants and ferns. We soon

enjoyed multiple views of Pipipi, South Island Saddleback, the South Island Robin, Tui, New Zealand Bellbird, and had fabulous looks at the highly sought-after Yellowhead – which sang in close proximity. We also saw many Red-crowned (-fronted) and brief looks at Yellow-crowned (-fronted) Parakeets. On the beach, we found several confiding Weka before catching our water taxi and heading back to the mainland. Around the town of Oban, several New Zealand Kakas were seen flying and calling overhead.



Southern Royal Albatross by Erik Forsyth

Our day wasn't over, as we had reserved places with Real Journeys for the kiwi night tour. After dinner, we climbed on a boat at the Oban jetty and travelled out to Ocean Beach, first stopping at some



Campbell Albatross, off Stewart Island by Erik Forsyth

nearby rocks, where we had great looks at Fiordland Penguins. We then sailed over to Bench Island, where we saw seven of the endangered Yellow-eyed Penguins. Also noted were a colony of Foveaux Shag and a pair of Brown Skua. Arriving at Ocean Beach, we walked through the forest with headlamps, hearing the calls of Southern Brown Kiwi which was very exciting. We struggled to find any birds, as there was no Bull Kelp washed up on the beach – which harbours the kiwi's favourite food, the sand-hoppers. We then headed into the forest to search, and although we had one call very loudly nearby, only a few managed a view.

The following morning saw us out at sea on a pelagic tour. We soon set sail and followed the rocky shoreline out of the bay, scanning for Fiordland Penguins. It didn't take long before three birds were found. We enjoyed great looks and even watched them swimming in the tidal pools. After this success, we headed further out to sea, noting a few Little Penguins en route, before stopping at a breeding site for Yellow-eyed Penguin. It wasn't long before we spotted four birds on the beach, enjoying the early morning sun. *Wow!* Three penguin species in an hour. We then headed further out to sea and stopped and chummed at several places, which produced many Shy (White-capped) and smaller numbers of Salvin's Albatross, Cape and White-chinned Petrels and several huge Southern Royal Albatross. After searching carefully through the masses of birds, shouts rang out for the scarce Campbell Albatross went out, and the bird came flying past and around the boat before landing right alongside us.



South Island Takahe by Erik Forsyth

Shortly afterwards, more excitement came in the form of the tiny Grey-backed Storm Petrel – which hung around the boat for ten minutes, allowing great views for everybody. If that wasn't enough, Bob O was calling frantically, as he had seen his most wanted bird, a Mottled Petrel! Bob came out and pointed, and amazingly half the group saw the bird as it sped away. *Wow!* Other seabirds noted included numbers of Sooty Shearwaters, Northern Giant Petrel, Common Diving Petrels and two pairs of Brown Skua, which put in a performance around the boat. After a hugely successful and enjoyable day at sea, we headed back to port.

The following morning, we had a leisurely breakfast and enjoyed the attention of a group of New Zealand Kaka feeding across the road from our hotel. Next, we caught the ferry back to Bluff, on the South Island, noting several Cape Petrels and a few Shy (White-capped) and Common Diving Petrels on the Foveaux Strait. We collected our vehicle and drove to Dunedin, stopping for lunch and then at our hotel to drop off our bags. After a quick break at the hotel, we drove on the beautiful coastal road to Taiaroa Head on the Otago Peninsular. Red-billed and Kelp Gulls, as well as a few Little Pied Shags and Great Cormorants, were seen en route. In the carpark at the Northern Royal Albatross centre, we walked down to the cliff-face where after a short scan, we saw two huge Northern Royal Albatross gliding majestically along the headland and out to sea. This is New Zealand's only mainland site where albatross breed, with about twenty pairs. Nearby, we had excellent close looks at Spotted Shags by their nests, and several fly-by Otago (Bronze) Shags. In the evening, we headed back to our hotel for our final dinner. It had been a highly successful and fun-filled tour and I would like to thank all our guests for making this tour so memorable.

Annotated List of species recorded

Birds (137: 1 heard)

Nomenclature and taxonomy follows Gill, F and D Donsker (Eds). 2015. IOC World Bird List (v 5.3).

Status codes: E = Endemic, NE = Near-endemic, I = Introduced

IUCN codes: CR = Critically endangered, EN = Endangered, VU = Vulnerable, EW = Extinct in the Wild, NT = Near Threatened, DD = Data Deficient

Top 5 Birds as voted by the participants:

- 1) New Zealand Rockwren
- 2) Weka
- 3) Blue Duck
- 4) Little Spotted Kiwi
- 5) Tui

KIWIS: Apterygidae

Southern Brown Kiwi (E) (TH)

Apteryx australis

Our night tour for Southern Brown Kiwi on Stewart Island was a real adventure. First, we hopped onto a boat at dusk and sailed out to some offshore islands where a pair of Brown Skua flew around our boat looking for scraps. After enjoying close looks at Fiordland Crested, Yellow-eyed and Little Penguins we cruised out to Ocean beach arriving at dusk. We then adorned flashlights and walked along a muddy forest track, eventually leading to a beach. Walking along the beach we did not find any birds, and so we headed into a nearby patch of forest where after several attempts about half the group saw a bird walking through the forest. A second attempt at the rugby field the following night drew a blank.

North Island Brown Kiwi (E) (TH)

Apteryx mantelli

Several pairs were heard calling in the valley near Kerikeri. Frustratingly, only two of us getting a brief view.

Little Spotted Kiwi (E) (TH)

Apteryx owenii

Fabulous close looks at three of New Zealand's smallest kiwi on Kapiti Island during our overnight stay. Several others were heard calling. Occurs mainly on offshore islands with one population living in the predator-free Karori Bird Sanctuary in Wellington.

DUCKS, GEESE & SWANS: Anatidae

Canada Goose (I)

Branta canadensis maxima

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

Black Swan

Cygnus atratus

Recorded throughout the tour. Introduced in 1864 but it is believed that the species has migrated to New Zealand from Australia.

Blue Duck (E) (EN)

Hymenolaimus malacorhynchos

A pair with one chick was located in the late afternoon 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 almost daily throughout the tour.

Australasian (Chestnut-breasted) Shelduck

Tadorna tadornoides

Two pairs were found at Tip Lagoon, Invercargill. A rare but regular vagrant to New Zealand.

Mallard (I)*Anas platyrhynchos*

Commonly seen at all wetland sites

Pacific Black Duck*Anas Superciliosa*

A pair were recorded on the South Island. Several hybrids between this and Mallard were observed.

Grey Teal*Anas Gracilis*

Several sightings throughout the tour.

Australasian Shoveler*Anas rhynchotis variegata*

First recorded in Auckland, with further sightings on the South Island at Invercargill.

Brown Teal (E) (EN)*Anas aucklandica chlorotis*

Small numbers seen well at Tawharanui Regional Park on three days. 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 at Lake Taupo, later at Twizel and we had several other sightings on the South Island.

NEW WORLD QUAILS: Odontophoridae**California Quail (I)**

Excellent views were had of this beauty at Tokaanu Wharf.

PHEASANTS & ALLIES: Phasianidae**Wild Turkey (I)***Meleagris gallopavo*

Recorded in small groups in farmland on the North Island.

Brown Quail (I)*Synois ypsilophorus*

Recorded at Tawharanui Regional Park and on Tiritiri Matangi Island.

Common (Ring-necked) Pheasant (I)*Phasianus colchicus*

A pair were seen at Tawharanui.

PENGUINS: Spheniscidae**Fiordland Penguin (E) (TH)***Eudyptes pachyrhynchus*

We had distant looks on our boat cruise at Milford Sound with fabulous views of birds found in caves on the rocky shoreline during our Stewart Island stay.

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

Great looks at several birds around their breeding grounds on Stewart Island. A rapidly declining species with less than 4000 birds remaining.

Little Penguin*Eudyptula minor*

Recorded on our Hauraki Gulf pelagic, en route to Kapiti Island in the Marlborough Sound, off Stewart Island and lastly at nesting boxes at Penguin Place on the Otago Peninsular.

STORM PETRELS: Hydrobatidae**Grey-backed Storm (-) Petrel***Pelagodroma nereis*

Fabulous views were had of a single bird that hung around the boat during our Stewart Island pelagic for 10 minutes.

ALBATROSSES: Diomedidae**Wandering Albatross***Diomedea antipodensis gibsoni*

We enjoyed fabulous looks at up to five birds alongside the boat at Kaikoura. An incredible sight that supports Kaikoura's reputation as a world-class pelagic destination! A further sighting was of a juvenile bird seen in flight off Stewart Island.

Note: We saw Gibson's Albatross D. antipodensis gibsoni. at Kaikoura. Two other species are recognised Antipodean Albatross D. antipodensis antipodensis and Snowy D. exulans.

(Southern) Royal Albatross*Diomedea epomophora epomoph*

A single bird at Kaikoura but later a further six were seen alongside our boat for all to admire, on our pelagic off Stewart Island.

Note: The IOC and many other authorities accept that there are two species of Royal Albatross. Clements only accepts one species: D.e.epomoph.

[Northern Royal Albatross]*Diomedea epomophora sanfordi*

Singletons were seen at Kaikoura and on our Stewart Island Pelagic. A further two pairs were seen flying at the breeding colony at Taiaroa Head, Otago Peninsular in Dunedin.

Note: This species is accepted by most authorities including the IOC. Not accepted by Clements as yet.

Campbell Albatross*Thalassarche impavida*

A single sub-adult bird was found alongside the boat and an adult was seen in flight during our pelagic off Stewart Island

White-capped Albatross (E)*Thalassarche cauta stadi*

First recorded on our ferry crossing from the North to the South Islands with further sightings at Kaikoura and on Stewart Island where we saw 150+. Most birds breed on Auckland and Campbell Islands.

Note: Most Authorities split this species into NZ White-capped Albatross T. cauta stadi and Shy Albatross T. cauta cauta. We saw the latter.

Salvin's Albatross (BE)*Thalassarche salvini*

Our first sighting was while crossing the Cook Strait heading to the South Island with further sightings on our Kaikoura and Stewart Island pelagics. This species breeds on the Snares Island.

SHEARWATERS & PETRELS: Procellariidae**Northern Giant (-) Petrel***Macronectis halli*

Sightings included: on our interisland ferry crossing on the Cook Strait, at Kaikoura and around Stewart Island.

Cape Petrel*Daption capense capense*

Very good looks were had off Kaikoura and off Stewart Island.

Fairy Prion*Pachyptila turtur*

Two from the Interisland ferry on the Cook Strait and two singletons off Stewart Island which showed really well, were our only sightings.

Mottled Petrel*Pterodroma inexpectata*

Bob O found his lifer bird off Stewart Island and managed to get several others onto it as it sped away!

Cook's Petrel (BE)*Pterodroma macroptera*

Small numbers were seen very well on our Stewart Island pelagic.

White-chinned Petrel*Puffinus Aequinoctialis*

Good views at Kaikoura and several off, Stewart Island.

Westland Petrel (BE)*Procellaria westlandica*

Several were seen on our interisland ferry crossing and then excellent close looks on our Kaikoura pelagic. This species breeds at three sites on the West Coast off the South Island.

Sooty Shearwater*Puffinus Griseus*

Good numbers were had off Stewart Island.

Flesh-footed Shearwater*Puffinus carneipes*

Three birds were seen in front of a ferry on our Cook Strait crossing.

Fluttering Shearwater (E)*Puffinus Gavia*

A few were seen well in the Hauraki Gulf on our way to Tiritiri Matangi Island and on our trip in the Marlborough Sound. A single bird was also seen off Stewart Island.

Hutton's Shearwater (BE)*Puffinus huttoni*

Good numbers were seen on our Kaikoura pelagic. Often flying close to the boat, where we had fabulous looks. This is the only site where this species breeds in the surrounding mountains.

DIVING PETRELS: Pelecanoididae

Common Diving-Petrel

Pelecanoides urinatrix

Fabulous looks on our crossing to Stewart Island, as well as on our pelagic trip.

GREBES: Podicipedidae

New Zealand Grebe (E)

Poliocephalus rufopectus

Recorded at Hokianga Nature Reserve, where we saw four birds and later at Tokaanu Wharf, Lake Taupo. This species only occurs on the North Island.

Great Crested Grebe

Podiceps cristatus

A spectacular looking pair were seen daily on freshwater lakes at Twizel and three were recorded by Kevin at the Lakefront Te Anua. This species occurs only on the South Island.

IBISES, SPOONBILLS: Threskiornithidae

Royal Spoonbill

Platalea regia

Great views at Tip Lagoon, Invercargill and at the Royal Albatross colony at Taiaroa Head, Dunedin.

HERONS & BITTERNS: Ardeidae

Australasian Bittern

Botaurus poiciloptilus

Bob O saw a bird in flight opposite our hotel in Snells Beach. Most likely heading to a farm wetland in the area. The “booming” call of two birds was heard clearly at a wetland at Lake Taupo.

White-faced Heron

Egretta novaehollandiae

A common species recorded throughout the tour.

Pacific Reef Heron

Egretta sacra

A single bird was seen flying along the coast off Tiritiri Matangi Island during our visit.

GANNETS & BOOBIES: Sulidae

Australasian Gannet

Morus serrator

First recorded at a breeding colony at Muriwai Beach, where we enjoyed fabulous close looks. Further sightings at Waipu Cove, in the Hauraki Gulf and on our boat tour of the Marlborough Sounds.

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 to Kapiti Island, on our Marlborough Sound boat tour, around Stewart Island and at Taiaroa Head. This included a few adults in breeding plumage with superb crests.

Little Black Cormorant

Phalacrocorax Sulcirostris

Small numbers were recorded throughout the north island and at Invercargill.

Australian Pied Cormorant

Phalacrocorax varius varius

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

Great Cormorant

Phalacrocorax Carbo

This large species was seen on five dates.

New Zealand King Shag (E)

Phalacrocorax. carunculatus

We enjoyed great looks, on a rocky stack, of at least twelve birds on our boat trip in the Marlborough Sound. The whole-population occurs only in this area and a recent survey estimated an increase from 550 to around 800 birds.

Otago Shag (E)

Leucocarbo chalconotus

Good views were had from the viewpoint at the Northern Royal Albatross Colony at Taiaroa Head.

Note: Recent taxonomic work has shown that the birds at Taiaroa Head in Dunedin are a separate species (Otago Shag) from the birds on Stewart Island (Foveaux Shag) This accepted by the IOC but not accepted by Clements as yet.

Foveaux Shag (E)

Leucocarbo stewarti

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

Note: Recent taxonomic work has shown that the birds at Taiaroa Head in Dunedin are a separate species (Otago Shag) from the birds on Stewart Island (Foveaux Shag) This accepted by the IOC but not accepted by Clements.

KITE, HAWKS: Accipitridae

Swamp Harrier

Circus approximans

A majestic and commonly seen species recorded almost daily in all habitats throughout New Zealand.

RAILS, CRAKES & COOTS: Rallidae

Weka (E)

Gallirallus australis

First recorded on Kapiti Island with further sightings at Arthur's Pass and on Stewart Island.

Note: Four sub-species are noted. We saw G. a. australis at Blumine Reserve and at Arthur's Pass; G. a. scotti was recorded on Stewart Island.

Buff-banded Rail

Gallirallus australis

We enjoyed cracking looks at four birds at a stream in a regional park.

Spotless Crane (H)

Porzana tabuensis

Calling in a reedbed at Lake Taupo.

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 by Clements.

South 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. We also enjoyed great looks at a pair on Kapiti Island. South Island Takahe have been introduced to several island sanctuaries where they are safe from introduced predators. A wild population of around 180 birds occur on the Murchison Mountains at Milford Sound. Total population estimate is 280 birds.

Eurasian Coot

Fulica atra

Recorded at Lake Taupo and at lakes around the Twizel area.

OYSTERCATCHERS: Haematopodidae

South Island Pied Oystercatcher (E)

Haematopus ostralegus

First recorded on our drive from Picton to Kaikoura where we saw four in a field and then seen on farmlands almost daily throughout the South Island.

Variable Oystercatcher (E)

Haematopus. Unicolor

Recorded in good numbers at coastal areas throughout the tour.

STILTS & AVOCETS: Recurvirostridae

White-headed (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 a single adult and nine juveniles in the in the Tasman River Delta, Mt Cook. What a relief! Fabulous scope views were obtained of one of the rarest waders in the world, with a population of fewer than 200 birds. Always a bitter/sweet moment as this species is critically endangered due to a lack of suitable habitat, introduced predators and disturbance at their breeding sites. Only the supplementary addition of captive-bred birds keep the population ticking over!

PLOVERS: Charadriidae

Masked Lapwing

Vanellus miles

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

Wrybill (E) (EN)

Anarhynchus frontalis

We had great scope looks at fifteen to twenty birds on mudflats at Miranda Shorebird Centre. Glen also saw a bird at the Tasman River Delta. 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 4000 birds!

Pacific Golden Plover

Pluvialis fulva

Half a dozen were seen on the mudflats at Miranda Shorebird Centre.

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

Charadrius obscurus

We had great looks at several birds in breeding plumage on the mud flats at Waipu Cove, while looking for Fairy Terns. A couple of birds were seen the next day at a beach in Auckland. 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 around 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

We had great looks at four birds on a pebble beach at Kaikoura with further sightings at wetlands around Twizel. Some birds were in stunning breeding plumage.

SANDPIPERS & SNIPES: Scolopaciidae

Bar-tailed Godwit

Limosa lapponica

A small flock were seen feeding on mudflats at Waipu Cove and a huge flock at Miranda Shorebird Centre. Our final sighting was at Tip Lagoon, Invercargill.

Ruddy Turnstone

Arenaria interpres

A few were seen on the sandflats at Waipu Cove on our second visit.

Red Knot

Calidris canutus

Good numbers amongst the Bar-tailed Godwits at Miranda.

Sharp-tailed Sandpiper

Calidris ruficollis

Three birds were scoped and seen well at Miranda Shorebird Centre.

Red-necked Stint

Calidris ruficollis

A singleton was scoped at Miranda Shorebird Centre.

GULLS & TERNS: Laridae

Silver (Red-billed) Gull (E)

Larus Scopulinus

Commonly seen at coastal areas throughout New Zealand.

Black-billed Gull (E)

Larus Bulleri

First recorded at Lake Taupo where we enjoyed close views. A flock of 200 birds were recorded on our drive from Picton to Kaikoura thereafter sightings of many birds seen congregating in fields in the Twizel-Omarama area.

Kelp Gull*Larus dominicanus*

Commonly seen throughout New Zealand.

Caspian Tern*Sterna. Caspia*

This huge tern was seen at Waipu Cove and at Sandspit Wharf.

Fairy Tern (CE)*Sterna Nereis davisae*

We were ecstatic to find a single bird feeding over the estuary at Waipu Cove, on the North Island. A very rare bird with only about fifteen to twenty pairs of this rare sub-species breeding 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 as far as Stewart Island.

Black-fronted Tern (E)*Chlidonias albobriatus*

First recorded on our drive from Picton to Kaikoura with further sightings of 100 birds found on rivers near Omarama with further sightings at Twizel, en route to Te Anua and lastly, hunting over grasslands adjoining the river in Fiordland National Park. This species breeds on rivers only on the South Island.

SKUAS: Stercorariidae**Brown Skua***Stercorarius antarcticus*

These burly, large predators were seen on smaller islands off Stewart Island. We enjoyed fantastic looks on our pelagic of three different pairs, which would fly around the boat looking for scraps.

Parasitic Jaeger*Stercorarius parasiticus*

A single bird was seen from the Interisland ferry coming into Picton and another was seen the following day on our Marlborough Sound boat tour.

PIGEONS & DOVES: Columbidae**Rock Pigeon***Columba livia*

Small numbers recorded in urban environments.

African Collared (Barbary) Dove*Streptopelia roseogrisea*

Good views on both days at Kerikeri and at Sandspit

Spotted Dove*Streptopelia chinensis*

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

New Zealand Pigeon (E)*Hemiphaga novaeseelandiae*

First seen en route to Muriwai, Kerikeri then at Tiritiri Matangi Island where we had fantastic looks at several confiding birds and lastly down on Ulva Island. Recorded on fourteen days.

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

Fabulous looks at a bird calling in flight on Kapiti Island.

Shining Bronze Cuckoo (H)*Chrysococcyx lucidus*

Heard calling in Fiordland NP but too high up to get a look.

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

Brilliant views of a calling bird spot-lighted at Tawharanui.

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

Great views were had on ten days of the tour.

FALCONS AND CARACARAS: Falconidae**New Zealand Falcon***Falco novaeseelandiae*

Very good looks on Kapiti Island Lodge as it flew over a ridge on several occasions. Kathleen also had a sighting of a bird sitting on the ground, while travelling from Te Anua to Milford Sound.

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

Up to six of these colourful, playful characters were enjoyed at Arthur's Pass Village. Further sightings included two at Franz Joseph and a further four at the Homer Tunnel, Fiordland NP. This threatened species occurs in mountainous areas only on the South Island, where the population is estimated to be as low as 2000 birds!

New Zealand Kaka (E)*Nestor meridionalis septentrionalis*

Our first sighting was of three birds in flight at Tawharanui Regional Park. Further sightings included up to twenty birds on Kapiti Island, and lastly, small groups daily while visiting Ulva Island and on Stewart Island.

Note: South Island sub-species, Nestor meridionalis meridionalis. was seen on three dates.

OLD WORLD PARROTS: Psittacidae**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.

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

Three birds flew across the road near Haast and only seen by a few of us. Also, brief views of a bird on Ulva Island, Stewart Island.

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

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

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

Firstly, brief looks on Tiritiri Matangi for some. Then we enjoyed multiple views of a pair of these tiny birds at Arthur's Pass attending a nest box where they were feeding chicks. Also seen well in Fiordland NP.

New Zealand Rockwren (E)*Xenicus gilviventris*

We had fabulous looks at a pair attending a nest at the Homer Tunnel, Fiordland NP.

HONEYEATERS: Meliphagidae**Tui (E)***Prosthemadera novaeseelandiae*

This colourful and showy species was seen throughout the tour and its wide range of calls heard daily.

New Zealand Bellbird (E)*Anthornis melanura*

We enjoyed great looks at Tawharanui Regional Park, several duetting birds on Tiri Tiri Matangi Island. We had further sightings on Kapiti Island, Milford Sound and on Stewart Island.

AUSTRALASIAN WARBLERS: Acanthizidae**Grey Gerygone (E)***Gerygone igata*

Seen and heard on six days of the tour. Our first sighting was of a pair at our motel in Kerikeri.

NEW ZEALAND WATTLEBIRDS: Callaeidae**North Island Kokako (E) (EN)***Callaeas cinerea wilsoni*

After a tense wait, we enjoyed fabulous, close looks at a pair feeding just above our heads on Tiritiri Matangi Island. Another pair were seen later at another territory. This is a rare and endangered species occurring only on the North Island and with a population estimated at 2000+ 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, on Tiritiri Matangi Island and on Kapiti Island. 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 were had of several pairs on Ulva Island. This is a much rarer and restricted species 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 rufusater.

STITCHBIRDS: Notiomystidae

Stitchbird (E) (CE)

Notiomystis cincta

This very rare endemic was seen on Tiritiri Matangi Island, where we enjoyed great looks at several confiding birds, including a male displaying his white-ear tufts. A couple of female birds were also noted on Tiritiri. This is a rare and highly threatened species, with less than 2000 birds remaining on offshore, predator-free Islands.

NEW ZEALAND CREEPERS: Mohouidae

Yellowhead (E) (EN)

Mohoua ochrocephala

We had fabulous close looks at several small groups feeding and in song on several occasions at Ulva Island, Stewart Island. Occurs only on the South Island, where it is declining rapidly due to introduced predators. This species has been translocated to several predator-free islands to try and secure its future.

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 the North Island.

Pipipi (E)

Mohoua novaeseelandiae

First seen at Arthurs Pass where we had a good view, Bob O had a bird at Te Anua and then very good looks at several confiding flocks on Ulva Island, Stewart Island. Occurs only on the South Island.

FANTAILS: Rhipiduridae

New Zealand Fantail (E)

Rhipidura fuliginosa

This delightful species was enjoyed as it often approached very close. Recorded on ten dates.

WOODSWALLOWS, BUTCHERBIRDS and ALLIES: Artamidae

Australian Magpie

Gymnorhina tibicen

Good numbers recorded throughout the tour, especially on open fields.

AUSTRALASIAN ROBINS: Petroicidae

Tomtit (E)

Petroica macrocephala macrocephala

Our first sighting was at Arthurs Pass with further sightings at Franz Joseph Glacier, at Milford Sound and lastly on Ulva Island.

Note: Only Tomtit is recognised by the IOC and Clements. Some authorities split this species as North Island Tomtit P.m. toitoi and South Island Tomtits P.m. macrocephala.

New Zealand Robin (E) (TH)

Petroica australis longipes

We had good looks on Tiritiri Matangi Island and on Kapiti Island.

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

Confiding birds were seen at Arthur's Pass and on two visits to Ulva Island.

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

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

Recorded frequently on the tour. Its beautiful song and display flights were enjoyed by all.

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

We recorded this species on almost every day on tour.

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

We enjoyed very close looks at two calling birds at Tokaanu Wharf, Lake Taupo.

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

This common native was seen on eleven 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 most days of the NZ tour. Its beautiful song was heard on several days.

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

Commonly seen on a daily basis.

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

Commonly seen on the South Island.

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

A singleton was found by Bob O and seen well while taking pictures of Tongariro NP. A further two birds were seen in the Twizel area.

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

This attractive finch was commonly seen on most days.

Eurasian Greenfinch (I) *Carduelis chloris*

Recorded on eight dates.

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

More commonly seen on the South Island where it had a preference for Pine Forests.

Eurasian Goldfinch (I) *Carduelis carduelis*

Fairly commonly seen throughout our tour.

BUNTINGS: Emberizidae

Yellowhammer (I) *Emberiza citronella*

This beautiful bunting with its catchy song was seen and heard regularly throughout NZ.

Mammals:

European Rabbit (I) *Oryctolagus cuniculus*

Seen on at least twelve dates.

NZ Fur Seal *Arctocephalus forsteri*

Seen at Kaikoura and off Stewart Island.

NZ Sea – Lion *Phocarctos hookeri*

Recorded at Penguin Place, Taiaroa Head, Dunedin.

Hector's Dolphin *Cephalorhynchus hectori*

Fabulous looks at a singleton on the Marlborough Sound

Bottle-nosed Dolphin *Delphinus delphis*

Up to fourteen were seen on our Milford Sound boat cruise.

Dusky Dolphin *Lagenorhynchus obscurus*

Great views off Kaikoura.

Orca *Orcinus orca*

Two distant individuals scoped from Kapiti Island.

Common Ringtail Possum (I) *Pseudocheirus peregrinus*

Seen on our kiwi tour on Stewart Island.

Miscellaneous:

Long-finned Eel -Kapiti Island

Common Gecko - Kapiti Island

Tree Weta – Kapiti Island

Monarch Butterfly

White Cabbage Butterfly

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