

New Zealand



& Singapore



3rd March to 13th April, 2018



Thurs 8 th March	Devonport, Auckland	
Friday 9 th March	Journey from Auckland to Taupo	
Sat 10 th March	Walk to Huka Falls, Taupo	11:00 - 16:30
Sun 11 th March	Tongariro River Trail, Turangi	11:30 - 16:00
Mon 12 th March	Aratiatia Dam	11:30 - 13:00
Tues 13 th March	Journey from Taupo to Napier	
Wed 14 th March	Journey from Taupo to Wellington	
Thur 15 th March	Kapiti Island & Paraparaumu Beach	11:00 - 15:30
Fri 16 th March	Ferry from Wellington to Picton	
	Elterwater Wildlife Reserve, between Picton & Kaikoura	
Sat 17 th March	Kaikoura Whalewatch	10:00 - 12:00
Sun 18 th March	Albatross Encounter	07:00 - 09:00
	Kaikoura Peninsula Walkway	11:00 - 13:00
Tues 20 th March	Raumanuka Reserve & Motueka Coastal and Inlet Walkway	10:00 - 14:00
Thur 22 nd March	Motueka Inlet Walkway	12:00 - 13:00
Fri 23 rd March	Journey from Motueka to Hokitika	
Sun 25 th March	Franz Josef Glacier walk	
Mon 26 th March	Journey from Hokitika to Wanaka	
Wed 28 th March	The Outlet Track, Wanaka	10:00 - 14:30
Fri 30 th March	Te Anau to Milford Sound	09:10 - 17:30
Sat 31 st March	Doubtful Sound Cruise	08:00 - 14:30
Mon 2 nd April	Oban, Stewart Island & Bluff ferry	11:00 - 17:00
Tues 3 rd April	Ulva Island	9:15 - 12:15
Wed 4 th April	Oban, Stewart Island	
Fri 6 th April	Oamaru Penguin Colony	18:30 - 20:00
Sun 8 th April	Taiaora Point & Papanui Cove, Otago Peninsula	14:00 - 18:00
Tues 10 th April	Akaroa Town & Akaroa Peninsula	11:00 - 15:00

NEW ZEALAND

3rd March to 13th April, 2018

Introduction

After having my nose to the grindstone for nearly 40 years and sneaking in the odd 2 week holidays to some marvellous locations during then, it was finally time to call work a day and signify retirement in some meaningful way. So why not go to the opposite side of the planet for an indeterminate time, and see what the Land of the Long Cloud could offer? It has to be said that this trip was a one for myself and my wife to celebrate the occasion, so any birds that were seen were generally as a consequence of being there, rather than planning a trip around the birds. It was also the first time that we had planned a trip without the constraints of time, which led us to plan an itinerary that fitted what we wanted to do, rather than what would fit into the work-holiday-work routine. This resulted in 5 weeks in New Zealand on the ground, with stopover in Singapore on the way out and the return. Thus, the quality of the birds that we saw over the trip was more often as a result of being in the correct place at the correct time by default rather than planning. There were some exceptions, such as the albatross outing at Kaikoura and (planned) Kiwi spotting on Stewart Island for me, and whale and penguin trips which had these as the prime objective for the both of us. Through all this, a brilliant holiday with memorable experiences resulted as the top line, with the consequence of seeing and experiencing most of the New Zealand speciality birds.



There are one or two choices of routes to New Zealand from the UK. We plumped for using Singapore Airlines, who operate flights arriving into Auckland and then back out of Christchurch, both via Singapore, from Manchester. This also meant a stop off in Singapore both ways to break the journey, resulting in a small selection of birds which weren't seen in New Zealand. Weather here was a world away from the main part of the trip – very hot and humid, although we were only treated to the occasional downpour while there.

For no special reason, we decided on tackling the North Island first, and then the majority of the time on the South Island after that. After pinpointing the areas we wanted to cover, the logistics of the trip were drawn out. We were happy to stay in locations for up to 5 nights and travel out by car from them even if this meant an hour or two journey. This meant a solid location (probably not in the lines of birding planning but worked well for us) and quite often we would find local walks which would also turn up great local birds. Many motor homes cruise around the islands, and this may be decent alternative for a purely

birding holiday, but we found hiring a car in Auckland, driving via the North to South Islands ferry, and then returning the car to Christchurch for the return flight worked well and was not overly expensive. Apex car rentals gave a good price and included Interislander Ferry, with the only down side that the car we were given wasn't in the best condition when we picked it up. Any worries about fuel stops being few and far between were also dashed – there seem to be plenty for all journeys – but it IS a good idea to have a full tank at the start of any long journey here. Roads are also a lot better than expected, being generally metalled, and with road signs good. Be aware of driving laws – speeds are strictly enforced by the police (maximum 100 km/hr) and can be as low as the chugging 30 km/hr through the regular road works that are encountered.

Timing of the trip was made around taste. We didn't want to be there during peak summer season, which is December to February. This often then leads to the question of a Spring visit during October to November, or Autumn March to April. Decision here was easy – my retirement date of end of February fit in beautifully with the March to April time slot. This was also (perhaps by fluke) an excellent shoeing in for the weather. We left the 6 inches of snow and threat of travel disruption in the UK for mid 20's and almost constant sunshine on the North island and into the first week of the South Island. This may have been a little unseasonally hot for here, but so also was the early snow at the end of our tenure as we left, with some passes such as Arthur's Pass (good for Kea) shut. One norm that has to be accepted – the South Island can be wet, particularly on the western side and Stewart Island, where there are over 200 days of rain a year, and 10-15 metres of rain during that year in some parts. We saw that rain on occasional days when we were there, but overall escaped a lot of the rain god's wrath! However, the weather still affected us at times, with a day's delay getting off Stewart Island due to high winds cancelling the ferry, and Abel Tasman walk being cancelled due to heavy rain. There were also signs of the earthquake that hit the east coast in 2016 (not to be confused with the one which devastated Christchurch in 2013, but a much more powerful one), where the road from Picton to Kaikoura (the latter a must do for seawatching trips) had only been reopened for 3 months, and then only during daylight hours.

Tips

- Credit cards are very widely accepted throughout the islands and even on Stewart Island
- The power sockets are the angled two pins similar to Australia. They are not always great, with some adaptors falling out. It is useful to have an adapter which also included a third (earth) pin
- If you think you might suffer seasickness on some of the trips/ferries, you will. Stores and pharmacies have quite effective remedies as prophylaxis
- Booking ahead for trips such as Otago penguins, Stewart Island Kiwis, etc online is often worthwhile – it is surprising how many tourists are on these (including bus trips)
- We didn't see evidence of many mosquito types of insect, but sandflies can be a real pest in certain coastal areas. A specific repellent can be bought for these

Singapore

Depending on time, scope, and type of visit to the country, there are varied potentials for seeing birds. A limited variety of species can be seen by sticking to the "downtown" localities, which is more or less the urban sprawl including the Marina Bay Gardens (and the Botanical Gardens which are also within the central area), and going a little further afield to the North of the island, where there are a couple of nature reserves/open habitats. We chose the former, treating this as a true stopover, and picking up birds as they were chanced upon, rather than specific birding outings. We were located a mile or so alongside the main river, which was traversed daily, and also made a visit to the Marina Bay & Botanic Gardens.

Despite the urban location of the river itself, a few birds could be seen regularly. Apart from the Javan Mynas and Tree Sparrows, both of which were ubiquitous throughout, there

were one or two other species which could be chanced upon. Pacific Swallows were not uncommon and searching through the Mynas produced regular Common variants. Perhaps surprisingly, Black-naped Orioles were often heard, even around the busy main arteries, and could occasionally be picked out in the canopies. Sunbirds were similar, mostly seeming to be Olive-backed. It was well worth looking overhead for raptors. While Brahminy Kite was the most likely, a large individual resembling Changeable Hawk-eagle, and smaller ones of accipiter types, were also seen. Strangely, the only Pink-necked Green Pigeon during the outbound visit was a male alongside the upper reaches of the river.



The Marina Bay Gardens offered much more comfortable mixtures of manicured woodland and also some water based habitat. It was the latter which threw in a single Baillon's Crake near to a pair of Red Junglefowl. Bee-eaters had been seen in the distance along the river in town, but in the gardens some perched to reveal themselves as Blue-tailed. The occasional Koels which been heard in town were then also to be seen in the gardens. In addition to the irregular showy Olive-backed Sunbirds here, one of the Flowerpeckers which had been heard proved to be Scarlet-backed (a male thankfully!). The only Oriental Magpie-Robin was a female feeding alongside one of the Javan Mynas. While expected, it was nice to pin down a couple of Collared Kingfishers, which once perched, stayed in the same spot for some time.

Another much more enjoyable habitat visited during the return visit was the Botanic Garden. This is not quite what I expected – in a good way. Rather than being a small area of conserved species, it stretches for 1-2 km from head to toe, and offers some much needed greenery in a busy and built up city. There are well laid paths throughout, and despite being popular, never seemed crowded. The obvious draw for the birds is the varied arboreal vegetation, and some good birds were seen, although not many new compared to the ones seen elsewhere. Best addition to the trip



were a couple of stunning male Crimson Sunbirds, fearlessly visiting the planted heliconias near to the concert area. As mentioned the other species had been seen elsewhere, but good opportunities for better views of the regular Black-naped Orioles and Asian Glossy Starling. On the walk from here, a White-throated Kingfisher was disturbed from feeding next to the roadside in a suburban location.

New Zealand

TAUPO

Apart from a quick stop in Auckland, Taupo was the only main stop on the North Island. The theory was that we would stay 5 nights there, and travel out to various spots as and when necessary. As it turned out, the Taupo area was interesting enough to find walks locally, and also turned up some of the birds which are likely to be fairly easy to find. The town itself lies on the north-eastern shore of the vast Lake Taupo, and it is worth walking the shores of town to pick up some of the commoner water birds. Duck are the most obvious, with small rafts of New Zealand Scaup and Pacific Black Duck amongst the more numerous Mallard. Closer inspection should also turn up New Zealand Grebe – they had reasonably young immatures feeding with their parents on our visit. Also obvious are the Cormorants. Great & Pied were the most common, but at least one Little Black was amongst them.



From Spa Thermal Park to Huka Falls

Taupo sits on the outlet of Lake Taupo to the Waikato River, which flows at some speed to pass through a narrow slit of rock after 3 miles to form the Huka Falls. The falls themselves are one of the most popular sites visited in New Zealand – worth seeing but busy! We were based next to the start of an excellent walk (easy and some good birds), which ostensibly begins at the Spa Thermal Park, on the first large horseshoe bend of the river. The park is very popular, being very open with quite a few paths winding through, as well as car park and toilets. One of the attractions for the visitors is a small thermal stream which empties into the river – folk seem to love floating downstream from Taupo to here and then dip their toes in the hot water.



From here, the walk starts proper, meandering through mixed rain forest with views of the sparkingly clear river and the odd island it contains. We went on a warm, sunny Saturday, which brought out good numbers of other walkers. The good news is that this particular track does not allow cyclists, so fewer obstacles to the birding.

Despite the amount of people around the bunjy and thermal park, attention should still be paid here. At the end of the walk, a Grey Gerygone was in the trees next to the jump, and a New Zealand Falcon flew overhead into the gorge. Just beyond, and below in the trees of the gorge, a Long-tailed Cuckoo was picked out briefly. Even at the popular spot for bathers – the thermal stream – it was worth taking a look at the river. Even among the bathers – a Pacific Black Duck was padding around amongst the towels for some reason. On the water next to the opposite bank was a pair of Black Swans. Not native but now well established in the country. A pied form of Little Pied Cormorant (perversely, most of the birds here are the dark variant, apart from somewhat higher numbers on the North island) was perched on a log earlier on, feeding on the return. Just a little further towards the middle of the river were a trio of New Zealand Scaup. A couple of European Coot looked a little comical trying to swim directly across the river, battling almost sideways against the strong current. Downside of the birding through the riverside forest were the vast numbers of introduced species which almost dominated sightings, in particular the constant presence of House Sparrows, followed by Starlings and Common Mynas. However, Silvereyes were also very regularly seen, in small and busy groups which appeared often. They were easily the most common of the indigenous birds, with some other species seen in ones and twos, and these seen irregularly. These included Tui (great call), Bellbird (almost as good a call), and Fantail.



Tongariro River Trail, Turangi

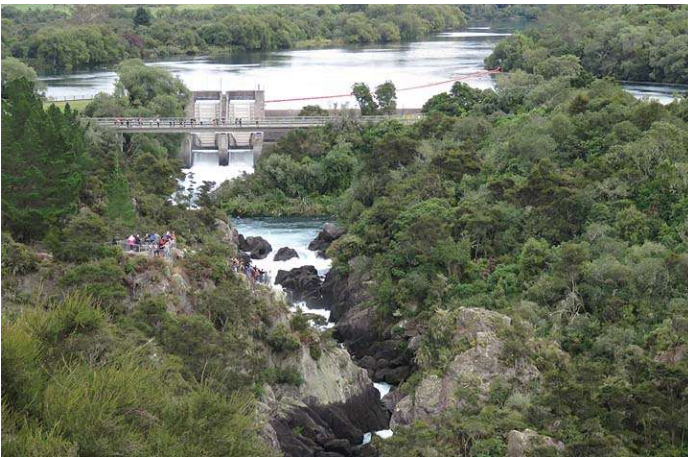
In New Zealand birding circles, and certainly for the North Island, this stretch of the river is probably best known for the potential to see Blue Duck. This species has been hit hard by the introduced predators such as Stoat, but action is being taken to reduce the numbers of these aliens (we came across one of the locals who was tending the traps to catch and dispatch introduced species). Blue Duck tend to like fast flowing rivers and stretches of the Tongariro River certainly fit the bill. It is possible that early morning or just before dusk might be the best time to look for this species, meaning that we were doing our walk away from the (potential) best time. The spots which seem of particular interest are from the Major Jones Bridge, which is not too far from Turangi, and the larger Red Hut Bridge, around 3 miles upriver. We parked as suggested by the iSite Visitor Information Centre just off Pihanga Road, but for a quick visit to the Major Jones Bridge, it is probably easier to park on the road side in the streets nearby. There are not too many vantage points over the river to look for the ducks, hence why the bridges may be good vantage points. I



also found some of the angler's access tracks helped to view extra stretches of the river, but to no avail today – no ducks spotted.

Quite a bit else to see in the area though. Much of the trail from Turangi on the western bank is through closed and thick woodland, with occasional views of the river. It also passes by the Trout Centre, which, unless you have a particular interest, is worth bypassing (there is an entrance fee to pay). Much of the birdlife in these woods comprised the abundant Silveryeyes and very active Fantails, with a single Bellbird thrown in for good measure. At one of the points which met the busy road, a Swamp Harrier was hunting over the open land on the opposite side. Once the Red Hut Bridge was reached, the variety increased somewhat. A White-faced Heron was perched on one of the horizontal branches of a high tree next to the river – a couple more were seen further on the return leg of the trail. The woodland opened adjacent to spacious farmland on the eastern side of the river, and a pair of Paradise Shelducks and Australian Magpies added to the list. In a field further down, a small group of Masked Lapwings were on the ground, with occasional Welcome Swallows over the woodland. A couple more Swamp Harriers were seen hunting over the farmland.

Aratiatia Dam



It's amazing how something that is functional can be turned into a tourist attraction. Enter the Aratiatia Dam. Before this was built, to hold the waters of the Waikato River for hydroelectric purposes, this portion of the river narrowed and formed an impressive ladder of rapids, purportedly one of the longest drops in the region. The dam has now calmed this to a trickle, but the filling of the reservoir above from Lake Taupo upstream necessitates opening the flood gates at times. In the case of this dam, that is at 10am,

12pm, 2pm (& 4pm in season), which has led to the building of a couple of vantage points to witness the rebirth of the flooding channels at these times. It is certainly worth a look if in the area (and it's free!), but there are also one or two of the more common species here. Outside of the calling Bellbird on the walk to the viewing platform, all the birds of note were on the reservoir side of the dam. These included very good numbers of Black Swans and ducks (Mallard, New Zealand Scaup, Pacific Black Duck) and European Coot. On the banks and the floating barrage were Great & Little Pied Cormorants, with a few Masked Lapwings nearby.

Kapiti Island

After huge desolation of the indigenous bird populations by introduced predators such as cats, rats, dogs and stoats, one of the projects New Zealand is well known for is the eradication of these interlopers and the resultant rewilding of certain offshore islands. Kapiti Island, off the western coast just above Wellington, is not only one of these, but arguably the largest island to have undergone this treatment. Although it was made a reserve in 1897, with the occupying farmers given 3 years to leave, it wasn't until the 1990's that traps were laid for the stoats, and shortly after poison bait for the rats. Within 3 years the latter had been eradicated. From only one small pocket of original forest, the whole of the island has now reseeded, and the only non Government owned section at the North is the base for the Maori owners to run the visits to this part of the island. Thus many birds indigenous to New Zealand can once again be seen after conservation/reintroduction schemes to boost their numbers. Some of the speciality birds are easy to see, such as North Island Robin, Weka, and Takahe, but others (Saddleback and Morepork) need a bit of good fortune. Stitchbird is a more recent introduction, and Kokako prefers habitat away from the settlement.



Various methods of visiting the island can be employed, all using Kapiti Island Nature Tours (www.kapitiisland.com). The lowest cost is a simple no frills day trip, more expensive the same with guide and lunch (including access to the lodge area where lunch is served), and an overnight option, which has the benefit of looking for Little Spotted Kiwi (NB they are not always seen!). Rangatira Point, a little further down the eastern side of the island, can also be visited. Giving contact details, including mobile phone, on booking is useful, since the times of sailing from the mainland can vary – we received a text on the morning with this information. The boat, hitched to a tractor and trailer for launch, leaves the beach at Paraparamau usually at around 9am. The beach itself is worth checking – there was a group of White-fronted Terns next to the tractor with Silver Gulls, and at least 3 Variable Oystercatchers when we were there.



The crossing takes around half an hour, and the agenda when we went was a short briefing on the history of the island at the shelter near to the boat dock, then a short guided walk to the start of the loop trail, free time to walk the loop trail (at least 2 hours for this), and then lunch at the Lodge, with some free time to look for the birds around here. There is also a track around the lagoon near to the sea, but this had been destroyed by a recent tropical storm when we were there, and the nesting Spoonbills and Gulls had already departed. From the shelter to the start of the loop walk, it is obvious that New Zealand Pigeons and Tui are very common, with Bellbirds also a regular sight and sound. A Red-crowned Parakeet was calling just outside while we were having the briefing but had frustratingly gone by the time we could look for it. The start of the loop walk offered a couple of very amenable North Island Robins. As with a lot of forest birding, much of the walking along the trail is fairly quiet, although the payback was 2 very busy flocks of mixed Fantails and Whiteheads. Our first Kaka was picked up as it flew across the path, but the meat of the birding was around the Lodge. Kaka was very close here – almost too close, as they eyed up the lunch that they were trying to steal. Takahe is now a very rare bird in New Zealand, and so it was nice to pick up one of the two residents, which are now apparently around 20 years old and so unfortunately past breeding age. It was also ridiculously easy to see, as it grazed the lawn next to the Lodge (what was likely to be this bird was even seen from the boat while approaching the island). For comparison, there were 5 Pukakos (Australian Purple Swamphen) in the wet area to the rear of the buildings. This area was explored for a short while before we departed, and was particularly good for Red-crowned Parakeets, Paradise Shelduck, a single Sacred Kingfisher, and very close views of New Zealand Pigeons. As we were boarding the boat, a New Zealand Pipit was spotted amongst the rocks on the shore line.

Wellington to Picton Ferry, and journey on to Kaikoura

As part of our car hire package, we had included the Interislander ferry from the North to the South Island. One of the intentions was the potential for seawatching from the observation decks. After chugging out of Wellington Harbour for the first 15 minutes or so of the trip, the ferry headed into the much more choppy waters of the Cook Strait. This thin strip of water is renowned for being a bit wild, so it was comforting for the captain to announce that the swell would be only one metre or so (slightly optimistic as it turned out, but still not too tough a ride). Much more of an issue was the wind – a very strong northerly which could be felt as almost gale force on the level 10 observation deck. Luckily, I found a relatively sheltered spot on the port side away from the fiercest of the gusts. This also had the side benefit of scattering the selfie crowd pretty smartly - I was the only person on the deck for most of the trip. Scanning the waves for the hour and a half or so in the Strait itself did produce some interesting birds. One of the targets was to see Albatross in any form, and this was rewarded about half an hour in with Shy Albatross shearing the waves a little distance from the ship. 3 further birds of this species were seen – another fling the same line, and 2 on the sea. The other definite species was a single Common Diving-Petrel which took off from near to the ferry. Birds seen which were likely but couldn't be definitively identified were 3 separate Fluttering Shearwaters (seemed to have the whiter underwing than Hutton's), Buller's Shearwater (back patterning and size looked good, but conditions might preclude 100% certainty), and Flesh-footed Shearwater (all dark and didn't seem to have white patch under wing or wedge shaped tail). A few Australasian Gannets also appeared near to the entrance of Queen Charlotte Sound. Last treat in the Sound was a group of Bottlenose Dolphins which followed the ferry for some distance.



Nothing outstanding was seen on the car journey from Picton to Kaikoura (apart from good numbers of New Zealand Fur Seals on rocks on the shoreline about 20Km North of



Kaikoura), but a chance pull in about 85Km North of Kaikoura found us munching our picnic on a table right next to Elterwater Wildlife Reserve. This is a small expanse of water which is generally open, with one or two stands of either dense or bare trees. The main claim to fame here seems to be the half a dozen or so Royal Spoonbills feeding or sleeping at the far shore. These had been missed the day before at Kapiti Island, where they breed. A Pied Stilt was with them, and some ducks which were a little too distant to identify through binoculars, although inspection of photographs later picked out both Australian Shoveler and Grey Teal.

KAIKOURA



Whale Watch

One of the main reasons to visit this area is for the rich pickings in cetaceans, due to the close proximity of the continental shelf just off the coast. There is just one company which runs the boats for the whalewatching

(www.whalewatch.co.nz), although another has helicopters for the same reason (not sure why you would fly over a whale when better views are had from the boats, as well as the added bonus of seabirds!). We chose



a sensible time for departure of 10:30am, meaning a 10:00am check in at the office. The boats are relatively new and quite spacious, offering plenty of comfortable seats downstairs, and upper and lower outer viewing areas when stationary. The latter is important – passengers must be sat down when moving and judging by the amount of sick bags being given the hammer, this is just as well. The main objective is to see whales, and Sperm Whales are the most predictable. Using sonar, previous viewings, etc, we picked up one of the resident males in no time, accompanying a sister boat to watch it on the surface recuperating before another hour long dive. After searching elsewhere for a little while, the captain tried for this individual again, but it had dived as we approached. This was a blessing in disguise, since the decision was then made to look for a pod of Dusky Dolphins, which were subsequently located and put on a great show around the boat.

Birding on this trip at first seemed a bit of a dead duck, due to the speed of the boat and the bouncing up and down as we looked for whales. However, some seabirds could be seen passing, albeit with unstable views. However, stopping for the whales and dolphins also had its side benefit of plenty of activity around the boat. Shy Albatross were very regular, skimming past the boat effortlessly, and closer inspection revealed that some of these were Salvin's. The heads of the latter weren't as grey as expected, making them more difficult to sort out, but good views of the bills revealed the black spot at the base of the bill tip. Hugely impressive, in more ways than one, was the Southern Royal Albatross which was gliding past – even showing the diagnostic black edge to the bill. Two more large albatross were seen, but couldn't be sorted into Royal or Wandering. Shearwaters were also regular, with all the dark ones looking to be Flesh-footed, accompanied by the distinctive Buller's. Smaller Shearwaters nearer to the coast in the area of the dolphins had the small size and duskier underwings of Hutton's, reputedly a species forming large rafts in the Kaikoura area. Only seen once, at the front of the boat while stationary, was a group of 5 Cape

Petrels. All in all a good trip for the cetaceans which were the quarry, but also for seabirds on the 3 occasions that the boat stopped at sea.

Albatross Encounter

For anyone with even an iota of interest in seabirds, especially to see the ones the southern oceans have offer in New Zealand, this is THE tour to book on to (www.albatrossencounter.co.nz). I had met Gary and the team at the British Bird fair, and not only did this prise out a 15% discount on the trip, but it was Gary who took the boat out. There are various times of sailing through the day, but I felt the early one at 7am would be best. The only proviso here is that they need at least 3 people to make the trip or pay the whole of the minimum NZ\$300 yourself. Luckily, a rather pleasant couple from the Netherlands decided to come along as well, inadvertently lowering my cost in doing so. The departure point South of the peninsular was the same as the Whale Watch of yesterday, but in a much smaller boat. With only 3 of us on though, there was plenty of room to move about at the rear where the real seabird viewing was to happen. We were also fortunate in that the swell wasn't too high and overall conditions were good.



Plan for the 2 hour trip was to speed to the edge of the continental shelf, stop, then hang the bait (apparently the very choicest stinky fish livers) over the stern of the boat. Within seconds, a squadron of Cape Petrels were straight into the fray, and a Wandering Albatross was in seconds later, tugging at its delicious breakfast. The Cape Petrels multiplied in numbers and were constantly chattering all the time they were there (which was throughout the stop). As the sun rose over the horizon, a couple more Wandering Albatross joined the melee, with

relatively dapper Salvin's proving a little more standoffish. In time, a Southern Royal Albatross forged its way in, although it seemed to be giving respect to the gorging Wanderers. Petrels in the form of early White-chinned and subsequent Westland often made a tour of our vicinity but weren't enticed to settle down. Same for the much smaller and distinctive Buller's Shearwaters, which didn't at any time even look as if they were going to settle. It took a little time, but a Northern Giant Petrel eventually alighted a little distance from the boat, with a couple more circling the area, but it didn't come any closer. A couple of Shy Albatross did, however, giving really close comparison with the very similar Salvin's.



We then headed over to a fishing boat to look for more variety and following that the final stop was in the deeper water. This is where the Northern Giant Petrels came into their own. The Wandering Albatrosses present still ruled the roost, but the former Giants wasted no time in landing near to the bait to take their share of the goodies. They seemed up for a fight with the Salvin's Albatross present, and also their own kind, but were much more respectful of the Wandering Albatross with their own threatening bayonet of a bill. A Northern Royal Albatross also flew by, showing the much darker upperwing compared to Southern, although it was more of a flyby, not showing the same interest in the bait ball at the stern.

Kaikoura Peninsular Walkway



When in Kaikoura and with a couple of hours to spare, this 2 mile or so marked trail is well worth the time spent on it. The best way to tackle it is to drive to the smallish yet free car park at the Fur Seal Colony. We visited on a Sunday so this was predictably very busy. From here, there are a couple of ways to proceed, but if the tide is out, it might be preferable to walk along the bottom of the cliffs, with partly well marked routes over the rock pools, shingle and grass, climbing about two thirds along to meet the upper path, then continuing South to the boat docks on the southern part of the peninsular. By doing this, ample views of lounging New Zealand Fur Seals should be gleaned, although they could be on rocks anywhere along the walk. The walk is also notable for Hutton's Shearwater, which breed in the mountains above the peninsula, but some of which have been relocated to try to establish a new breeding colony in one of the bays. Nonetheless, small flotillas of these birds were seen passing close to the shoreline (in addition to a couple of Albatrosses which looked like Shy/Salvin's). While circumnavigating the rocks and odd rock pool, it is worth checking for shoreline birds, such as Variable Oystercatcher, White-faced Heron, Paradise Shelduck, and Australian Pied Cormorant. Only other birds of note above the cliffs on the return walk were New Zealand Pied Fantail and Welcome Swallow (as well as a couple of European introductions – Yellowhammer and Skylark).

MOTUEKA & ABEL TASMAN NP AREA

Motueka Coastal and Inlet Walkways

In an anticlockwise tour of the South Island, one of the first localities to visit after Kaikoura on the North East coast is the North Western tip, which includes the tiny Abel Tasman National Park. As a base we chose Motueka, which is just a short drive from the water taxis of the national park, and also a town small enough to have some interesting walks of its

own. The walk we made on the first day included both, starting at our accommodation on Thorp Street, walking North and then East to Raumanuka Reserve, then the full length of the coastal walkway to Motueka marina, then including part of the Inlet Walkway to view part of the tidal lagoons.

Walking North along Thorp Street, the housing quickly clears to reveal open fields with small creeks and wet areas, which seem to be teeming with Swamphen. In amongst these are smaller numbers of Paradise Shelduck, and a small creek near to the road had a pair of Australian Shoveler. The only Little Black Cormorant was perched on a fence overlooking a small pool in the fields, and a Swamp Harrier quartered overhead. The road meets Staples Street, which then heads to the East, meeting the coastal part of the pathway at the Ramanauka Reserve. A track cuts through some trees to overlook some tidal mudflats, which were exposed during our visit at low tide. Most obvious birds were a group of 9 Royal Spoonbills roosting on a spit in the centre of the flats. Towards the neck of the tidal stream were large numbers of South Island Oystercatchers, with a sprinkling of Variable Oystercatchers in front of them. The regular appearances of Sacred Kingfisher were kicked off also at this spot with what looked like a family of 7 birds feeding from exposed dead logs, and a trio of Pied Stilts were in one of the small pools next to the beginning of the coastal path.



The length of the coastal part of the trail was an enjoyable walk, but not over heavy with birding pleasures. White-faced Herons and Sacred Kingfishers continued to be constant, and the first of a handful of Tui were here. It wasn't until the Inlet Walkway that a bit more avian interest was reinstated. That being said, the low tide and exposed mud/sand wasn't exactly engorged with birds. Of most interest was a small island in the centre of the inlet, which had around 45 Royal Spoonbills, and even more Pied Stilts. Outside of these, a solitary Caspian Tern making its way towards town was the only other bird on interest. The walkway crossed Old Wharf Road to run alongside the recreation grounds, and a field just to the North of the grounds held a solitary Cape Barren Goose amongst the multitude of Swamphens and Paradise Shelducks. While there was a temptation to look at this as an occasional winter vagrant from Australia, the less exciting truth was that it was more likely to be an escaped or released captive bird. Shame.

A couple of days later, the rest of the Inlet Walkway was completed, and also the field containing the Cape Barren Goose revisited. This time, the same bird was in almost the same spot, with an additional 2 birds at the corner of the field. 3 birds together made the likelihood of a true vagrant even less so, although the status of now released birds breeding and forming a sustainable population had to be considered. The small section of the Inlet Walkway was the shore of the tidal



mud on the western edge, and opposite that covered the first time. This visit did throw up a few more birds at the muddy edges. Small groups of ducks turned out to be Australian Shoveler and Grey Teal. In addition to the now expected Pied Stilts, a group of 30 or so Bar-tailed Godwits were a little further into the mud, with one in almost full breeding plumage. In a park opposite, a quartet of New Zealand Scaup were with Mallard. There was also a Pacific Duck with a bird which showed the characteristics of a hybrid Mallard/Pacific Duck – they don't make things any easier!

FJORDLAND

Te Anau to Milford Sound

For many tourists who traverse the length of the SH94 from Te Anau to Milford Sound, the 2½ hour journey has the sole purpose of reaching the cruise which then glides though the fjord for 3 hours. However, there are many noteworthy stops which can be made to turn the journey into a day out for its own pleasure, and then added on to that is the potential of some decent birds. Prime amongst these are Kea and Blue Duck, neither (particularly the latter) in the least bit guaranteed, but there are some good spots to search for both. Monkey Creek is the location with the possibility of both but encouraging signs not to feed the Kea always raise extra hope.

The journey is over 100km in length, and initially runs parallel to half the length of Lake Te Anau, then morphs into the wide Eglinton base of Eglinton Valley, whose grand flat expanse forms an excellent habitat for the Swamp Harriers coursing over. It then gains a bit of height (and even more cloud and a smidgeon of drizzle on the day we visited), to run alongside Lake Gunn, before climbing even further within some spectacular mountainous scenery – most of which is forested. The Homer Tunnel bridges the gap between the very high peaks and runs steeply downhill through more forested mountain sides to the small hamlet of Milford Sound, which is no more than a cafe, some lodges, and the cruise terminal for the Sound itself.

First stop with birding potential was Lake Gunn, which has a 45 minute walking loop through red beech forest. It is quite an eerie atmosphere, with many seemingly dead trees covered in mosses and lichens, giving a deathly green visage in a humid feeling air. There are one or two good birds here though. A couple of South Island Robins added another early on when they chased off an interloper. Tomtits eclipsed the Robins in numbers fairly easily, although both laid claim to the most approachable – neither were shy! Prize here were a couple of separate Riflemen. Neither stayed in view for any extended period of time, but the small bundles of feathers which they portrayed were more than welcome. Just before this oasis from the masses were the Mirror Lakes – a small collection of almost roadside pools of water which were very popular with tourists unfortunately, but also a good spot for a couple of Pacific Duck and New Zealand Scaup.



Lake Gunn forest



Mirror Lakes

Monkey Creek had been much anticipated, since it is a potentially good spot for both Kea and Blue Duck. Visibility at this point was quite poor, with very low cloud and some drizzle putting paid to any hope of either species. Other locations or better weather on return were hoped for. Another tip for Kea was to look around the entrances to the Homer Tunnel. Great views in the rising clouds but no sought after birds. And so it was down the winding descent to Milford Sound. Plenty of tourists here, and also a short but interesting foreshore walk. This takes you quickly to the wet foreshore, with the superb vista of the fjord as a backdrop. Paradise Shelduck continued their wide distribution as the most obvious bird here, with a manic White-faced Heron trying to crash the party. A short walk along the shore found a few Variable Oystercatchers, but these were mainly of the pied variety, showing the indistinct border between black and white clearly. Tomtits continued to be very tame here, but biggest surprise was a Weka wandering around the steps of the cafe.



So back to the return journey. The ascent to the entrance of the tunnel was again increasingly one of more and more cloud. We then spotted the waiting time on the clock for our queue to turn to a green light at 2 minutes 40 seconds. A brief sigh was emitted before we saw what at first looked like Weka prowling the front of the queue, when we realised they were Kea. And there were even a couple eyeing us up on the verge opposite. That time on the clock all of a sudden seemed all too little, as cameras were groped for and the Keas photographed as the time ticked down. Result. A brief stop was made to look for more on the opposite side of the tunnel without luck. We also stopped to admire the impressive Lake Marion waterfall where Blue Duck had been seen some weeks before, and made a further search at Monkey Creek, again without turning up the quarry. The Kea would have to do, although a circling New Zealand Falcon further on in the journey was small compensation.



Doubtful Sound

One of the main reasons for staying at Te Anau is to use it as a gateway to Fjordland National Park. Prime amongst this for tourists is a cruise along either Milford or Doubtful Sounds. The former we had seen from its departure point the previous day, following a day along the Te Anau to Milford Sound road. We decided on the latter for the cruise, partly due to its proximity to our accommodation (20 minutes), and also because it offered most on a full day out. The trip is in three phases – an hour or so on Lake Manapouri, then a bus drive linking that lake with the fjord, and then



the cruise proper on Doubtful Sound. Birding wise, the former 2 have little to offer, and it truth be told, the main interest area for birds at the junction of the fjord and the Tasman Sea. One or two Shy Albatross had been seen just before here, but once the rougher waters are experienced and the small islets standing as guardians to the inlet are spotted, the birdlife becomes very interesting. At the correct time of the year (ie not during our visit but the Spring breeding period) it's more than possible to spot Fjordland Crested Penguin. But not really during the end of March. However, this was more than made up for by the regular fly by of Albatross – some of the Shy that had been seen at Kaikoura, but also equal numbers of Buller's, showing the narrower and cleaner lines on the underwings compared to Grey-headed, as well as a seemingly yellower bill edge. Also here were myriads of Sooty Shearwaters, often passing close to the boat in squadrons. On the rocks themselves were the famed New Zealand Fur Seals, which is likely to be the main reason the boat extends to this location.



STEWART ISLAND

For tourist visits, the only regular way to visit the island is to take the ferry which departs from Bluff on the South of the mainland South Island, and traverse the channel for an hour before alighting in Oban, the only settlement there. Even before the ferry leaves the terminal, it is worth checking the water just out from the harbour. An albatross was seen as we were boarding, and a Buller's Albatross after a minute or so out at sea. There were surprisingly no others on the journey, although Sooty Shearwaters, were fairly regular within a short distance of both coasts. Later on, while having a beer in the hotel which

looks on to the harbour, a handful of Buller's Albatross could be seen plying to and fro a few hundred metres out. What may have been a trio of penguins were spotted on the water all too briefly. The deep forest of the national park backs on to the town, and regular sightings were Tui, New Zealand Pigeon, New Zealand Fantail, and the odd Bellbird, with a Kaka flying overhead and into a tree late on. Strangest sight was a Sacred Kingfisher perched on one of the rugby posts at the recreation ground. It is also worth time sitting watching the harbour in more detail (prime spots are the waiting room for the ferry or while having a pint at the South Seas Hotel!). Buller's Albatross are regular here, and occasionally fly up to and level with the ferry dock – a quartet was even with a Shy Albatross right next to the dock lured in by a fisherman throwing small fish back for them. Shags from here included Otago & Spotted, and there was even a Sea Lion meandering around between the beach and the ferry dock. A pair of Kaka flew overhead a few times though the day.



A prime birding reason for visiting Stewart Island is that it not only holds a healthy population of Southern Brown Kiwi (apparently in the region of 10000), but they are the only species which can be diurnal, and also they are so regular from Oban that tours are more or less guaranteed to see them. That is when the boats can sail around to the viewing point of course! I was booked in for the evening we were on the island, but it was cancelled due to an impending hurricane that evening. We only had a sniff of this when the Ulva ferry captain told us that he wasn't running the 6:15pm return due to the high winds, and sure enough, checking at Stewart Island Experience confirmed the cancellation of the Kiwi tour. Yet this was also a blessing in disguise. The water based cancellations extended to the main Bluff return ferry, so we had an extra night on the island enforced upon us. The weather was very variable through the day and into the evening, but I decided on a look around the rugby pitch near to our accommodation anyway. And when they say timing is everything – I entered the field to find a small group of people with dimmed red lights watching a small Kiwi slowly and methodically probing around the edge of the field. It continued to do this for around 5 minutes when someone's noisy velcro fastening sent it hot footing back into the deep vegetation.

Ulva Island

A second reason for visiting Stewart Island is the potential to visit Ulva Island. For birders this is highly recommended. It only costs NZ\$20 return for the 15 minutes or so each way short journey from Oban, and this finds prime habitat for many New Zealand specialities. The story seems to be that this is one of the few islands not to have suffered from the presence of stoats (rats were present and have been eradicated but aren't quite as lethal to birds as the former), so had managed to retain some of the indigenous birdlife, along

with a little help in the form of some reintroductions. From the experience of our visit, it is also one of the only places I went to where I didn't see signs of the widespread European introductions. There are only a few tracks on the island, and a steady stroll can cover them in 3 hours, although the ferry transfer times can accommodate longer stays if necessary (usual first one across is 9am and last return 6:15pm). These tracks are very well maintained, and mainly cut through the lush and thickly vegetated rain forest, with occasional ventures on to rocky beaches.



Ulva ferry



Ulva Island

Even before landing on the jetty of the island, a group of Shag resting on a nearby rock turned out to be Otago Shags – the first ones seen on the trip, and probably at their South-western limit here. Alighting on to Terra Firma, we decided to take the longest track first to Western Bay, which cuts through thick and dark forest for around 45 minutes. First fifteen minutes or so turned up much of the usual in the form of Bellbird, Tui, and New Zealand Fantail, but then we came across our first bird party – a small number of Pipipi were buzzing around at eye level. Just above, a calling Red-crowned Parakeet gave itself away. At the Bay, we were excited by the sign warning of carefully approaching Sea Lions, but this was an empty threat – no mammals of any sort. However, a couple of Weka pushed in on the entertainment, by following us around and almost stepping over our feet. We then headed off towards Boulder Beach, and this is where birding became even more interesting. After a very close South Island Robin, a band of Yellowheads was chanced upon. Just as busy as their white-headed counterparts from the North, they also hosted a single South Island Saddleback, being shadowed by a New Zealand Fantail. Boulder Beach hosted more Wekas, and it was here we decided on the return to the jetty. We arrived there early, so following up an unusual call pinned down a much more obliging Saddleback. Time also allowed for a detour to Shelter Bay, where we chanced upon a resting New Zealand Sea Lion amongst the rocks, showing the marks in the sand where it had hauled out. Some amazing birding continued after we had boarded the ferry for the return. After a single Spotted Shag on the sea, we were trailed all the way by half a dozen Shy Albatross. They seemed to delight in using our swell, and at times were so close above the bow that they seemed to be staring in at us.

DUNEDIN AREA

Oamaru Little Penguin colony

Of the at least 6 possible species of Penguins which can be found around New Zealand, Little Penguin is perhaps the most common and easily seen. Yellow-eyed Penguin is much rarer, and much more tricky to see. However, at Oamaru, nearly 2 hours drive North of Dunedin, the former can be more or less guaranteed, and there is also a possibility of the latter at a small colony in the same area. It is also worth a look at one of the disrepaired jetties just before the visitor centre at Oamaru harbour, to marvel at the hundreds of Cormorants tightly packed in places. They are in tight and distinct groups – Spotted Shags

more loosely nearest to the land, and perhaps the largest numbers that of dense Otago Shag (both Pied and Bronze variants).



Before going to the Little Penguin colony, we drove along Tyne Street to eventually find the car park at the end of Bushy Beach Road – the location of Bushy Beach Scenic Reserve. There is a shingle backed beach below the base of the reserve, and this is the site of the Yellow-eyed Penguin colony. The beach itself is only accessible until 3pm each afternoon, following which it is closed off in deference to the returning birds. A path from the car park runs above the beach to end at a small hide (more of an open shelter really!). Rather than the small number of birds returning from fishing and legging it up the beach to quickly

disappear, the 4 birds that we saw were in view for most of the time we were there (about 20 minutes). 2 were a little distant about half way along, heading to the back of the beach next to the thicker vegetation, and later 2 more were bobbing around in the surf next to the shoreline.

The Little Penguin colony is around the headland from the Yellow-eyed Penguins, on the edge of town next to the harbour. It is heartening to see the “Beware Penguins Crossing” signs on approach to the reception, and also the hundreds of cormorants on the opposite side of the road on the jetty. There are two prices for tickets to access – NZ\$30 as standard, and an extra NZ\$15 for the premier seats. It is worth paying the NZ\$45, since the penguins file past this seating area very closely – perhaps less than 4 metres from the front row. Most people are queuing for the 6am opening of the doors – a seat on the seaward part gives better views of the birds in the water and climbing the rocks. No photography of any sort is allowed, and the viewing area is bathed in an orange light which apparently doesn't startle the birds. They can be expected any time from 18:30 – we saw our first raft of 12 birds 10 minutes later. They tend to all come ashore and climb the rocks to their nesting area within about an hour. They can be seen swimming in these tight rafts before being battered around the surf on the rocks yet climbing out with apparent ease. They then stopped in a hollow or around 5-10 minutes to preen and cool down a bit, before gaining the courage to patter in a tight group past the dozing Fur Seals (not a threat), and dash to the openings at the base of the fence surrounding their colony. Most could then be seen making haste to the nest holes, but good numbers hung around the fence and boardwalk before moving on. In all we saw 54 birds in 3 rafts – a good number for the time of year.

The Otago Peninsula

For any birder visiting anywhere in the Dunedin area, the Otago Peninsula is a must. It can probably be covered by self guided tour, with paid access to the Royal Albatross colony easy and potential hides above beaches for Yellow-eyed Penguins. However, for a much closer look at some of the wildlife, it is likely that taking a guided tour may be the best option. There are one or two choices for this, but we chose The Peninsula Encounters tour from Elm Wildlife Tours (www.elmwildlifetours.co.nz). They are based in Dunedin and begin their 1.30pm pickups in the centre of the city. They also pick up at 2pm at the Portobello Store on the peninsula – our preferred choice since it negated the need to park in the city (parking can be found easily for free at Portobello). They used a small minibus for our afternoon, which had only 6 others on board.

We headed straight for the Northern Royal Albatross colony at the end of the peninsula (Taiaora Head). There is a visitor centre here based on the presence of a small area for nesting birds, and an extra payment can gain access to somewhat closer views of the nesting birds. We were informed by our guide that it probably isn't worth this extra cost, since the birds are still a little distant, and the best views are probably of the occasional

birds which soar past the observation points lower down near the cliffs. This is where the standard tour-goers are directed to, and I would certainly recommend this. Some Northern Royal Albatross were indeed seen close to overhead, but the extra benefit is that some decent seawatching can also be had from here. In addition to the odd Northern Royal passing by, there was also a Southern Royal Albatross low over the waves, as well as a handful of Buller's, and a Northern Giant Petrel. Sooty Shearwaters were regular, and there was a constant flyby of Spotted & Otago Shags. Swamp Harrier was hunting over the cliffs.

There was then a half an hour drive to the Papanui Cove area. This is privately owned by Maori, and we pay a sum of money for sole wildlife watching access. The large Papanui Inlet is rounded, and then the head crossed, passing through 2 locked gates to ensure the exclusivity of this tour. The van was parked with a partial view of the cove, and we walked along a track which descended to a rocky cove which was to the South-east of the main beach. This is the site of a New Zealand Fur Seal colony, which is totally wild and untended, apart from a fence to stop access and a hide above for when it is raining (which started while we were there). The close views down of the mothers and pups is excellent, with plenty of activity to keep interest. To the rear of the colony, on rocks a couple of hundred metres away, is an Otago Shag colony with both pied and bronze variants. Of greater additional interest is the seawatching potential here, particularly from the hide. In the short time we were there, I had an additional Southern Royal Albatross, Shy & Buller's Albatrosses, a few Northern Giant Petrels, Sooty Shearwaters, and the first Cape Petrel I had seen since the trip at Kaikoura.



We then retraced our steps back up to where the van was parked in the increasing rain, passed it by, and then descended down to the main cove and beach. We had spotted some New Zealand Sea Lions from the top, but on entering the beach, had much better views only metres away. They are apparently unconcerned by our presence, and this seemed to be the case. A large bull made its way slowly to the shore and then into the sea with us following it only a short distance away. It made its way through small collections of Silver Gulls and White-fronted Terns, as well as

Variable Oystercatchers and Pied Stilts. Impressive as these are (and rare – apparently the world's rarest sea lion), the Yellow-eyed Penguins which can be found here are arguably the stars of the show (also the rarest of their kind – this time of the world's penguin species). And on this tour they are not only easy to see in good numbers, but also in unexpectedly close quarters. Over the course of the hour that we were on the beach, we saw a grand total of 15 birds. First ones were at the opposite end of the beach, but we walked the shallow dunes behind a couple on the open sand to a hide which watched a few come out from the sea and then slowly make their way up the banks. Best was reserved till last. An individual came out of the sea at the end of the beach where we had entered, and as we stood still next to the base of the hill, it passed by only metres away, calling occasionally to what was likely to be its partner in the vegetation behind the beach. It didn't seem to have much idea where it was going, since it re-entered back through a gate to the beach, wandering around where we were for some time. It could still be seen preening on a small bridge in the vegetation as we left the area.

SPECIES SEEN IN NEW ZEALAND

Southern Brown Kiwi

Apteryx australis

Of the 5 species of Kiwi, none are nailed on to see, due mainly to their scarcity and nocturnal habits. One of the best places for a decent chance is Stewart Island, where this species is relatively common, and where Stewart Island Experiences can run evening trips from Oban to see them. Unfortunately, my trip was cancelled due to bad weather, but the same weather front kept us on the island for a day longer (still no trips though), and I was lucky enough to see one on the rugby pitch at Oban well after darkness had fallen (around 9.25pm)

Cape Barren Goose

Cereopsis novaehollandiae

Any records of these in New Zealand can be of dubious origin, since vagrant birds can reach here, particularly in winter, but there are also regular records of escapees. The 3 I saw in Motueka were likely to have been the latter (A single bird was a surprise grazing in a field next to Goodman Recreation Park, Motueka, along with Paradise Shelducks and Swamphen. The following day, 3 birds in field adjacent to Motueka Recreation grounds)



Canada Goose

Branta canadensis

Occasionally seen in flocks - presumably of introduced birds originally in the early 20th Century (~30 Motueka Coastal and Inlet Walkway)

Black Swan

Cygnus atratus

The numerous birds seen throughout are from introduced ornamental collections, but strictly speaking this should be termed reintroduction, since apparently this species was abundant in New Zealand before Europeans emerged and wiped them out (2 on River during Huka Falls; ~8 Lake Taupo waterfront, Taupo; At least 50 birds Aratiatia Dam; 2 Elterwater Wildlife Reserve, between Picton and Kaikoura; ~16 Motueka Coastal and Inlet Walkway, most being on tidal lagoon; 4 Motueka Inlet Walkway; 2 Journey from Motueka to Hokitika; 4 on large lake Journey from Hokitika to Franz Josef; ~12 on route to Oamaru Penguin Colony from Dunedin; ~20 Otago Peninsula; 2 Akaroa Peninsula)



Paradise Shelduck

Tadorna variegata



Male



Female

This is apparently one of the few New Zealand birds which has actually thrived since Europeans arrived. They tend to like grazing, so the wholesale levelling of the forests in favour of farmland has been to their liking. The result is a very common and widespread bird (Pair in open fields from Tongariro River Trail, Turangi; 2 in field Journey from Taupo to Napier; 1 female in fields Journey from Taupo to Wellington; ~10 Kapiti Island; 2 Elterwater Wildlife Reserve, between Picton and Kaikoura; 2 behind Brook House B&B, Kaikoura; Pair on rock pools at Kaikoura Peninsula Walkway; Good numbers totalling

anywhere up to 40 birds on the cultivated grassy land between High Street and the coastal walk Motueka Coastal and Inlet Walkway; Regularly seen throughout Journey from Motueka to Hokitika; Common and regular Journey from Hokitika to Franz Josef; Small numbers in fields Journey from Hokitika to Wanaka; ~30 Milford Sound; 5 Doubtful Sound Cruise; ~6 Oban Town, Stewart Island; 6 on Stewart Island Golf Course; Field with 100-200 birds on way to Oamaru Penguin Colony from Dunedin; ~16 Otago Peninsula; Small groups Akaroa Peninsula, 2 Akaroa Town)

Australasian Shoveler

Spatula rhynchotis

Only seen in small numbers to the North of the South Island (At last 3 birds Elterwater Wildlife Reserve, between Picton and Kaikoura; Pair on a small creek alongside Thorp Street, Motueka; ~12 Motueka Inlet Walkway)



Pacific Black Duck

Anas superciliosa

May have been a little more common than the recorded numbers suggest, but the abundance of Mallard negated searching through all occurrences of the latter to find this species (Up to 10 in singles and pairs on River during Huka Falls; Few birds Lake Taupo Waterfront, Taupo; 2 at Mirror Lakes Te Anau to Milford Sound)

Mallard

Anas platyrhynchos

Under-recorded due to abundance perhaps, and also due to the inclusion of many feral or semi feral birds (4 Lake Taupo Waterfront, Taupo; Quite common Lake Taupo Waterfront, Taupo; ~20 Oban, Stewart Island; Quite common Akaroa Town)

Grey Teal

Anas gracilis

Not as common as expected (At least 2 birds Elterwater Wildlife Reserve, between Picton and Kaikoura; ~20 Motueka Inlet Walkway; 1 Otago Peninsula)



New Zealand Scaup

Aythya novaeseelandiae

As opposed to Grey Teal, this was a much more common and widely distributed bird than had been thought. As opposed to the marine loving Greater Scaup of Europe, this species seems to be most often seen on fresh water, from small ponds and rivers to large lake edges (3 on river during Huka Falls; Groups of up to ~30 birds Lake Taupo Waterfront, Taupo; Small numbers Lake Taupo Waterfront, Taupo; 4 Motueka Inlet Walkway; ~20 on Lake Wanaka from The Outlet Track, Wanaka; 4 at Mirror Lakes Te Anau to Milford Sound; ~50 Lake Te Anau)

Yellow-eyed Penguin

Megadyptes antipodes

Some authors regard this as the rarest of the penguin species, although in truth it is probably second to the much more range limited Galapagos Penguin. Regardless, it is endemic to New Zealand and is in very low numbers. It tends to breed on some of the outlying islands, but since some birds also favour the Otago peninsula and a few other mainland sites, the former is the best place to see them. It is always possible to come across them if visiting the correct areas (such as the few we saw from the known cliff top lookout at Oamaru), but for really close encounters, going with a company such as Elm

Wildlife Tours is worth the cost (4 birds on beach at Oamaru Penguin Colony; 15 Papanui Cove, Otago Peninsula)



Little Penguin

Eudyptula minor

This is one of the more widespread penguin species, and there is a bit of an industry in both Australia and New Zealand to build viewing areas around natural colonies, which is how we saw ours. They tend to feed at sea during the day and viewing areas such as the one such as that at Oamaru base views on the birds returning to their nesting burrows after dusk. Bad news for the photographers is that they do not allow imaging in any form (including sneaky mobile phones!), and flash photography anywhere is a big no. Just turn up, watch and enjoy - they are a very entertaining bird. 54 were seen during our visit

Wandering Albatross

Diomedea exulans

The best (and only definite) place to see these is on a paid trip from Kaikoura. And are they worth the money! As soon as the boat stopped and the bait was dropped, these massive birds dropped straight in for an eye to eye encounter (4 Albatross Encounter)



Southern Royal Albatross

Diomedea epomophora

As with the Wandering Albatross, the best spot for really good views of these is on the Albatross Encounter from Kaikoura, where they are pushed out a little by their larger cousins. However, searching through the expected Northern Royals on the Otago Peninsula also picked up a couple of Southern Royals by the distinctive upper wing pattern (1 Southern Royal Albatross past stern of boat on Kaikoura Whalewatch - two more large Albatross seen while at speed in boat; 3 Albatross Encounter; 1 past Taiaora Point, Otago Peninsula, 1 past Papanui Cove, Otago Peninsula)



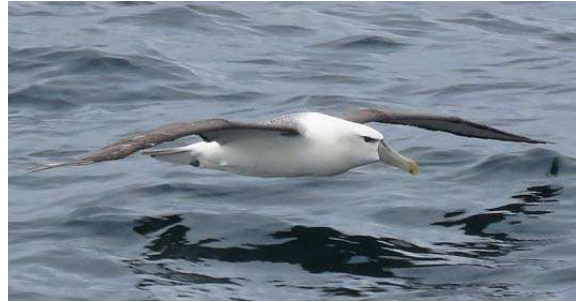
Northern Royal Albatross

Diomedea sanfordi

The mirror image of the Southern Royals, which were the expected species on the Kaikoura trip, but where one Northern Royal was seen flying by. They are much easier to see at Taiaora Point on Otago, where there is a small breeding colony, with some birds still present when we visited (1 Albatross Encounter; At least 6 around Taiaora Point, Otago Peninsula)

Shy Albatross*Thalassarche cauta*

In New Zealand, this species is still referred to as White-capped Mollymawk, which seems to be a subspecies of the Shy Albatross group. Salvin's Albatross has also been separated as a species, and close views of both on the Kaikoura Albatross trip could easily separate the two. Birds could often be seen gliding by over the waves, and the black notch at the base of the fore-underwing was usually easy to see (4 birds Ferry from Wellington to Picton - 2 flying past ferry, 2 on sea; The most common Albatross seen on Kaikoura Whalewatch; Probably over 30 birds in total 8 Albatross Encounter; 4 Doubtful Sound Cruise; 1 Stewart Island Ferry; ~6 followed the ferry from Ulva to Stewart Island; 1 bird next to ferry dock, Oban, Stewart Island; 2 past Taiaora Point, Otago Peninsula)

**Salvin's Albatross***Thalassarche salvini*

Best views were of birds on the sea with the closely related Shy on the Kaikoura Albatross encounter (Difficult to separate at sea from Shy, but at least 3 birds seen with diagnostic dark spot at base of bill tip on Kaikoura Whalewatch; 5 Albatross Encounter)

**Buller's Albatross***Thalassarche bulleri*

After the first birds were seen on the Doubtful Sound cruise, they became one of the more common albatrosses from Oban, Stewart Island and also from the Otago Peninsula. All underwings were scanned for Grey-headed to no avail (3 Doubtful Sound Cruise; 2 Stewart Island Ferry; ~6 Oban, Stewart Island out from harbour; 1 in Oban Harbour; 4 birds next to ferry dock and ~10 flying by, Oban, Stewart Island; 4 past Papanui Cove, Otago Peninsula and Taiaora Point, Otago Peninsula)

**Northern Giant Petrel***Macronectes halli*

All Giant Petrels seen were of this rather than Southern species. It was usually the all dark colouring which was the clincher - red bill tip only really obvious on the birds which landed near to the boat on the Kaikoura trip (5 Albatross Encounter; 1 past Taiaora Point, Otago Peninsula, 3 past Papanui Cove, Otago Peninsula)



Cape Petrel

Daption capense

Apart from one bird seen flying past Otago, all others were off Kaikoura, either on the whale watch or albatross trips. They tend to come near to the boats in groups, chattering constantly (Group of 5 birds at bow of boat on Kaikoura Whalewatch ~40 Albatross Encounter; 1 past Papanui Cove, Otago Peninsula)

White-chinned Petrel

Procellaria aequinoctialis

2 Albatross Encounter, Kaikoura

Westland Petrel

Procellaria westlandica

When seen well, which was in fewer rather than more occasions, the black tip of the bill compared to White-chinned above was obvious (3 Albatross Encounter)



Buller's Shearwater

Ardenna bulleri

Even when seen at middle distance, these birds have a very distinctive colouration across the upperwings, which is quite different from any of the other petrels, or even shearwaters, seen on the water (1 bird which was most probably this species Ferry from Wellington to Picton; 6 Albatross Encounter)

Sooty Shearwater

Ardenna grisea

Around most of the South Island, this was by far the most common dark shearwater/petrel seen, sometimes occurring in quite large lines and flocks (~100 Doubtful Sound Cruise; ~40 Stewart Island Ferry; Small numbers past Taiaora Point, Otago Peninsula and Papanui Cove, Otago Peninsula)



Flesh-footed Shearwater

Ardenna carneipes

A few dark shearwaters could be seen with the distinctive pink based bill of this species (1 bird which was most probably this species Ferry from Wellington to Picton; all dark Shearwaters of this type seemed to be Flesh-footed on Kaikoura Whalewatch - probably >10 birds)

Hutton's Shearwater

Puffinus huttoni

We passed by the area where a colony of these is being encouraged at Kaikoura. Predictably, this wasn't much of a help in seeing the birds, but quite often large groups could be seen passing by near to the shore (Small Shearwaters had the duskier underwing

of this rather than Fluttering - 5+ identified, although a large flock was passed at speed of one of these two species on Albatross Encounter, Kaikoura; ~40 flying past shoreline of Kaikoura Peninsula Walkway)

Common Diving Petrel

Pelecanoides urinatrix

Only one bird seen - flying away from the Interisland Ferry as we passed where it must have been resting on the sea before being flushed

New Zealand Grebe

Poliiocephalus rufopectus

This species is almost exclusively found on the North Island, so it was no surprise that the only birds seen were a few close to the shore of Lake Taupo (2 together in amongst Scaup Lake Taupo Waterfront, Taupo; 5 including juveniles Lake Taupo Waterfront, Taupo)



Great Crested Grebe

Podiceps cristatus

As opposed to the New Zealand Grebe, this species is only found on the South Island, which is indeed where we saw our few birds (Pair Elterwater Wildlife Reserve, between Picton and Kaikoura; 1 on Lake Wanaka from The Outlet Track, Wanaka)

Royal Spoonbill

Platalea regia

There was a modicum of disappointment when we were told that the breeding colony on Kapiti Island had finished their parental chores early this year and departed the island. Not all was lost, though, and the northern part of the South Island turned up some small collections in what were presumably wintering homes (6 birds at back of lake Elterwater Wildlife Reserve, between Picton and Kaikoura; 9 birds on the exposed mud Motueka Coastal and Inlet Walkway, and ~45 on the tidal lagoon at Motueka)



Great Egret

Ardea alba

1 bird in field at Hokitika; 1 Journey from Hokitika to Wanaka

White-faced Heron

Egretta novaehollandiae

This is THE heron seen throughout New Zealand, and can be quite tame and closely approached. Apparently quite rare up until the 1960's, there is now almost no avoiding seeing them (4 separate birds Tongariro River Trail, Turangi; 4 Kaikoura Peninsula Walkway; Very common Motueka Coastal and Inlet Walkway, with birds in all habitats from field to coastal lagoon - ~25 total; 1 Motueka Inlet Walkway; 1 at Milford Sound; 1 Ulva Island; 2 birds in Oban harbour, Stewart Island; 5 Otago Peninsula; 1 Akaroa Town, 2 Akaroa Peninsula)



Australasian Gannet

Morus serrator

1 flying past Napier; 3 birds seen from Ferry from Wellington to Picton as it entered Queen Charlotte Sound; 1 Albatross Encounter, then 3 flying past Kaikoura Peninsula Walkway)

Little Pied Cormorant

Microcarbo melanoleucos



Adult



Immature

1 pied individual on river during Huka Fall; 4 Tongariro River Trail, Turangi; 3+ Lake Taupo Waterfront, Taupo; ~6 Lake Taupo Waterfront, Taupo; 1-2 Kapiti Island; One past Whalewatch office ay Kaikoura; 1 juvenile on rocks at Kaikoura; ~16 birds at the mouth of the tidal lagoon, Motueka; 12 in tree adjacent to Motueka Recreation fields; 4 on Lake Wanaka from The Outlet Track, Wanaka; 1 at Milford Sound; 1 Doubtful Sound Cruise; 1 Oban Harbour, Stewart Island; ~15 Akaroa Town

Spotted Shag

Phalacrocorax punctatus

4 on sea stacks at Pancake Rocks; 1 near to Ulva Island on sea; 1 bird in harbour, Oban, Stewart Island; Into 3 figure numbers at Oamaru Penguin Colony; Small numbers around Taiaora Point, Otago Peninsula



Little Black Cormorant

Phalacrocorax sulcirostris

1 on the end of one of the piers in Auckland harbour; 1 with Great Cormorants Lake Taupo Waterfront, Taupo; Single bird on wetland in field, Motueka Coastal and Inlet Walkway

Australian Pied Cormorant

Phalacrocorax varius

~16 Kapiti Island; Few birds from Ferry from Wellington to Picton along Queen Charlotte Sound; ~10 on rocks at Kaikoura; One past Whalewatch office at Kaikoura; 4 adults on rocks and in trees at Kaikoura, then 4 Kaikoura Peninsula Walkway; 2 at Milford Sound; 2 Akaroa Town



Great Cormorant

Phalacrocorax carbo

1 Tongariro River Trail, Turangi; 6 Lake Taupo Waterfront, Taupo; 1 on Lake Wanaka and 1 on Clutha River from The Outlet Track, Wanaka; 1 at Milford Sound

Otago Shag

Leucocarbo chalconotus

While the white wing bar is useful in identifying this species, care should be taken with the bronze (all dark) form, which is quite common around the Otago area (4 on rocks at Ulva Island; 1 bird in harbour, Oban, Stewart Island; Into 3 figure numbers at Oamaru Penguin Colony; Small numbers around Taiaora Point, Otago Peninsula and colony from Papanui Cove, Otago Peninsula)



Swamp Harrier

Circus approximans

Since New Zealand Falcon is uncommon and obvious, any large raptor seen is nailed on this species. It is seen everywhere, and is another of the select few species which has actually benefited from the arrival of the Europeans and their introduced rodents for prey (3 separate birds Tongariro River Trail, Turangi, with one on return to Taupo; 4 Journey from Taupo to Napier; 2 Journey from Taupo to Wellington; 6 birds seen on journey from

Picton to Kaikoura; One to rear of accommodation in Kaikoura; 5 on journey from Kaikoura to Motueka; 2 birds Motueka Coastal and Inlet Walkway; 9 Journey from Motueka to Hokitika; ~14 Journey from Hokitika to Franz Josef; 5 birds Journey from Hokitika to Wanaka; 1 over Wanaka from accommodation; 4 Te Anau to Milford Sound; 6 on journey from Te Anau to Bluff; 6 on way to Oamaru Penguin Colony from Dunedin; At least 6 on Otago Peninsula; ~16 Akaroa Peninsula)

Weka

Gallirallus australis

We thought we were privileged with our first and confiding views of Weka on Kapiti Island, but this was dashed when passing many on roadsides and even seen in car parks (5 on Loop Walk Kapiti Island, and 2 at the Lodge Kapiti Island; 1 in car park at Pancake Rocks, with subsequent 3 from car Journey from Motueka to Hokitika; ~10 Journey from Hokitika to Franz Josef, feeding at side of road; 2 birds shortly after setting off Journey from Hokitika to Wanaka; 1 crossing road at Milford Sound outside of cafe; 10 on Ulva Island - 3, 3, and 2 on separate beaches)



Australasian Swamphen

Porphyrio melanotus

As with Weka, seeing a group of Pukaku on Kapiti was our first and we thought limited sighting. That is until we started passing fields full of them on the South Island (5 near to the Lodge, Kapiti Island; 4 birds together at rear of Brook House B&B, Kaikoura; Abundant in the fields between High Street and the Coastal walk, Motueka (at least 60 birds); ~6 Motueka Inlet Walkway; Very commonly seen from car, sometimes in good numbers in one field, Journey from Motueka to Hokitika; Very common in fields Journey from Hokitika to Franz Josef; ~10 on way to Oamaru Penguin Colony from Dunedin; 6 on Otago Peninsula; 5 Akaroa Peninsula)

South Island Takahe

Porphyrio hochstetteri

The only truly wild Takahe now occur in almost inaccessible locations in Fjordland. Some have been introduced on to some of the rewilded islands. We had one on the lawn at Kapiti Island, one of two here apparently both of which are a bit of an age and likely to be beyond breeding potential



Eurasian Coot

Fulica atra

2 on river on Huka Falls; ~6 Taupo harbour

South Island Oystercatcher

Haematopus finschi

Some excellent views of this species next to dark Variable for structure comparison were had. Most pied oystercatchers were of this species, and could usually be told easily by the delineation between black and white breast (One flew past Whalewatch office at Kaikoura, and ~12 with Masked Lapwings to rear of accommodation in Kaikoura; Large collections of roosting birds on the shoreline Motueka Coastal and Inlet Walkway, numbering into 3 figures; 1 Otago Peninsula; ~10 with Variable Oystercatchers Akaroa Town)



Variable Oystercatcher

Haematopus unicolor

While the dark variation becomes much more common the further South you travel in New

Zealand, occasional pied birds were seen and needed care, although they usually had some dark spotting on the white of the breast (3 Paraparaumu Beach; 3 Kaikoura Peninsula Walkway on rocks; 5 birds on the shoreline and 3 at the marina, Motueka Coastal and Inlet Walkway; 2 Motueka Inlet Walkway; 2 in field next to accommodation at Hokitika ; 4 at Milford Sound, which included 3 light phase birds; 2 Oban, Stewart Island; 5 black phase and 5 pied phase on Stewart Island golf course; 4 birds Oban, Stewart Island; ~8 Portobello on Otago Peninsula; Quite common Otago Peninsula (including mid Pied); ~25 Akaroa Town)



Black variant



Pied Variant

Pied Stilt

Himantopus leucocephalus

3 on pools Hawke's Bay; 1 bird Elterwater Wildlife Reserve, between Picton and Kaikoura; 3 birds on the coastal path lagoons and ~50 on the tidal lagoons, Motueka Coastal and Inlet Walkway; ~30 Motueka Inlet Walkway; ~6 Papanui Cove, Otago Peninsula



Masked Lapwing

Vanellus miles

Overall, common and widely distributed, although it is likely that the highest numbers were seen from the car while travelling (6 birds in open cultivated fields Tongariro River Trail, Turangi; 3 Aratiatia Dam; 3 Journey from Taupo to Wellington; ~20 to rear of accommodation in Kaikoura; 3 + 3 Motueka Coastal and Inlet Walkway; 2 in Motueka Recreational fields; ~5 Hokitika; 2 on a main street during the journey from Hokitika to Franz Josef; 1 field during Journey from Hokitika to Wanaka contained; ~20 birds; 2 Milford Sound; Field with ~60 birds on journey from Te Anau to Bluff; 1 on way to Oamaru Penguin Colony from Dunedin; 2 Otago Peninsula; 1 Akaroa Town, 3 Akaroa Peninsula)

Bar-tailed Godwit

Limosa lapponica

~30 Motueka Inlet Walkway

Silver Gull

Chroicocephalus novaehollandiae

Very common and widely distributed, and often checked for Black-billed Gull without success (Reasonable numbers at Devonport and fewer at the harbour in Auckland; ~100 Lake Taupo Waterfront, Taupo; Quite common Paraparaumu Beach and Kapiti Island; Very common in Queen Charlotte Sound and Kaikoura; ~10 Albatross Encounter, common around Kaikoura; Common Motueka Coastal and Inlet Walkway; ~12 at Milford Sound; 3 Doubtful Sound Cruise; ~20 Oban, Stewart Island; ~10 on beach at Ulva Island; Common Akaroa Town)



Kelp Gull

Larus dominicanus

Lesser numbers than Silver Gull on the coast, but usually much the commoner gull, often in large flocks, in the interior (Small numbers on the shore at Devonport; 3+ Lake Taupo Waterfront, Taupo; 3 Lake Taupo Waterfront, Taupo; Quite common Paraparaumu Beach

and Kapiti Island; Occasional birds Ferry from Wellington to Picton; The commonest Gull species on Kaikoura Whalewatch, although not many and mainly juveniles; ~30 Albatross Encounter; Occasional fields full of this species Journey from Hokitika to Franz Josef; Occasional fields with good numbers Journey from Hokitika to Wanaka; 1 Milford Sound; ~10 Doubtful Sound Cruise; Fields with large flocks in on journey from Te Anau to Bluff)



Caspian Tern

Hydroprogne caspia

1 bird flew towards town on the tidal lagoon, Motueka; 1 Portobello, Otago Peninsula

White-fronted Tern

Sterna striata

Small numbers on shore at Devonport; Group of ~30 birds on Paraparaumu Beach; Small flock on rocks at Kaikoura; 1 Stewart Island Ferry; ~10 on sea Ulva Island; 3-4 birds Oban, Stewart Island; 2 Otago Peninsula; Regularly seen past Taiaora Point, Otago Peninsula and Papanui Cove, Otago Peninsula; Large group of roosting birds on jetty at Akaroa Town



Black-fronted Tern

Chlidonias albostratus

A single bird was a bit of a surprise when it was picked up hawking over a cut grass field behind the accommodation in Kaikoura

New Zealand Pigeon

Hemiphaga novaeseelandiae

Best views were of very close birds on Kapiti Island, most other sightings were in flight (Commonly seen on Kapiti Island, with good numbers of birds around the lodge; 2 over hills at Pancake Rocks; 1 Franz Josef Glacier walk; 1 bird in mountains flew across road Journey from Hokitika to Wanaka; 5 separate birds flying over forest Te Anau to Milford Sound; 1 Doubtful Sound Cruise; 1 in tree and 4 overhead Oban, Stewart Island; 5 singles on Ulva Island; 1 over Akaroa Town)



Pacific Long-tailed Cuckoo

Urodynamis taitensis

1 in bushes next to river on Huka Falls

Sacred Kingfisher

Todiramphus sanctus

Quite often seen perching on wires at the side of main roads, but highest number was during a walk along the shoreline at Motueka (1 on telegraph wires Journey from Taupo to Napier; 1 flew over main highway Journey from Taupo to Wellington; 1 near to the Lodge on Kapiti Island; 22 birds in total from Motueka Coastal and Inlet Walkway to the tidal lagoon, Motueka Coastal and Inlet Walkway; 1 Motueka Inlet Walkway 1 at Pancake Rocks; 1 on rugby posts, Oban, Stewart Island; 1 Akaroa Town, 1 Akaroa Peninsula)



New Zealand Falcon

Falco novaeseelandiae

1 flew along river course in front of bunjy on Huka Falls; 1 flying over forest Te Anau to Milford Sound

Kea

Nestor notabilis

One of the best places to see Kea is at the cafe on Arthur's Pass, which runs high across the Western mountains between Christchurch and Greymouth. However, this wasn't on our route, so we decided to rely on other sites. Another good one is on the Te Anau to Milford Sound road, with Monkey Creek being a good recommendation for both Kea and Blue Duck. The weather when we there was abysmal, with poor visibility. However, another good spot is around the northern entrance to the Homer Tunnel. As you leave Milford Sound and ascend the hairpin curves towards the tunnel, either prey for a long red light to delay entry or find a pull in - the birds are often here enticing tourists to throw them food. 6 were stalking the cars waiting for access to the tunnel



New Zealand Kaka

Nestor meridionalis

Not as easy to spot as thought, with the best views being on Kapiti Island, although they can also be pinned down around Oban on Stewart Island (1 on Loop Walk, and at the Lodge, Kapiti Island; 1 at dusk flew into roadside tree, Oban, Stewart Island; 1 bird on deck of accommodation, Oban, Stewart Island, 2 flying over and 1 on house deck, Oban, Stewart Island)

Red-crowned Parakeet

Cyanoramphus novaezelandiae

Ironically, this is the less common of the two crowned parakeets in New Zealand, but the only one we saw. It's possible that some of the flying birds on Stewart Island were Yellow-crowned, but couldn't be seen well enough for positive ID (At least 6 birds seen flying from perches, with only one red crown seen, Kapiti Island; 1 Ulva Island)



Rifleman

Acanthisitta chloris

2 separate birds at Lake Gunn, Te Anau to Milford Sound

Tui

Prothemadera novaeseelandiae

This is a very common and widespread species. The variations in calls are a delight to hear. Despite the regularity of hearing it, it was very difficult to get tired of listening to it (~10 birds in singles and pairs along Huka Falls; At least 3 singing after dusk near apartment in Wellington, with further 2 flying over during late afternoon; ~20 birds on Kapiti Island; 6 birds Motueka Coastal and Inlet Walkway; 2 juveniles Franz Josef Glacier walk; Commonly seen and heard Oban, Stewart Island; ~10 Ulva Island; ~6 Oban, Stewart Island)



New Zealand Bellbird

Anthornis melanura

Quite common and well distributed. They were often more obvious on call at first than sight due to very well camouflaged plumage (2 birds seen bathing in a small stream along the Huka Falls, with a further with subsong on the return; 1 seen Tongariro River Trail, Turangi, with others only heard; 1 singing Aratiatia Dam; ~8 birds Kapiti Island; 1 The Outlet Track, Wanaka; 1 at Milford Sound, and 1 Lake Marian trail, Te Anau to Milford Sound; 1 Doubtful Sound Cruise; 2 Oban, Stewart Island; 2 Ulva Island; 1 feeding on cultivated fuchsia on deck of accommodation, Oban, Stewart Island; 1 calling Akaroa Town)

Grey Gerygone

Gerygone igata

1 from balcony of accommodation in Taupo; 1 above bunjy jump in bushes at the end of Huka Falls; 2 separate birds The Outlet Track, Wanaka; 1 Ulva Island



South Island Saddleback

Philesturnus carunculatus

After the disappointment of not seeing the North Island species on Kapiti, the two birds on Ulva Island more than made up, particularly the second bird which was found just before leaving at the boat dock and stayed in view for quite a while

Australian Magpie

Gymnorhina tibicen

7+ in open fields Tongariro River Trail, Turangi; 1 on way to Aratiatia Dam; 7 by roadside; Up to 5 Journey from Taupo to Wellington; 1 on journey from Picton to Kaikoura ; 2 birds to rear of accommodation in Kaikoura; 1 Kaikoura Peninsula Walkway; 1 Journey from Motueka to Hokitika; 5 separate birds Journey from Hokitika to Franz Josef; 1 Te Anau to Milford Sound; ~6 in fields on journey from Te Anau to Bluff; 2 Portobello, Otago Peninsula; 6 Akaroa Peninsula



Yellowhead

Mohoua ochrocephala

A flock of ~6 birds Ulva Island



Whitehead

Mohoua albicilla

~15 in mixed flock with Fantails, Kapiti Island

Pipipi

Mohoua novaeseelandiae

2 separate small flocks Ulva Island

New Zealand Fantail

Rhipidura fuliginosa

One of the most regularly seen and heard bird species throughout New Zealand. They are also very bold, and often fly in touching distance (Up to 10 birds on singles to a trio along Huka Falls; Common and regularly seen Tongariro River Trail, Turangi; 1 at lunch stop Journey from Taupo to Wellington; Common along Loop Walk, Kapiti Island; 3 birds in grounds of accommodation in Kaikoura; 1 Kaikoura Peninsula Walkway; 3+ birds Motueka Coastal and Inlet Walkway; Occasionally seen Journey from Motueka to Hokitika; Small

numbers Franz Josef Glacier walk; Occasional birds flew across road Journey from Hokitika to Wanaka; Occasional birds The Outlet Track, Wanaka; Seen regularly Te Anau to Milford Sound; Fairly common Oban, Stewart Island; ~6 Ulva Island; 2 Akaroa Town)



Tomtit

Petroica macrocephala

2 birds flew over road Journey from Hokitika to Franz Josef, and 3 separate birds Franz Josef Glacier walk; 2 separate birds flew across road Journey from Hokitika to Wanaka; 1 flew across Clutha River, The Outlet Track, Wanaka; Very regular Te Anau to Milford Sound, with at least 5 Lake Gunn; 3 Milford Sound, 2 Lake Marian Trail; 1 Ulva Island

North Island Robin

Petroica longipes

2 adults and separate juvenile on Kapiti Island



South Island Robin

Petroica australis

Male in grounds of accommodation in Kaikoura; Male at side of road though upland forest Journey from Motueka to Hokitika; 3 birds together at Lake Gunn, Te Anau to Milford Sound; 4 Ulva Island

Eurasian Skylark

Alauda arvensis

1 calling above accommodation in Kaikoura; 1 Kaikoura Peninsula Walkway; 1 on journey from Te Anau to Bluff; Common Papanui Cove, Otago Peninsula

Welcome Swallow

Hirundo neoxena

3-4 Journey from Auckland to Taupo; 4+ over open fields Tongariro River Trail, Turangi; 5+ at Napier; Regularly seen over Kapiti Island; Quite common at Kaikoura; ~15 Kaikoura Peninsula Walkway; At least 12 birds Motueka Coastal and Inlet Walkway; 2 Akaroa Town



Silvereye

Zosterops lateralis

Next to, or even alongside, Fantail in how common and widespread they seem to be. Also just as bold at times (A common sight during Huka Falls, with birds usually in small flocks; Common and gregarious in woodland Tongariro River Trail, Turangi; 1 in grounds of accommodation in Kaikoura; At least 10 birds Motueka Coastal and Inlet Walkway; 2 birds Franz Josef Glacier walk; Regularly seen along The Outlet Track, Wanaka; Small groups Akaroa Town

Common Myna*Acridotheres tristis*

Small numbers at Devonport; Regular Journey from Auckland to Taupo; Occasional birds seen on Huka Falls; Quite common around Taupo; Occasional birds Journey from Taupo to Napier

Common Starling*Sturnus vulgaris*

Very common in most areas

Common Blackbird*Turdus merula*

Common in most areas

Song Thrush*Turdus philomelos*

1 Kaikoura; 1 Motueka; 1 Milford Sound ; 5 on village lawn in Te Anau

House Sparrow*Passer domesticus*

Common to abundant throughout

Dunnock*Prunella modularis*

1 to rear of accommodation in Kaikoura; 2 The Outlet Track, Wanaka

New Zealand Pipit*Anthus novaeseelandiae*

Despite declining numbers, these birds are supposed to be seen more regularly on farmland and open land. It was this surprising that only two separate birds were seen, both on the shores of islands (Kapiti & Stewart) - 1 on boat landing, Kapiti Island; 1 on beach, Oban, Stewart Island

**Common Chaffinch***Fringilla coelebs*

Regularly spotted throughout

European Greenfinch*Chloris chloris*

2 at lunch stop calling Journey from Auckland to Taupo; 2 Kapiti Island

Common Redpoll*Acanthis flammea*

Group of ~8 young birds at a small pool during Huka Falls; 1 Kapiti Island; 1 Lake Mistletoe, Te Anau to Milford Sound

European Goldfinch*Carduelis carduelis*

4 Kapiti Island; Quite common in small flocks Kaikoura Peninsula Walkway; Small flocks Motueka Coastal and Inlet Walkway; 4 Akaroa Town

Yellowhammer*Emberiza citrinella*

1 female Aratiatia Dam; 2 Kaikoura Peninsula Walkway; Small group of ~5 birds Te Anau to Milford Sound; 1 Akaroa Town

Total number of species = 89

SPECIES SEEN IN SINGAPORE

Red Junglefowl*Gallus gallus*

One pair seen in the wet vegetation of Marina Bay Gardens in Singapore. They were more regular in the Botanic Gardens, quite often feeding on or next to paths



Grey Heron

Ardea cinerea

One flying over Marina Bay Gardens in Singapore

Brahminy Kite

Haliastur indus

Perhaps the most common raptor in Singapore (the only one to be identified with 4 birds)



White-breasted Waterhen

Amaurornis phoenicurus

One picked out in the wet vegetation at Marina Bay Gardens in Singapore

Baillon's Crake

Porzana pusilla

One picked out in the thick wet area vegetation of Marina Bay Gardens in Singapore

Zebra Dove

Geopelia striata

A few birds were very tame and approachable in Marina Bay Gardens in Singapore



Pink-necked Green Pigeon

Treron vernans

Only one seen in Singapore on the outbound visit, but a small group were feeding on fruits high up in the Botanic Garden on return

Asian Koel

Eudynamis scolopaceus

Another bird more often seen than heard in Singapore, only one was picked out perching, with another flying past



White-throated Kingfisher

Halcyon smyrnensis

1 was seen flying from the roadside to alight on a wall in a suburban street in Singapore

Collared Kingfisher

Todiramphus chloris

2 seen at Marina Bay Gardens in Singapore, and 1 the next day flying along the river



Blue-tailed Bee-eater

Merops philippinus

Seen occasionally both along the river and at Marina Bay Gardens in Singapore



Black-naped Oriole

Oriolus chinensis

Another occasional sound in Singapore. As usual with this type of Oriole, the bright yellow plumage wasn't always the help it should have been to see against green leaves, but some could be picked out in the centre of town and also the Botanic Garden

House Crow

Corvus splendens

Regularly seen in Singapore



Yellow-vented Bulbul

Pycnonotus goiavier

Occasional in Singapore

Pacific Swallow

Hirundo tahitica

Seen now and again along the river and adjacent banks/land in Singapore



Asian Glossy Starling

Aplonis panayensis

2-3 feeding in high palms in the Botanic Garden

Javan Myna

Acridotheres javanicus

Quite easily the most commonly seen (and heard) bird in Singapore. They were everywhere, including hanging around restaurants' looking for scraps



Common Myna

Acridotheres tristis

Most of the Mynas seen in Singapore were Javan, but occasional birds proved to be this species

Oriental Magpie-Robin

Copsychus saularis

Only one female at Marina Bay Gardens in Singapore, with an additional male in the Botanic Gardens

Scarlet-backed Flowerpecker

Dicaeum cruentatum

Quite a few Flowerpeckers were heard (very sharp metallic call), but only one was pinned down to this species in Marina Bay Gardens

Olive-backed Sunbird

Cinnyris jugularis

More commonly heard in Singapore than seen, the metallic chips of these birds was a giveaway. They could, however, be regularly seen when feeding lower down in flower bearing bushes



Crimson Sunbird

Aethopyga siparaja

Two males seen feeding on the heliconia flowers in the Botanic Gardens

Eurasian Tree Sparrow

Passer montanus

These may have been almost as common in Singapore as Javan Myna, but the constant sound of the latter made it seem as though the Mynas were much more of a presence than the Sparrow

Total number of species = 23

MAMMALS SEEN

Plantain Squirrel

Callosciurus notatus

1 seen well in open urban area of Singapore, with one or two others in Botanic Gardens



Australasian Fur Seal

Arctocephalus forsteri

To the uninitiated, the differences between these and the NZ Sea Lion seem to be minimal, and in truth care has to be taken. However, we were given a couple of useful pointers which in practice seemed to bear fruit. If they are lounging on rocks, they are likely to be fur seals (sand or grass for sea lions). Also, fur seals walk with both back flippers moving at the same time (sea lion alternate) - 1 on rocks as boat approached landing, Kapiti Island; Good numbers on rocks on the shore about 20km North of Kaikoura; 2 at sea during

Kaikoura Whalewatch; ~40 on rocks along Kaikoura Peninsula Walkway; Colony at Papanui Cove, Otago Peninsula

New Zealand Sealion

Phocarctos hookeri

Numbers of this once endemic (small numbers have now reached Australia) are low, and they tend to be found in waters south of Dunedin. The ones we saw were on the same beach as emerging Yellow-eyed Penguins, and contrary to our beliefs, don't tend to go for the penguins on land (1 Ulva Island; 1 in harbour, Oban, Stewart Island; At least 12 hauled out Papanui Cove, Otago Peninsula)



White-tailed Deer

Odocoileus virginianus

2 on rugby pitch, Oban, Stewart Island

Dusky Dolphin

Lagenorhynchus obscurus

Pod of at least 30 during Kaikoura Whalewatch



Bottlenose Dolphin

Tursiops truncatus

Pod of at least 15 following Ferry from Wellington to Picton in Queen Charlotte Sound

Sperm Whale

Physeter catodon

This is the main target whale species from Kaikoura. While they tend to dive for about an hour, once found they can be on the surface for 5-10 minutes before the next underwater foray. The one we saw was a little longer at 12 minutes, but when we returned an hour later for a second look it had clipped that time and dived again

