

PEREGRINE BIRD TOURS

NEW ZEALAND

19 NOVEMBER – 6 DECEMBER 2005

TOUR REPORT

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New Zealand was to live up to our high expectations, we saw a host of endemics a huge number of seabirds, enjoyed fabulous scenery, good accommodation and great food. A superb total of 134 birds were observed throughout the tour, which included all three New Zealand endemic families; kiwis, New Zealand wrens and wattlebirds. Add to this an impressive 28 species of seabirds, all of which were seen very well, including the recently discovered New Zealand Storm-Petrel. We enjoyed watching the antics of a very close Southern Brown Kiwi, a very obliging Blue Duck, a large flock of Black Stilts, superb looks at the New Zealand Falcon and good close looks at Rock Wren as well as two species of vagrants, Pectoral Sandpiper and Ruff. Add to this four species of dolphins and the quality really comes shining through.

We flew the short distance from Australia to New Zealand and then spent the night at a comfortable hotel in Auckland. The following day was a full day pelagic on the Hauraki Gulf. On the drive from Auckland, roadside birds included Black Swan, Paradise Shelduck, Swamp Harrier, Common Pheasant, Australian Swamphen, Masked Lapwing, New Zealand and Feral Pigeons, Eurasian Blackbird, Song Thrush, House Sparrow, European Starling, Common Myna and Australian Magpie. In the harbour, prior to boarding the boat we added White-faced Heron, Mallard, Variable Oystercatcher, Kelp and Red-billed Gulls, Caspian Tern, Sacred Kingfisher and Welcome Swallow, plus a few European Rabbits. We set off with high hopes of seeing lots of seabirds and hoping not to be seasick; it was a bright sunny day with excellent visibility, the sea was flat calm and there was almost no wind at all, and best of all, we were not to be disappointed. Whilst still in the harbour we enjoyed watching several Little Penguins loafing around on the surface, which showed very well, a few Australasian Gannets also came close to the boat, as they flew overhead. Along one of the rocky shores of the bay there were a few Pied Cormorants sat on rocks and a large flock of White-fronted Terns flew close to them. As we began to leave the bay good numbers of Fluttering Shearwaters, were sat in rafts on the ocean, becalmed by the almost total lack of wind. A little further on, we found rafts of Common Diving-Petrels doing the same thing and even larger rafts of Cook's Petrels, with up to 300 birds sitting on the water. They allowed us to approach very closely and we were able to pick out a few of the extremely range restricted Pycroft's Petrels, amongst them. As the boatman began to chum, we attracted a large number of Flesh-footed Shearwaters around the boat; close inspection of the dozens of dark shearwaters surrounding the boat, revealed a few Short-tailed Shearwaters amongst them and one Sooty Shearwater. On several occasions, a few dainty White-faced Storm-

Petrels were observed dancing on the water, right next to the boat. As if by magic a few Black Petrels, suddenly appeared amongst the squabbling shearwaters and at one stage a pair of Little Shearwaters flew past the boat. We also very much enjoyed watching a school of Bottle-nosed Dolphins and a school of Short-beaked Common Dolphins. Time was getting on and we reluctantly headed back to shore, the only bird we were missing was the recently rediscovered New Zealand Storm-Petrel, which had been absent for over 120 years! The skipper told us to keep our eyes peeled, as this was the time of the day that they were most often seen. Fortunately for us, not long after heading back, one came flying past the boat, followed by a second, a short time later. The tour was well and truly off to a flying start.

The following day we took a water taxi across Auckland Harbour and out to Tiri Tiri Matangi Island, for an overnight stay. This world-famous island has been cleared of predators and the natural vegetation is slowly being restored. Several species of New Zealand's rarest birds have been placed on the island and are doing well there. Birding is very easy on the island and we quickly saw many of the most sought after specialities; Little Pied Cormorants were seen on a rocky island close to the landing sight and once on the island, we were greeted by several Silvereyes, a few Grey Fantails and large numbers of Tuis and Bellbirds. At a small pond, not far from the landing site, we found a pair of the critically endangered Brown Teal, with a few ducklings. We sat and watched the edge of the pond for a short period of time and were rewarded with good views of the usually very secretive, Spotless Crake. After settling in at the bunkhouse, we walked one or two of the many trails on the island and enjoyed great looks at Brown Quail, the endangered Takahe, Red-crowned Parakeet, Grey Gerygone, Eurasian Skylark, Whitehead, New Zealand Robin, Kokako, the now very rare Stitchbird, Saddleback, Chaffinch, European Goldfinch and Yellowhammer.

The following morning we did some birding on Tiri Tiri, before taking the water taxi back to Auckland. From here we drove to Miranda, on the Firth of Thames, where we had lunch. The mudflats at Miranda are home to the largest concentration of waders in New Zealand. At a high tide roost on the beach we found a large number of South Island Pied Oystercatchers and Black-billed Gulls, scattered amongst them there was also half a dozen or so, fine looking Wrybills and a few very handsome New Zealand Dotterels. A little further down the coast some brackish pools held a few Little Black Cormorants, several Grey Teal, good numbers of White-headed Stilts, a few Sharp-tailed Sandpipers, a solitary Curlew Sandpiper, which is very uncommon in New Zealand, together with a very rare vagrant to New Zealand, a wonderful Ruff, which we saw very well indeed. The mudflats on the foreshore provided refuge for thousands of Bar-tailed Godwits and Red Knots and there was a small number of Ruddy Turnstones scattered amongst them. As we were watching the flock a Pectoral Sandpiper flew in and settled amongst the flock, this bird is also a very uncommon vagrant to New Zealand. Just before leaving the area we also found a solitary Pacific Golden-Plover and a few European Greenfinches feeding on roadside flowers, close to our bus. Later in the day we drove to Lake Rotarua, specifically looking for the rather uncommon New Zealand Grebe. In no time at all, we located a pair of the grebes and enjoyed great scope views of them. At Lake Rotarua there were also large numbers of New Zealand Scaup and a few Great Cormorants.

The next day was a day of contrasts; we spent the morning at Pureora Forest Park, where a solitary Kokako, the only wattlebird to be found on the mainland, proved to be rather obliging, singing from successive treetops before gliding down on vestigial wings to the next tree. We also enjoyed our first sighting of the New Zealand Falcon here, as well as flight views of Kaka, Yellow-crowned Parakeet and Long-tailed Cuckoo. A Shining Bronze-Cuckoo responded very well to tape playback, allowing incredibly close scope views. Tomtits also proved to be quite tame here. Introduced birds were also present and included California Quail, Dunnock and Common Redpoll. At an extensive reedbed close to Waihi Village we enjoyed superb close looks at an Australasian Bittern feeding in a small channel on the edge of the reedbed. Using the bus as a hide we were able to get superb views of this rarely seen bird. At a small wetland close to Turangi, a pair of Fernbirds responded well to tape playback, showing quick glimpses of themselves as they moved through the dense vegetation. At Lake Whakamaru we found Eurasian Coots, enroute to Tongariro National Park. Driving through the park we observed our first Australasian Pipit. Close to Ruattiti we stopped at a bridge over a fast running river, where we enjoyed great scope views of the uncommon Blue Duck, sat on a rock in the middle of the river. After dark we went to a private forest and attempted to see Northern Brown Kiwi. A pair did come close to us and we could hear them duetting nearby but unfortunately they ran off before we could see them. On the way back to our lodge an introduced Common Brush-tailed Possum was observed along the roadside.

In the morning we drove southwards to New Zealand's capital city, Wellington. Here we boarded the ferry bound for Picton in the South Island, where we spent the night. We broke the drive with a stop at the Rangitiki River, near Bulls, where we enjoyed good close looks at the endemic Double-banded Plover. During the ferry crossing of Cook Strait, on a rather rough sea, we found some shelter at the back of the boat, which enabled us to watch for seabirds. We added a total of five new species of seabirds for the tour during the crossing, these included good looks at several White-capped Albatrosses, both Northern and Southern Giant Petrels, up to ten or so Cape Petrels and a couple of Westland Petrels.

The following morning we enjoyed yet another boat trip, this time on Queen Charlotte Sound, where we explored the forest-clad, shores of the Marlborough Sound Maritime Park. Large flocks of Fluttering Shearwaters were to be found along with a very nice pod of Dusky Dolphins. We then enjoyed good close looks at two separate Arctic Jaegers, one light morph and for contrast, one dark morph bird. At the head of the sound was a rocky islet, which is home to a colony of endangered King Shags, we saw up to 40 birds very well indeed, a significant proportion of the total population. Also nesting on the islet was a colony of Spotted Shags and on nearby islands there were small numbers of New Zealand Fur Seals. We stopped at a small jetty and went for a short walk along the beach, where there was a memorial to Captain Cook, who particularly enjoyed stopping at this safe anchorage. To meet us on the beach was a family party of Wekas, all members of the family proved to be very tame, even posing to have their photographs taken.

The following morning we enjoyed yet another pelagic boat trip, this time off famous Kaikoura. Once again, the sea was very placid and we enjoyed a superb spectacle of very close seabirds. Flocks of hundreds of Hutton's Shearwaters surrounded the boat; together with large numbers of Wandering and Salvin's Albatrosses, many literally within touching distance. Amongst the Wandering Albatrosses we found a few Gibson's Albatrosses, a recent split from Wandering Albatross and it was great to have them side-by-side, so that we could easily pick out the differences between them. There was also a splendid supporting cast of Southern Royal Albatross, a solitary immature Black-browed Albatross, good numbers of White-chinned Petrels and a few Buller's Shearwaters and surprisingly, two more Short-tailed Shearwaters, which are not supposed to occur in these waters.

From Kaikoura we drove across the vastness of the Canterbury Plains, before stopping for a picnic lunch at Waimakariri River Gorge, where Black-fronted Terns entertained us while we ate lunch. Shortly after lunch we stopped at Lake Pierson where we added Great Crested Grebe and Canada Goose. A quick stop at St. Anns Lagoon provided us with our only sighting of Australasian Shoveler for the tour and this is the place in New Zealand to see Cape Barren Goose, which duly obliged. We then drove over the majestic Southern Alps via the dramatic Arthur's Pass, where we did a little birding. Here we saw a remarkably tame Kea and good looks at Rifleman. We then continued down the east slope of the Alps down to Hokitika, a small seaside town, where we spent the night. During the drive we saw our first European Hares, which have been introduced from Britain.

Today we traveled down through coastal Westland, stopping to do some birding along the way. We made a stop at Okarito Lagoon, this is the only place in New Zealand where the Great Egret nests. Great spotting by Paddy, enabled us to enjoy good close scope views of this attractive species. A stop at Monro Beach proved very rewarding, with excellent views of a solitary and highly endangered Fiordland Crested Penguin. A final stop at Ship Creek, enabled us to watch the world's smallest and one of the most endangered dolphins in the world, the diminutive Hector's Dolphin. Up to four dolphins splashed around in the surf, just off the beach.

Leaving the coast behind we headed inland and stopped to do some birding at Haast Pass. In an area of wonderful native forest we managed to locate a few Brown Creepers and the very uncommon Yellowhead. We stopped for lunch at Wanaka, where there was a pretty good Pacific Black Duck amongst the hundreds of Mallards along the edge of Lake Wanaka. In the afternoon we headed north towards Twizel, on the way near the small village of Tauros, we enjoyed good close looks at the introduced Little Owl.

The Twizel area was noticeably different in character to other parts of New Zealand. It was drier and more open, with no natural forest. The main target bird here is the endemic and critically endangered Black Stilt. We were fortunate to find a group of 14 Black Stilts along the edge of Lake Pukaki, which we watched from the road through our telescopes. We decided to try and get a closer look at the birds by walking towards them. Unfortunately, as we set off on the long walk towards them, they were flushed by another

birder and flew far away from us. However, we did get very close looks at Double-banded Plover and Wrybill. In the afternoon we visited Mount Cook National Park, where we enjoyed some spectacular scenery but no new birds. In the late afternoon we birded the Ohau Delta, where some of us had a brief glimpse at a Baillon's Crake, but unfortunately it stayed in deep cover and could not be coaxed out into the open.

A long morning drive took us to Homer Tunnel in Fiordland. Here the target bird was the endemic and very uncommon Rock Wren. As we arrived at the tunnel there were a couple of Keas in the carpark, these remarkable and intelligent alpine parrots are known for their tameness and destructive habits. They provided much pleasure to the tourists and especially the photographers. Up on the pass our search for the tail-less Rock Wren was partially successful, with some members of the group enjoying good close views but others not seeing the bird at all.

The following morning we headed back to Homer Tunnel and continued our search for the Rock Wren. Fortunately, this time we all enjoyed good, close looks at this gem amongst birds, indeed it was voted bird of the trip by tour participants. In the afternoon we enjoyed a cruise along the pristine Milford Sound. The three hour cruise took us through some of the most dramatic scenery imaginable. Cascading waterfalls, steep mountain sides clothed in forests and towering peaks greeted us as we moved silently down the sound. There were not too many birds to distract us, but we did have some distant views of a few Fiordland Crested Penguins along the shoreline and we saw another pod of Dusky Dolphins.

A morning drive took us to Bluff on the south coast of the South Island where we took a short ferry trip across the Foveaux Strait to Stewart Island, for a two night stay at the tiny settlement of Oban, on the shores of Halfmoon Bay. During the ferry crossing, good spotting by Doris enabled us to have a quick look at a couple of Yellow-eyed Penguins, before they dived below the surface. We also enjoyed several encounters with Stewart Island Shags.

Much of the following day was taken up by a pelagic trip off Oban. Soon after setting out we passed by some small islands where we enjoyed our best looks at Fiordland Crested Penguin and shortly afterwards, we enjoyed good close looks at several Yellow-eyed Penguins swimming in the sea, close to the boat. We enjoyed huge numbers of seabirds, with hundreds of Sooty Shearwaters and Common Diving-Petrels and good numbers of White-capped Albatross and one or two Southern Royal Albatross and a Salvin's Albatross. New birds included several Brown Skuas. We stopped at Ulva Island and walked through some very attractive native forest, where some members of the group enjoyed good looks at Kaka. After a particularly fine dinner we returned to the boat and set off on an expedition to search for the Southern Brown Kiwi. There was a great air of anticipation as we walked silently through the forest, when suddenly a kiwi was observed walking along the trail following the group! Some tour members at the back of the group were able to have a good look at it, before it ran off into the forest. We continued to Ocean Beach, where the kiwis are most often observed, but try as we may; we were unable to find any. Leaving the beach behind, we started back through the forest. Not far into

the forest a kiwi suddenly appeared in a small clearing right next to us. The whole group froze, as a somewhat manic kiwi ran backwards and forwards through the group, showing very well. What a fabulous way to end a really great day, but there was more to come. On the return boat trip, low cloud had forced seabirds returning to their nesting burrows to fly very low, just above the sea and we were able to spotlight large numbers of Broad-billed and Fairy Prions and Mottled Petrels. It was strange to see them fluttering overhead in the spotlights.

On the final day of the tour we went birding along the Otago Peninsula, close to Dunedin. Unfortunately, it rained heavily for much of the day, so we did much of our birding from the vehicle. While birding at Hooper's Inlet, we enjoyed good close looks at a pair of Royal Spoonbills. In the late afternoon we took a short pelagic trip in the vicinity of Taiaroa Head, where there is a small Northern Royal Albatross breeding colony, the only mainland colony in New Zealand. These majestic birds soared effortlessly overhead as they patrolled the headland and the surrounding coastal areas.

After just over two weeks in New Zealand, it was time to leave, but we left knowing that we had seen almost everything that you could see in New Zealand, with the exception of some very difficult species of Kiwis. We had enjoyed some of the best pelagics on earth, seen some amazing scenery, and enjoyed fine food and some excellent accommodation. It had indeed been a very enjoyable tour. However, it is a sobering thought to realise that so many New Zealand birds are in real trouble, as they try to compete with an estimated 80 million introduced possums and an infestation of stoats and rats. In the not too distant future, New Zealand's endemic birds may only survive, on a few, small offshore islands.

SYSTAMATIC LIST

APTERYGIDAE

Southern Brown Kiwi *Apteryx australis* Good close looks at two birds during our

nocturnal adventure to Ocean Beach, on Stewart Island. This bird came second in the bird of the trip vote. This species is listed as vulnerable, in Threatened Birds of the World.

SPHENISCIDAE

Fiordland Crested Penguin *Eudyptes pachyrhynchus* We saw this New Zealand endemic at Munro Beach, in the Milford Sound and off Oban, Stewart Island, on a pelagic boat trip. This species is also listed as vulnerable, in Threatened Birds of the World.

Yellow-eyed Penguin *Megadyptes antipodes* One of the rarest penguins in the world, we saw it briefly during the ferry crossing to Stewart Island but saw it much better on the pelagic boat trip off Oban, Stewart Island. This species is listed as endangered in Threatened Birds of the World.

Little Penguin *Eudyptula minor* Seen well on many of the pelagic boat trips.

PODICIPEDIDAE

New Zealand Grebe *Poliiocephalus rufopectus* A pair was seen well on Lake Rotarua, this New Zealand endemic only occurs on the North Island, where it is now very uncommon. This species is listed as vulnerable, in Threatened Birds of the World.

Great Crested Grebe *Podiceps cristatus* Several good sightings of this widespread species, throughout the tour.

DIOMEDEIDAE

Wandering Albatross *Diomedea exulans* Good numbers present right next to the boat during our pelagic off Kaikoura, allowing direct comparison with the following species. This species is listed as vulnerable, in Threatened Birds of the World.

Gibson's Albatross *Diomedea gibsoni* Recently split from Wandering Albatross, four birds were present amongst the Wandering Albatrosses, during the pelagic off Kaikoura. This species is also listed as vulnerable, in Threatened Birds of the World.

Southern Royal Albatross *Diomedea epomophora* Two birds flew close to the boat during the pelagic off Kaikoura, but did not come in to feed. A few birds were seen on the sea, close to the boat, during the pelagic off Oban, amongst much larger numbers of White-capped Albatross. This species is also listed as vulnerable in Threatened Birds of the World.

Northern Royal Albatross *Diomedea sanfordi* Seen wonderfully well at their breeding colony at Taiaroa Head, on the Otago Peninsula. This species is listed as endangered in Threatened Birds of the World.

Black-browed Albatross *Thalassarche melanophrys* One immature bird was observed at close quarters, during the pelagic off Kaikoura, adult birds were on nesting duties further a field from New Zealand.

Salvin's Albatross *Thalassarche salvini* Large numbers were observed very close to the boat during the pelagic off Kaikoura, followed by two birds, during the pelagic off Oban, Stewart Island. This species is listed as vulnerable, in Threatened Birds of the World.

White-capped Albatross *Thalassarche steadi* The common nesting albatross in New Zealand waters, we enjoyed many good sightings.

PROCELLARIIDAE

Southern Giant Petrel *Macronectes giganteus* Seen well during the ferry crossing of Cook Strait and again during the pelagic of Kaikoura. This species is listed as Vulnerable, in Threatened Birds of the World.

Northern Giant Petrel *Macronectes halli* This species was seen well during the ferry crossing of Cook Strait, in Marlborough Sounds Maritime Park and again during the pelagic of Kaikoura.

Cape Petrel *Daption capense* Large numbers present on all the pelagic boat trips.

Mottled Petrel *Pterodroma inexpectata* This species only breeds in New Zealand waters and was seen incredibly well in the spotlights of our boat on the way back from our kiwi excursion.

Cook's Petrel *Pterodroma cookii* This species only breeds in New Zealand and we saw hundreds of birds during our pelagic in the Hauraki Gulf. This species is listed as endangered, in Threatened Birds of the World.

Pycroft's Petrel *Pterodroma pycrofti* This endangered species only breeds in the Hauraki Gulf of New Zealand. A few birds were present amongst the hundreds of Cook's Petrels during our pelagic on the Hauraki Gulf. This species is listed as vulnerable, in Threatened Birds of the World.

Broad-billed Prion *Pachyptila vittata* Great views of large numbers of birds in the spotlights of our boat, as we returned from our nocturnal kiwi expedition on Stewart Island.

Fairy Prion *Pachyptila turtur* Large numbers of this species were also observed in the spotlights of our boat, as we returned from our nocturnal kiwi expedition on Stewart Island.

White-chinned Petrel *Procellaria aequinoctialis* Good numbers feeding very close to the boat during the pelagic off Kaikoura. This species is listed as vulnerable, in Threatened Birds of the World.

Black Petrel *Procellaria parkinsoni* This species only breeds on Little Barrier Island in the Hauraki Gulf, of New Zealand. We saw several very well during our pelagic boat trip in the Hauraki Gulf. This species is also listed as vulnerable, in Threatened Birds of the World.

Westland Petrel *Procellaria westlandica* Our first encounter with this species occurred during the ferry crossing of Cook Strait. We enjoyed much closer sightings during the pelagic off Kaikoura. This species is also listed as vulnerable, in Threatened Birds of the World.

Flesh-footed Shearwater *Puffinus carneipes* Many hundreds of birds were present during the pelagic boat trip on the Hauraki Gulf.

Buller's Shearwater *Puffinus bulleri* A few birds were seen well during the pelagic off Kaikoura, this bird only breeds in New Zealand waters. This species is listed as vulnerable, in Threatened Birds of the World.

Sooty Shearwater *Puffinus griseus* Small numbers observed on most of the pelagics,

these sightings were eclipsed by staggering numbers of thousands of birds on the pelagic off Stewart Island.

Short-tailed Shearwater *Puffinus tenuirostris* This species is only known to breed in Australia and should only occur in New Zealand waters when birds are travelling to and from their wintering grounds in the Bering Strait. However, our sightings occurred during the breeding season, perhaps small numbers have recently began to colonise New Zealand. We saw a few birds during the pelagic in the Hauraki Gulf and a couple of birds during the pelagic off Kaikoura.

Hutton's Shearwater *Puffinus huttoni* This inshore species was observed in huge numbers during the pelagic off Kaikoura. They only breed in the mountains just inland from Kaikoura. This species is listed as vulnerable, in Threatened Birds of the World.

Fluttering Shearwater *Puffinus gavia* This inshore species was observed on all of the pelagics, except for the one off Stewart Island.

Little Shearwater *Puffinus assimilis* A couple of pairs were observed in flight during the pelagic in the Hauraki Gulf, followed by a second sighting of two pairs of birds during the pelagic off Stewart Island.

HYDROBATIOIDEA

New Zealand Storm-Petrel *Oceanites maorianus* Rediscovered last year in the Hauraki Gulf, following an absence of 120 years. We were very pleased to observe two birds during our pelagic in the Hauraki Gulf. This species does not rate a mention in Threatened Birds of the World, as it has only recently been rediscovered and was thought to be extinct.

White-faced Storm-Petrel *Pelagodroma marina* We very much enjoyed watching these birds dancing on the water, during the pelagic in the Hauraki Gulf.

PELECANOIDIDAE

Common Diving-Petrel *Pelecanoides urinatrix* Very common in the Hauraki Gulf and even more common around Stewart Island.

SULIDAE

Australasian Gannet *Morus serrator* Seen well on many occasions during our nine boat trips, it was great to see them plunge-diving, on several occasions.

PHALACROCORACIDAE

Little Black Cormorant *Phalacrocorax sulcirostris* Small numbers present in most wetland areas.

Great Cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo* One or two birds present in most wetland areas.

Pied Cormorant *Phalacrocorax varius* Small numbers present in most coastal areas.

King Shag *Phalacrocorax carunculatus* A rare endemic species with a very restricted breeding range. It has an estimated population of 600 birds, so the 40 birds we saw in the Marlborough Sounds, Maritime Park, is a significant proportion of

the total population. This species is listed as vulnerable, in Threatened Birds of the World.

Stewart Island Shag *Phalacrocorax chalconotus* A dimorphic endemic, with pied and bronze colour morphs; we saw both colour morphs, commonly around Stewart Island. This species is also listed as vulnerable, in Threatened Birds of the World.

Spotted Shag *Phalacrocorax punctatus* Good numbers observed in most coastal areas.

Little Pied Cormorant *Phalacrocorax melanoleucus* A common and widespread species throughout the whole of New Zealand.

ARDEIDAE

Great Egret *Ardea alba* A very uncommon bird in New Zealand, where it only breeds at Okarito Lagoon. Great spotting by Paddy enabled everyone to enjoy good scope views of this attractive species.

White-faced Heron *Egretta novaehollandiae* A common and widespread species throughout the whole of New Zealand

Australasian Bittern *Botaurus poiciloptilus* This is a very difficult species to observe, because of its skulking behaviour, preferring to bury itself deep inside large reedbeds. Therefore, we were very pleased to enjoy splendid looks of this species, as we observed one clambering in and out of reeds in order to feed in a small channel of the edge of the reedbed. This species is listed as vulnerable, in Threatened Birds of the World.

THRESKIORNITHIDAE

Royal Spoonbill *Platalea regia* Two birds seen at close quarters feeding at Hoopers Inlet, on the Otago Peninsula. Two nesting birds were also observed later in the day on the boat trip around Taiaroa Head.

ANATIDAE

Black Swan *Cygnus atratus* Now a common species on the larger lakes of New Zealand.

Originally, it was presumed that these birds were introduced from Australia, however, it is now believed that at least some of the birds colonised New Zealand, without help from man.

Canada Goose *Branta canadensis* Small numbers seen at several locations, but only in the South Island.

Cape Barren Goose *Cereopsis novaehollandiae* Two birds seen very well at St. Anns Lagoon. These birds were recently introduced from Australia.

Paradise Shelduck *Tadorna variegata* This very attractive New Zealand endemic, proved to be common and widespread, throughout the whole country.

Blue Duck *Hymenolaimus malacorhynchos* A single bird was observed extremely well, for a long period of time, at it was roosting on a large rock, in the middle of a fast flowing river at Ruattiti. This species is listed as vulnerable, in Threatened Birds of the World.

Grey Teal *Anas gracilis* Small numbers present, throughout the length and breadth of New Zealand.

Brown Teal *Anas chlorotis* Very close looks at this, one of the world's rarest ducks, on Tiri Tiri Matangi Island, where we saw a pair of birds with several ducklings. This species is listed as endangered, in Threatened Birds of the World.

Mallard *Anas platyrhynchos* Introduced to New Zealand, where unfortunately, it is now extremely common and widespread.

Pacific Black Duck *Anas superciliosa* Unfortunately, this attractive species, is now endangered in New Zealand, due to hybridization with the introduced Mallard. Almost pure birds were observed at Lake Wanaka and Hoopers Inlet, on the Otago Peninsula.

Australasian Shoveler *Anas rhynchotis* A widespread species but nowhere common; we only recorded this species in the South Island.

New Zealand Scaup *Aythya novaeseelandiae* This New Zealand endemic, is common and widespread throughout the whole country. There were particularly large numbers in the Twizel area.

ACCIPITRIDAE

Swamp Harrier *Circus approximans* A common and widespread species throughout New Zealand, recorded on almost every day of the tour.

FALCONIDAE

New Zealand Falcon *Falco novaeseelandiae* We enjoyed three separate sightings of this uncommon New Zealand endemic, which is often, all too easy to miss. The roadside sighting in Westland, was very much enjoyed by the whole group.

ODONTOPHORIDAE

California Quail *Callipepla californica* As the name would imply, this species was introduced to New Zealand from California. We saw a few pairs very well in the Pureora Forest Park.

PHASIANIDAE

Brown Quail *Coturnix ypsilophora* Common on Tiri Tiri Matangi Island, where we enjoyed superb looks at this introduced Australian species.

Common Pheasant *Phasianus colchicus* A few birds seen along the roadside but only in the North Island. This species was introduced from Britain.

RALLIDAE

Weka *Gallirallus australis* This New Zealand endemic was observed very well on a few occasions, none more so, than the ridiculously tame individuals on the beach at the Captain Cook Memorial, in the Marlborough Sounds, Maritime Park. This species is listed as vulnerable, in Threatened Birds of the World.

Baillon's Crake *Porzana pusilla* This species was glimpsed by some members of the group in the Ohau Delta, near Twizel.

Spotless Crake *Porzana tabuensis* Seen brilliantly at the small pond on Tiri Tiri Matangi Island, this is normally a very shy and retiring species.

Australian Swamphen *Porphyrio melanotus* Recently split from Purple Swamphen, this species is common and widespread throughout New Zealand.

Takahe *Porphyrio mantelli* This flightless species is endemic to New Zealand and almost became extinct. A number of these prehistoric-looking birds have been relocated on Tiri Tiri Matangi Island and seem to be doing quite well. We saw at least four individuals, including the one trying to mate with Paddy's leg! This species is listed as endangered in Threatened Birds of the World.

Eurasian Coot *Fulica atra* This widespread species is not very common in New Zealand, but we did see a couple of small flocks, on one or two of the larger lakes.

HAEMATOPODIDAE

South Island Pied Oystercatcher *Haematopus finschi* Despite the name of this New Zealand endemic, it also occurs in the North Island, where we saw large numbers at Miranda, on the Firth of Thames. Small numbers were scattered throughout farmland on the South Island.

Variable Oystercatcher *Haematopus unicolor* Another New Zealand endemic but unlike the above species, it is confined to coastal areas, where black colour morph birds vastly outnumber pied colour morphs. We found it to be plentiful.

RECURVIROSTRIDAE

White-headed Stilt *Himantopus leucocephalus* Common and widespread throughout New Zealand.

Black Stilt *Himantopus novaeseelandiae* Endemic to New Zealand and possibly the rarest wader in the world; we were very fortunate to see a group of 14 birds at Lake Pukaki. The following day we watched a hybrid bird for a considerable length of time, mainly because it was showing very little white in its plumage. The moult sequence of this particular individual, proved conclusively that it was a hybrid bird. The Black Stilt is listed as critically endangered, in Threatened Birds of the World.

CHARADRIIDAE

Masked Lapwing *Vanellus miles* A fairly recent coloniser from Australia, it is now common and widespread throughout the grassy paddocks of New Zealand.

Pacific Golden-Plover *Pluvialis fulva* One bird observed very well at Miranda, on the Firth of Thames. This bird is a fairly common migrant to New Zealand.

New Zealand Dotterel *Charadrius obscurus* A few of this New Zealand endemic, were seen very well at Miranda, on the Firth of Thames. It is listed as vulnerable, in Threatened Birds of the World.

Double-banded Plover *Charadrius bicinctus* We enjoyed many good sightings of this attractive species, we had particularly close encounters, while searching for Black Stilts at Lake Pukaki. This species breeds only in New Zealand but immature birds winter in Australia, this is one of the few species that migrates east to west, rather than north to south.

Wrybill *Anarhynchus frontalis* This New Zealand endemic was first seen at Miranda, on the Firth of Thames, followed by even better, closer sightings while searching

for Black Stilts at Lake Pukaki. This unique wader breeds only on the South Island of New Zealand, but winters on the North Island. This species is listed as vulnerable, in Threatened Birds of the World.

SCOLOPACIDAE

Bar-tailed Godwit *Limosa lapponica* New Zealand is the main wintering ground for the eastern race *baueri*, of Bar-tailed Godwit. Large numbers were observed in a few coastal areas.

Ruddy Turnstone *Arenaria interpres* A fairly common migrant to New Zealand, we observed two separate groups, but the sightings of the first group at Miranda, on the Firth of Thames, was by far the better sighting.

Red Knot *Calidris canutus* New Zealand is the main wintering ground for the eastern race *rogersi*, of Red Knot. Large numbers were observed in a couple of coastal areas.

Pectoral Sandpiper *Calidris melanotos* A rare vagrant to New Zealand, we were very fortunate to observe a single bird of this species at Miranda, on the Firth of Thames.

Sharp-tailed Sandpiper *Calidris acuminata* An uncommon migrant to New Zealand, we were fortunate to observe four birds at Miranda, on the Firth of Thames.

Curlew Sandpiper *Calidris ferruginea* Another uncommon migrant to New Zealand, we were fortunate to observe a single bird at Miranda, on the Firth of Thames.

Ruff *Philomachus pugnax* A very rare vagrant to New Zealand, the single bird we saw at Miranda, on the Firth of Thames, was the fifth sighting of this species in New Zealand. We enjoyed prolonged, close scope views of this particular individual.

STERCORARIIDAE

Parasitic Jaeger *Stercorarius parasiticus* A fairly common migrant to New Zealand waters, we enjoyed close looks at a light morph bird and a dark morph bird, during the boat trip on Marlborough Sounds Maritime Park.

Brown Skua *Catharacta antarctica* A few birds seen very well during the pelagic boat trip off Oban, on Stewart Island. In New Zealand waters, this species only breeds around Stewart Island and on New Zealand's subantarctic Islands.

LARIDAE

Kelp Gull *Larus dominicanus* One of the commonest birds in New Zealand, recorded on every single day of the tour.

Red-billed Gull *Larus scopulinus* Endemic to New Zealand, this species also proved to be very common throughout all coastal areas.

Black-billed Gull *Larus bulleri* This species is also endemic to New Zealand, unfortunately, its numbers are in steep decline. Unlike the above species, the Black-billed Gull prefers inland areas. This species is listed as vulnerable, in Threatened Birds of the World.

STERNIDAE

Caspian Tern *Sterna caspia* A widespread species throughout New Zealand but

nowhere common.

White-fronted Tern *Sterna striata* Common and widespread in all coastal areas. This very attractive species breeds only in New Zealand, but immature birds winter in southern Australia, this is another example of one of a handful of birds that migrates east to west, rather than north to south.

Black-fronted Tern *Sterna albobriata* Endemic to New Zealand, we enjoyed many fine views of this species of tern which prefers the interior of New Zealand, rather than the coast. It is far more common on the South Island, than the North Island, subsequently, all our sightings were from the South Island. Unfortunately, like the Black-billed Gull, who shares the same habitat with this species, it is also currently experiencing a rapid decline in numbers. It is listed as endangered, in Threatened Birds of the World.

COLUMBIDAE

Feral Pigeon *Columba livia* This introduced species was commonly encountered throughout the larger towns of New Zealand.

New Zealand Pigeon *Hemiphaga novaeseelandiae* This very large New Zealand endemic, was seen on almost every day of the tour.

PSITTACIDAE

Kea *Nestor notabilis* Endemic to the South Island of New Zealand, this large and destructive parrot, was seen well on a few occasions. A pair was seen particularly well at the Homer Tunnel, where they were copulating on the top of our bus! This species is listed as vulnerable, in Threatened Birds of the World.

Kaka *Nestor meridionalis* Endemic to New Zealand, our first sighting was of birds in flight at Pureora Forest Park, in the North Island. However, we saw this bird much better on Stewart Island. This species is also listed as vulnerable, in Threatened Birds of the World.

Red-crowned Parakeet *Cyanoramphus novaeseelandiae* We enjoyed super looks at this New Zealand endemic on Tiri Tiri Matangi Island, where they seemed completely fearless of humans. We also saw them on Ulva Island, off Stewart Island.

Yellow-crowned Parakeet *Cyanoramphus auriceps* This New Zealand endemic was only observed in flight and only in the Pureora Forest Park. It is listed as endangered, in Threatened Birds of the World.

CUCULIDAE

Shining Bronze-Cuckoo *Chrysococcyx lucidus* Heard in several locations, but only seen on one occasion, we enjoyed wonderful scope views of this species singing in the Pureora Forest Park.

Long-tailed Cuckoo *Eudynamis taitensis* This very elusive species, was only observed in flight, in the Pureora Forest Park. It only breeds in New Zealand but migrates to Polynesia, during the winter months.

STRIGIDAE

Little Owl *Athene noctua* Introduced to the South Island of New Zealand, from Europe,

we saw this small species of owl on a couple of occasions. However, the first sighting close to the village of Tauros, was particularly memorable.

Morepork *Ninox novaeseelandiae* This New Zealand endemic was seen brilliantly in the spotlight on one occasion, in Fiordland National Park.

ALCEDINIDAE

Sacred Kingfisher *Todirhamphus sanctus* A common bird throughout the North Island of New Zealand, in the South Island it is decidedly uncommon, hence, we only observed it once in the South Island.

ACANTHISITTIDAE

Rifleman *Acanthisitta chloris* We observed this uncommon New Zealand endemic; on three separate occasions, all three sightings were in the South Island.

Rock Wren *Salpinctes obsoletus* This uncommon bird is endemic to the South Island of New Zealand. It was voted bird of the trip by tour participants, we saw it on two separate occasions at the Homer Tunnel, in Fiordland National Park and we very much enjoyed hunting around for them.



ALAUDIDAE

Eurasian Skylark *Alauda arvensis* A common, introduced species.

HIRUNDINIDAE

Welcome Swallow *Hirundo neoxena* A very common bird in New Zealand, which we

observed on most days of the tour.

MOTACILLIDAE

Australasian Pipit *Anthus novaeseelandiae* This species is not as common in New Zealand, as it is in Australia. Even so, we enjoyed three separate sightings of this species, one on the North Island and two on the South Island.

PRUNELLIDAE

Dunnoek *Prunella modularis* We observed small numbers of this introduced species.

TURDIDAE

Eurasian Blackbird *Turdus merula* Another introduced species, which is very common and widespread throughout New Zealand.

Song Thrush *Turdus philomelos* Once again, this introduced species, is very common and widespread throughout New Zealand. In fact, it is doing far better in New Zealand, than it is in Europe, where it originated.

SYLVIIDAE

Fernbird *Megalurus punctatus* This uncommon endemic, responded well to tape playback, close to Turangi, in the North Island.

RHIPIDURIDAE

Grey Fantail *Rhipidura fuliginosa* A common and widespread species throughout the whole of New Zealand.

EOPSALTRIIDAE

Tomtit *Petroica macrocephala* We saw this New Zealand endemic on a few occasions, in both North and South Islands.

New Zealand Robin *Petroica australis* This New Zealand endemic, is always tame and confiding. We enjoyed all of our sightings of this species, in both the North and South Islands.

PACHYCEPHALIDAE

Whitehead *Mohoua albicilla* This fairly common species is endemic to the North Island of New Zealand. We enjoyed good looks at this species on Tiri Tiri Matangi Island and again in the Pureora Forest Park.

Yellowhead *Mohoua ochrocephala* This rare species is endemic to Fiordland, in the South Island. Unfortunately, in the past ten years this species has declined rapidly and has disappeared from most of its haunts in Fiordland. Therefore, we were very fortunate to enjoy good looks at this species at the Haast Pass. This species is listed as vulnerable, in Threatened Birds of the World.

Brown Creeper *Mohoua novaeseelandiae* This fairly common species is endemic to the South Island of New Zealand, where we saw it very well on a few occasions.

ACANTHIZIDAE

Grey Gerygone *Gerygone igata* This common New Zealand endemic was observed

frequently throughout the tour.

ZOSTEROPIDAE

Silvereye *Zosterops lateralis* A common and widespread species, occurring throughout both islands of New Zealand.

MELIPHAGIDAE

Stitchbird *Notiomystis cincta* This rare, endemic species, is now extinct on mainland New Zealand. This is very unfortunate, because the Stichbird is a stunning looking honeyeater. We enjoyed many good sightings of this species on Tiri Tiri Matangi Island. It is listed as vulnerable, in Threatened Birds of the World.

Bellbird *Anthornis melanura* Another endemic New Zealand honeyeater, which was common in both the North and South Islands.

Tui *Prothemadera novaeseelandiae* Yet another endemic New Zealand honeyeater, which was also common in both the North and South Islands.

CALLAEIDAE

Kokako *Callaeas cinerea* A rare bird which is endemic to the North Island of New Zealand. None of us will ever forget the first one we saw, galloping down the track on Tiri Tiri Matangi Island. We saw a second bird in the Pureora Forest Park, singing from successive treetops before gliding down on vestigial wings to the next tree. This species has only rudimentary wings and is therefore not a very strong flyer. It is listed as endangered, in Threatened Birds of the World.

Saddleback *Philesturnus carunculatus* Unfortunately, this rare New Zealand endemic, is extinct on the mainland. We watched many individuals on Tiri Tiri Matangi Island, where they performed brilliantly, this is a very attractive species.

CRACTICIDAE

Australasian Magpie *Gymnorhina tibicen* Introduced from Australia, it is now common and widespread throughout New Zealand, we saw it on most days of the tour.

STURNIDAE

Common Myna *Acridotheres tristis* Introduced to the North Island of New Zealand, where it is all too common.

European Starling *Sturnus vulgaris* Yet another introduced species, which unfortunately, is all too common on both islands.

PASSERIDAE

House Sparrow *Passer domesticus* Once again, another introduced species, which is all too common on both islands.

FRINGILLIDAE

Chaffinch *Fringilla coelebs* Another introduced species, which is incredibly common

on both islands and was recorded on most days of the tour.

European Greenfinch *Carduelis chloris* Another introduced species, which is also common and widespread on both islands.

Common Redpoll *Carduelis flammea* Another introduced species, which is also common and widespread on both islands.

European Goldfinch *Carduelis carduelis* Another introduced species, which is incredibly common on both islands and was recorded on most days of the tour.

EMBERIZIDAE

Yellowhammer *Emberiza citrinella* Another introduced species, which is incredibly common on both islands and was recorded on most days of the tour.

MAMMALS

Common Brush-tailed Possum *Trichosurus vulpecula* One of these introduced pests was seen along the roadside at night, on the way home from our attempt to see North Island Kiwi. This Australian species is well known for robbing bird nests of eggs and young and is having a devastating effect on New Zealand's native birds.

European Rabbit *Oryctolagus cuniculus* This introduced mammal is very widespread and common throughout New Zealand.

European Hare *Lepus europaeus* We saw this introduced mammal on many occasions, all sightings were in the South Island.

New Zealand Fur Seal *Arctocephalus forsteri* A common inhabitant of all New Zealand coastal waters.

Short-beaked Common Dolphin *Delphinus delphis* A small school was observed swimming in the ship's wake during our pelagic boat trip in the Hauraki Gulf.

Bottle-nosed Dolphin *Tursiops truncatus* A small school seen in the Hauraki Gulf provided spectacular views, bow-riding alongside the boat.

Dusky Dolphin *Lagenorhynchus obscurus* We enjoyed watching a large school of this species during our boat trip in the Marlborough Sounds Maritime Park. We also saw a second school during our boat trip on the Milford Sound.

Hector's Dolphin *Cephalorhynchus hectori* This endangered species, is the world's smallest species of dolphin. We enjoyed watching a small school frolicking in the surf, at the mouth of Ship Creek, in Westland.