

General



This is a report of a New Zealand tour made by Annelien and me in late November-December 2015. We started in Auckland (North Island, Nov 25) and departed from Christchurch (South Island, Dec 24). All together, we drove 5,000 km, visited 6 island (North and South Island, Stewart Island, Tiritiri Matingi, Maturoa and Ulva Island), and made 5 pelagic trips (Hauraki Gulf, Kaikura (2x), Milford Sound, and Stewart Island).

In general, we were surprised by the lack and scarcity of native landbirds and wildlife in general, the often disturbed landscape, and the widespread presence of introduced birds, plants and mammals. In contrast, we found the abundance of ocean wildlife overwhelming. Apart from numerous road works and a cancelled Interislander afternoon ferry between Wellington and Picton, we encountered no major logical problems. Because the weather was shabby, camping was unattractive and we slept in cabins and occasionally in motel rooms. The temperatures ranged between 10 - 30 °C, and all together the rain only modestly affected our activities, except "our" Tongariro Alpine Crossing, which was hampered by drizzle and fog.

ITINARY

Nov 23 Flight with Singapore Airlines from Schiphol to Singapore (10.30 – 23.00), and at 02.00 boarded for the flight to Auckland with Air New Zealand. Upon arrival, we were picked up by a shuttle and transferred to the Heartland Hotel. Slept well from 01.30 to 07.00. Picked up a car (toyota corolla) at Apollo-Hertz and bought groceries. Nice weather, about 20 °C. Arrived at Sandspit, where we rented a cabin at the waterfront. Afternoon walk produced several birds including Tui and Fantail, and I had a first but distant Kaka flying over. Awoke at 02.45, noticed a singing Blackbird



Nov 26 Sandspit Pelagic on Hauraki Gulf. A superb day, organized by Chris Gaskin, who rediscovered the New Zealand Storm-Petrel in 2003 and who discovered its nesting grounds on Little Barrier Island in 2013. Beautiful weather and no or hardly any wind. Cloudy in the morning, sunny in the afternoon. Also a group from Field Guides was present. A surprising number of birds were seen, including massive “mixed flocks” consisting of thousands of Shearwaters, Prions and (Storm) Petrels, etc. We had superb views of the very rare New Zealand Storm-Petrel, vocal Cook’s Petrels, and numerous Dolphins, and both Hammerhead Shark and Mako

Sharks were seen while being attracted to the chum. Furthermore, we saw a single Sunfish and amazing (and noisy) schools of Trevalli which in turn attracted numerous birds.



Nov 27 Drive to Gulf Harbour to catch the ferry to Tiritiri Matangi Island for an overnight stay in the Bunkhouse. We shared a not too large room with a young couple doing voluntary work.



Again nice weather, although a bit warm and sticky in the afternoon. The island has a surprising history. In 1955 almost the entire island was heavily overgrazed by sheep and devoid of native vegetation. Since 1973, sheep are no longer allowed and numerous re-forestry programs have tried to restore as much as possible of the indigenous vegetation. The island is “managed” by a few rangers, who are assisted by volunteers. Tiritiri is now one of the island nature reserves of New Zealand where rare and often almost extinct mainland birds have been re-introduced because the islands are mostly free of predators such as possums, stoats and rats.



Nov 28 Spend the morning at Tiritiri Matingi. Walked from 05.30 to 09.00, amongst other the Kawerau Track, several Kokako's seen. Coffee with crackers with cheese, and a mixture of raisins with nuts. Rain at 11.00, just when we thought we had discovered a potential Takahe. Returned to Sandspit, where we arrived at 18.00. Slept in a cabin.

Nov 29 Awake at 04.45 and left at 06.30 for Tawharanui Regional Park near Anchor Bay. Several good birds, including Brown Teal, Takahe with juveniles, and our first Paradise Shelduck with juveniles. Walked the Ecological Trail and part of the Fisherman's Track. Nice patch of rainforest, with (unringed) North Island Saddleback, Whitehead and at least 4-5 Kaka's ripping bark from trees. In fact, this sound is audible (even for me), and indicates the presence of this species. In the afternoon via Keri Keri to Aroha Island. About 3 hours for 180 km, despite being Sunday, in a rather devastated and overgrazed environment. Cabin at Aroha Island, in fact a peninsula, and a 3 hour Kiwi tour that produced a "heard only" male and female Northern Island Kiwi.

Nov 30 Drive to the Giant Kauri (Waipoua) Forest at the West coast. A few rain showers and temperature about 22 °C. Upon arrival, the rain had stopped. Impressive trees, the largest being about 50 meters, almost 18 meters in circumference, and about 200 years old.



Probably one of the oldest forest in the world, with loads of ferns, tree ferns and mosses, meanwhile the sound of singing (introduced) Blackbirds. In the afternoon we visited an estuary at Waipu, where we had distant views of 6 New Zealand Fairy Terns. Close views of Sacred Kingfishers eating a mouse and a lizard. Our first New Zealand Dabchicks at Mangawhai Sanctuary, a little pond which we passed. Again a night at Sandspit, best cabin so far with great views over the bay.



Dec 1 Breakfast at Sandspit outside the cabin, meanwhile trying to prevent ducks entering the cabin and gulls from stealing our food. Left 07.30 for Auckland, and after some modest traffic jams arrived at Mangare Bridge at 11.00. The famous sewage works are no longer there, but the local mudflats are apparently still good for waders, and we saw our first Wrybill. Then travelled to Miranda, a well-known hotspot for migrating waders. We were fortunate with the tide, and made a 2.6 km (one-way) walk to arrive at the hides, where we found out that there is a shortcut to the hide directly from the road. A total of about 50 Wrybill, thousands of Bar-tailed Godwit, etc. Arrived in Roturua at about 17.30 after buying groceries and gasoline. Overnight in motel.

Dec 2 Brief visit to the lake at Moturua, best new bird being New Zealand Scaup. Drive to Pururoa National Forest. Podocarp forest, with much lichens, ferns, mosses. Walked a short trail produced Kaka, Tui and Whitehead. In the afternoon a nice stop at the south end of Lake Taupo, where we made our own coffee, meanwhile having good views of New Zealand Dabchick, Black Swan, New Zealand Scaup, etc.



Afternoon drive to Whakapapa, because next day we wanted to walk the famous Tongariro Alpine Crossing. Fortunately, we walked a little trail along the river at “Whakapapa Holiday Park”, where -thanks to Annelien- we had crippling views of a pair of Blue Duck, a New

Zealand endemic whose existence is under pressure. Also several Tomtits heard and seen. Good weather, temperature about 15-20 °C.

Dec 3 We walked the Tongariro Alpine Crossing, 19.4 km total length, involving 800 meter climbing (1,100-1,900 m) that is followed by over 1,200 meter of descend, the last part –especially the stairs- being the toughest part of the entire crossing. At 07.00 picked up by a shuttlebus to the parking lot at one side of the crossing, at 16.00 picked up again at the other side. The weather was mediocre, with cold, fog, drizzle, wind, etc., likely the usual type of weather when looking at the vegetation. Nice and likely mostly native vegetation, with a few white and yellow flowers here and there, but also two excellent birds. We had both brief views of a New Zealand Falcon flying over, again spotted by Annelien, and excellent views of New Zealand Pipit. Despite the weather, we had some reasonable views of the Emerald Lakes. Nevertheless a great walk despite the not very cooperative weather.



Dec 4 Woke up at around 05.00 with some aching muscles, drizzle, rain, fog and 9 °C. Visited the local visitor centre, walked a short trail, had another look at the river for Blue Duck, and then drove to direction of Wellington. Stopped at a Holiday Park at Pakakariki, about 40 km South of Wellington. In the afternoon the weather improved but remained windy, and we had a walk at the Queen Elizabeth Park with an ongoing dune reforestation program.

Dec 5 Wetland walk in Queen Elizabeth Park with Shining Bronze-Cuckoo (hear), Weta, and otherwise mostly introduced species. Left at 11.00 for Wellington, where we arrived at 12.00 for rental car delivery (drive car in parking lot, lock, and drop keys in key box) and luggage drop-off. Unfortunately our 14.45 ferry to Picton (South Island) was cancelled, so we had to go with the 17.30 ferry. In the windy harbour of Wellington a few Shearwater and Little Penguin. From the ferry to Picton I saw a single Northern Giant Petrel, Westland Petrel, Sooty- and Fluttering Shearwater, etc. Arrival in Picton at 20.30, collected luggage, and picked up another rental toyota corolla. For one or another reason, this car was a hatchback with a tiny trunk, and we were unable to get our luggage in. After some administrative hurdles and additional money, we obtained a larger car. Because we had no food for diner left, we at peanuts and crackers, and slept at 22.30.



Dec 6 Awake at 07.00, with mild temperatures but grey skies. After buying groceries, we went with a tour at Queen Charlotte Sound at 13.30. Nice tour with amongst others the very rare and highly localized King Shag, Arctic Skua and New Zealand Fur Seal.



Dec 7 Walk from Shelley's Beach to Bobs Bay in Picton. Nice scenery and flowers, birds included South Island Robin and Tomtit. Drive to Kairura with a stop at the sewage works at Blenheim, where birds included expected Royal Spoonbill and unexpected Glossy Ibis. Another roadside stop at a lake near Taimate produced Banded Plover, the only Black-fronted Dotterel of the

tour, and many Pied Stilt. Stops at Half Moon Bay and Ohau Point produced a Giant Petrel. Arrived at the Kaikura Peninsula late afternoon. Abundant New Zealand Fur Seal, the only Ruddy Turnstone of the tour, many unidentified Albatross but at least one White-capped Albatross, both Little and Caspian Tern, etc. Overall nice weather. Bought some “Kaikura crackers”, anti-motion sickness pills produced by the local pharmacy, to be tested upon Annelien the next morning.



Dec 8 This morning the famous Kaikura pelagic from 06.00 to 08.30. Beautiful weather, hardly any wind, small boat (at the other side of the peninsula, boarding while boat still on trailer), and apparently the “cracker” worked splendidly, Annelien even eating a ginger cookie on board. Excellent and very close views of both Southern Royal and Northern Royal Albatross, Gibson’s / Antipodean Albatross, Black-browed Albatross (rare), White-capped and Salvin’s Albatross and possibly an old male Wandering Albatross (very white), numerous Northern Giant Petrel, Cape Petrel including a single bird of the white Southern race, Westland and Black Petrel, a single Buller’s Shearwater, Hutton’s Shearwater, etc. Also some Dusky Dolphin. Afternoon walk around the point of the peninsula. Apart from the pelagic birds, numerous Yellowhammer, Goldfinch and Greenfinch. Blue skies, 15-20 °C and even warm when walking uphill. After some doubts and concerns, decided to join a whale tour next morning, with 95% chance of seeing Sperm Whale.





Dec 9 Arrived at 07.45 for the whale tour, safety instruction movie at 08.15, brief bus ride to other side of the peninsula, bit windy with a swell of about 3 meter according to the local information. Although this boat was much bigger (capacity 60 passengers) than the boat the day before, the boat was a bit wobbly due to the often high speed required to arrive on time after a Sperm Whale had been spotted. Fortunately, the “Kaikura crackers” worked really well again, but at least half of the people on board were ill, white faces, with a weird smell and especially noise of vomiting people throughout the boat. A total of 3 decent views of males Giant Sperm Whale, world’s largest predator. Although observations were all a bit odds and end, in the end we both have seen most of the animal, including its bulky head. Also good views of Southern Royal Albatross. After the trip we had some (homemade) coffee and purchased cheese rolls. Drive via the Canterbury Plains to the Mary Ashly Estuary at Waikuku, where we booked a cabin at a nice but not too well maintained camping. Double-banded Plover, Black-fronted Tern, many Pied Stilt and a hybrid Black x Pied Stilt. Diner consisting of the regular lentils with tomato, sweet pepper, garlic, onion, mushrooms, curry and chorizo. Good stuff.

Dec 10 Awake at 05.00. Brief visit to the estuary produced the same birds, and left at 07.00 for Arthur’s Pass. Many ongoing road constructions and some modest traffic delays while passing Christchurch. On our way into the mountains, a roadside stop at a small lake produced a pair of Crested Grebe and Double-banded Plover. Weather at Arthur’s Pass was crap: cold, windy, rain and low clouds.



Close views of about 5 habituated Kea. Because we would like to make a walk at slightly better weather conditions, we rented a cabin at Jackson Retreat. The cabin was rather expensive, NZD 135, but in the 9 person cabin the firewood was included. Beautiful native forest, being very wet, everything covered with lichens, ferns and mosses, and possibly the largest Fuchsia (tree) in the world. Afternoon walk and later evening walk to the glow worms, which seem to have been filmed by the BBC. Despite chance of Greater Spotted Kiwi, no Kiwi has either heard or seen.



Dec 11 Bit damp. Woodstove before breakfast. Many Weka. Drive back to Arthur's Pass, nice walk at Otira. Start was a bit foggy and chilly, but later the weather greatly improved. Birds seen included distant views of a flying and noisy Kea, and introduced Redpoll and Chaffinch. Returned at about 11.00 and drove back to Arthur's Pass Village, where we walked part of the Arthur's Pass Wilderness Trail. Trail produced good views of Rifleman and Tomtit. Afternoon drive to Hokitika, bought groceries at "New World", and rented a cabin while pouring with rain. Diner consisting of bread, meat and salad, tea with chocolate chip cookies and to bed at 20.30.



Dec 12 Pouring with rain. When leaving the village, we saw two White Heron (Great Egret), a “very rare native” in New Zealand for unknown reason. Brief coffee break at the Okarito Lagoon, home of a famous Kiwi, another few and very distant White Heron, but otherwise not too exciting. At Franz Josef we made a brief and mostly dry walk to Peter’s Pool with a surprising number of native birds in rather nice forest, birds including New Zealand Fantail, South Island

Robin, Tui and Bellbird. Back to cabin around 14.00, pouring with rain. At the end of the day the weather improved, and we made a local walk to Cullary Gorge. Bird wise not too productive, but the biggest surprise –at least for me- was a Chamois, apparently another introduced species. The gorge itself is spectacular with a noisy and turbulent river.



Dec 13 Up at 06.00, again rain at 08.00. Drove to Fox Glacier, about 20 km, which was with hindsight a good decision because the weather improved considerably. We walked twice to the glacier, first time without and second time with the “big camera” to make some pictures. Started to rain again while returning from the second glacier walk. Via Highway 6, which is for sure scenic at some stretches, a walk at Monroe Beach. Local Penguins gone in contrast to the Sand Flies, the latter being a nasty South Island endemic. Meanwhile the weather improved, for sure a Kea and possibly a New Zealand Falcon seen (latter by Annelien) while driving, overnight stay at Haast. Strong and cold wind.

Dec 14 Rainy and cloudy. At 08.00 towards Haast Pass, weather improved, nice road, and walked the Bridle Track from about 09.40 to 13.00. Rifleman common, nice forest, but no Yellowhead. Drive to Wanaku, via Tarras and Lindis Pass to Omarama. Another cabin and nice, warm weather. Tried to find Black Stilt at the gravel plains along the river, but failed. Excellent views of Black-fronted Tern.



Dec 15 Left at 07.15 after a dry night. At the end of Lake Pukaki we searched again for Black Stilt, but and found a total of 3 heavily ringed immatures at close range. Later we heard that Black Stilt

is indeed not a shy bird. After our failure we walked the Hooker Track near Mt. Cook from 11.15 to 14.30. Almost dry and brief spells of sun. Nice views of Mt. Cook and its glaciers now and then. After that, we tried again for Black Stilt at the extensive gravel plains at Lake Pukaki. Despite the very strong wind, the bird watching was good, with characteristic species as Double-banded Dotterel, Wrybill and New Zealand Pipit being at least locally common. Fortunately, after a long search we “scoped” two adult Black Stilt, sheltering from the wind and at the lee side of a bush. Again a cabin at the campground of Omaraha, a small triangular house.



Dec 16 Mainly a travel day, about 400 km in total, mostly rain. After some initial shopping, we realized that it might be handy to book a cabin at Milford Sound beforehand. We did this, because the drive to Milford Sound is quite a challenge and time consuming, and although extremely expensive, NZD 345, this was a good decision because of the relatively early boat tour next day. In the morning we made a stop at Lake Dunstan, where Crested Grebe proved common. Afternoon walk at Gunn Lake, where we saw South Island Robin and our first Brown Creeper. At Homer Tunnel we tried for South Island Rock Wren while walking between the large boulders, but dipped. In the afternoon again rain and low temperatures.



Dec 17 Beautiful weather. Cruise at Milford Sound from 09.00 to 11.00. Spectacular scenery, including many waterfalls, a bit of tourist trap, but although we did see Dusky Dolphins, bird life was minimal. After this, we walked the “Chasms” at the Homer Tunnel, and I briefly saw a male South Island Rock Wren perched and hopping on a boulder quite close to the parking

lot. Despite a good look around, we were unable to retrieve the bird. Best bird of the day was a beautiful adult New Zealand Falcon, of which we had excellent views near the Homer Tunnel. Walked part of the “Key Summit” track where we saw a flying Kaka, and walked at Cascade Creek where we heard Brown Creeper.



Dec 18 Again mainly a travel day. Stops at Rakutu Wetlands and Blue Cliffs Beach. We didn't see much in the wetlands, the cliffs produced our first Stewart Island Shag. In the afternoon we booked a pelagic for Stewart Island. Bit of rain, cold and strong wind.

Dec 19 At 11.00 we took the ferry to Oban, Stewart Island. No wind, no swell, and consequently not many birds seen from the ferry, apart from some Common Diving Petrel, White-capped Albatross, Giant Petrel sp., and a few Petrel sp. Ewan picked us up at Stewart Island by car to bring us to his home (and that of Jenny) and B&B.



Beautiful weather, about 15 °C. Walked to Golden Bay Wharf, visited the local visitor centre and arranged a transfer by ferry to Ulva Island at 15.15. Beautiful vegetation, Red-fronted Parakeet, Brown Creeper, and –finally- good views of a pair of Yellowhead searching food in the forest litter, picked up by Annelien. Returned at 18.00, fish-and-chips for dinner, and at 19.30 back at the B&B.



Ewan and Jenny offered us to use Jenny's car to drive to the Wharf at Halfmoon Bay for a 20.50 departure by boat to Ocean Beach (Glory Cove). Many Sooty Shearwaters seen, as well as Bottlenose Dolphin and Blue Penguin. Crippling views of a female Southern Brown Kiwi on the beach. We were forced to take a small detour because a male Sea Lion had been spotted in the surf.



Dec 20 After a good night sleep, we had breakfast at 09.00. Pouring rain. Walk to Golden Bay at about 11.00 for the pelagic trip (13.00-16.00). Fortunately, the rain stopped and in the afternoon the weather turned out fine. Best bird were several Yellow-eyed Penguin, seen on land as well as swimming, numerous White-capped Albatross, excellent views of Brown Skua and little Brown Penguin, etc. Being back onshore, we had again fish-and-chips, returned to the B&B, had a shower, and also wet outside again. Cold night, we put our fleece jackets over the blankets.

Dec 21 The longest day. Breakfast at 06.30, Ewan brought us to the ferry, departure at 08.00 and arrival at 09.00. After collection our luggage and car, we bought a take-away coffee and returned to the viewpoint with all the distances indicated to cities all over the globe. Left Bluff at 11.00, bought groceries at the New World (Invercargill), and drive along the coast via Petrified Trees, Niagara Falls and Porpoise Bay – Hector’s Dolphin- to Nugget Point. This was by far our warmest day, temperature about 31 °C and a strong wind from the NW. Massive numbers of pelagic birds around, including White-capped Albatross, Salvin’s Albatross, a Wandering Albatross (could be identified even without binoculars!), Yellow-eyed Penguin, etc. Because we really enjoyed Nugget Point, we rented an apartment overnight at Kakapoint. Cooked pasta for dinner, a shower and sleep. At night pouring with rain and strong wind.



Dec 22 Up at 06.00 and left as soon as possible for Nugget Point. Again large numbers of Albatrosses. At least one Buller’s Albatross could be identified, but also e.g. Cape Pigeon was present in good numbers. Drive via Cannibal Bay to Surat Bay (New Haven). Here we saw first a close

female Sea Lion and then an impressive male. Strong wind. Drive to Portabello, arranged a cabin there, and then drove to the famous (Northern) Royal Albatross Colony at Taiaroa Head, Otago Peninsula, where we had a guided tour from 16.30-17.30. Although the breeding Albatrosses can only be observed from the observatory, i.e. behind glass, this proved to be quite fortunate due to the almost gale force wind. Beautiful views of mostly flying Northern Royal Albatross. Other birds of interest were Ortega Shag, Spotted Shag, Sooty Shearwater, etc. A day with occasional showers.



Dec 23 Cold, wind and sun. Returned after breakfast to Taiaroa Head for some final mainly Albatross watching at sea. Both Southern and Northern Royal Albatross, White-capped and Salvin's Albatross and possibly one or two Buller's Albatross could be identified, amidst numerous Sooty Shearwater. At a roadside stop at Karitane we saw a single Wandering Albatross. A final and rather sportive walk at Sandflybeach produced another two Sea Lion. Afternoon drive on Hwy 1 to Christchurch, arranged a motel about 10 km from the airport.



NEW ZEALAND 2015

BIRDS

APTERYGIDAE

1. **North Island Brown Kiwi** *Apteryx mantelli* [E] - Both male and female heard at Aroha Island (Nov 29). Uncommon endemic.
2. **South Island Brown Kiwi** *Apteryx australis lawryi* [E] - Stunning views of a hungry female at Ocean Beach (Glory Cove; Dec 19). Uncommon endemic.



SPHENISCIDAE

3. **Yellow-eyed Penguin** *Megadyptes antipodes* [E] - A total of 4 birds seen during the Stewart Island Pelagic (Dec 20) 2 birds near Nugget Point (South Island, Dec 21). Uncommon endemic.
4. **Blue Penguin** *Eudyptula minor* - At least 10 birds during the Hauraki Gulf Pelagic (Nov 26). Also seen on 4 other days, highest counts (30+) during the Stewart Island Pelagic (Dec 20). Common native.





PODICIPEDIDAE

5. **Australian Crested Grebe** *Podiceps cristatus* - Two birds on a small pond while travelling to Arthur's Pass (Dec 10) and common at Lake Dunstan (Dec 16). Uncommon native (South Island).
6. **New Zealand Dabchick** *Poliiocephalus rufopectus* [E] - Two birds seen at the Mangawhai Sanctuary (Nov 30), 20+ birds at Lake Taupo (Dec 2) and 4 birds on Dec 5. Locally common endemic (North Island).

DIOMEDEIDAE

7. **Southern Royal Albatross** *Diomedea epomophora* [E] - Superb views of 4 adult birds, including a beautiful old –almost white- male, during the Kaikoura Pelagic (Dec 8). Another 3 birds seen during the whale watching tour at Kaikoura (Dec 9) and 2 birds seen from shore at Taiaroa Head (Dec 23; South Island). Locally common endemic.



8. **Northern Royal Albatross** *Diomedea sanfordi* [E] – A single bird seen from the coast near Kaikoura (Nov 7). Great views of 2 birds during the Kaikoura Pelagic (Dec 8). At least 3 adults and 17 near adult birds at Taiaroa Head on the mainland colony (Dec 22). Also 2 birds seen from shore at Taiaroa Head (Dec 23; South Island). Locally common endemic.



9. **Antipodean Albatross** *Diomedea antipodensis* [E] – At least 5 different individuals seen during the Kaikoura Pelagic (Dec 8). A single bird seen during the whale watching tour at Kaikoura (Dec 9). Two birds seen at Nugget Point (Dec 21) and a single bird at Taiaroa Head (Dec 23; South Island). Locally common endemic.



10. **Wandering Albatross** *Diomedea exulans* – A single very white (old) bird during the Kaikoura Pelagic (Dec 8). Uncommon migrant.



11. **Black-browed Mollymawk** *Thalassarche melanophris* – Great views of a single bird during the Kaikoura Pelagic (Dec 8). Rare native.



12. **Buller's Mollymawk** *Thalassarche bulleri* [E] – A single bird could be identified at Nugget Point (Dec 22). Possibly also single birds seen on Dec 21 and 23. Locally common endemic.

13. **White-capped (Shy) Mollymawk** *Thalassarche cauta* - By far the most common Mollymawk seen. First seen during the Hauraki Gulf Pelagic (Nov 26), most common at Stewart Island. Common native.





14. **Salvin's Mollymawk** *Thalassarche salvini* – Most common (approx. 16 birds) during the Kaikoura Pelagic (Dec 8), much less common than previous species. Locally common native.



PROCELLARIIDAE

15. **Northern Giant Petrel** *Macronectes halli* – Common, seen on 6-7 days, highest count (45+) at the Kaikoura Pelagic (Dec 8). Common native.



16. **Southern Giant Petrel** *Macronectes giganteus* – A single bird during the Stewart Island pelagic (Dec 20). Common visitor.
17. **Cape Pigeon** *Daption capense australe / capense* – Snares Cape Pigeon (*australe*) common during the Kaikoura pelagic (30+) on Dec 8. Also a few birds seen at Kaikoura on Dec 9. Seen from land at Nugget Point (Dec 22). A single bird of the Southern *capense* form was present at Kaikoura (Dec 8), strikingly whiter than the *australe*. Common native.



18. **Cook's Petrel** *Pterodroma cookii* – My first *Pterodroma* species. Estimated 1,000+ birds during the Hauraki Gulf Pelagic (Nov 26). Vocal. Locally common endemic.



19. **Mottled Petrel** *Pterodroma inexpectata* – Three birds seen from the ferry to Stewart Island (Dec 19) likely this species, much darker upperparts than previous species. Common endemic.

20. **Fairy Prion** *Pachyptila turtur* – Very common (10,000+) during the Hauraki Gulf pelagic (Nov 2). Also seen (500+) from the ferry from Wellington to Picton (Dec 5). Abundant native.



21. **White-chinned Petrel** *Procellaria aequinoctialis* – Seen at both Kaikoura boat tours on Dec 8 (4 birds) and Dec 9 (2 birds). Uncommon native.
22. **Westland Petrel** *Procellaria westlandica* [E] – About 50 birds, likely this species, from the Wellington to Picton ferry (Dec 5). A total of 10 birds seen well during the Kaikoura pelagic on Dec 8. Uncommon endemic.



23. **Black (Parkinson's) Petrel** *Procellaria parkinsoni* [E] – Superb views of at least 20 birds during the Hauraki Gulf pelagic (Nov 26). Uncommon endemic.



24. **Buller's Shearwater** *Puffinus bulleri* [E] – Seen very well (at least 250 birds) during the Hauraki Gulf pelagic (Nov 26). Also a few birds at Kaikoura (Dec 8 and 9). Common endemic.



25. **Sooty Shearwater** *Puffinus griseus* – A single bird at the Hauraki Gulf Pelagic (Nov 26). At least 100 birds from the Wellington to Picton ferry (Dec 5) and mostly common at the South coast at e.g. Nugget point (1,000+). Abundant native.
26. **Short-tailed Shearwater** *Puffinus tenuirostris* – A single bird during the Hauraki Gulf pelagic on Dec 8. Common Australian migrant.

27. **Flesh-footed Shearwater** *Puffinus carneipes* – Very well seen during the Hauraki Gulf pelagic, about 800 birds (Nov 26). Common native.



28. **Fluttering Shearwater** *Puffinus gavia* – One of the common Shearwater species, about 1,000+ birds during the Hauraki Gulf pelagic (Nov 26) and the Kaikoura pelagics (at least 200 birds on both Dec 8 and 9). Abundant endemic.
29. **Hutton's Shearwater** *Puffinus huttoni* [E] – Most common during the first Kaikoura pelagic (Dec 8), but also seen on Dec 9 (Kaikoura), and at Stewart Island (Dec 19-20). Locally common endemic.
30. **Little Shearwater** *Puffinus assimilis* – Three birds seen well during the Hauraki Gulf pelagic (Nov 26). Common native.

HYDROBATIDAE

31. **White-faced Storm Petrel** *Pelagodroma marina* – At least 200 seen during the Hauraki Gulf pelagic (Nov 26). Great views of birds dancing and bouncing on the water surface. Common native.



32. **New Zealand Storm Petrel** *Pealeornis maoriana* [E] - Great views of 3 birds. In mixed flocks with previous species. Small, agile and rather fast in flight. Rediscovered in 2003 and breeding site on Little Barrier Island discovered in 2013. For sure one of the best birds of the trip. Very rare endemic.



PELECANOIDIDAE

33. **Common Diving Petrel** *Pelecanoides urinatrix* – At least a 1,000 birds during the Hauraki Gulf pelagic (Nov 26). Also seen at Kaikoura and along the south coast.



SULIDAE

34. **Australasian Gannet** *Morus serrator* – Seen on many days, but most common at the Hauraki Gulf pelagic of Nov 26.



PHALACROCORACIDAE

35. **Great Cormorant** *Phalacrocorax carbo* – Not common, or overlooked. Seen on 4 days in low numbers. Common native.
36. **Pied Shag** *Phalacrocorax varius* – Common, seen on many days of the tour, e.g. 2 birds on the Hauraki Gulf pelagic (Nov 26). Locally common native.
37. **Little Black Shag** *Phalacrocorax sulcirostris* – Seen on 5 days, most common (20+) at the Lake Taupo area (Dec 2). Locally common native.

38. **Little (Pied) Shag (Cormorant)** *Phalacrocorax melanoleucos* – Rather common, seen on many days, first seen at Sandspit (Nov 25). Common native.
39. **Stewart Island (Bronze) Shag** *Leucocarbo chalconotus* [E] – Common along south coast and at Stewart Island. Two colour morphs: pied and black (bronze). Best seen during the Stewart Island Pelagic (Dec 19). Locally common endemic.
40. **Spotted Shag** *Stictocarbo punctatus* [E] – Common. First seen during the pelagic at Queen Charlotte Sound (Dec 5). Locally common endemic.



41. **King Shag** *Leucocarbo carunculatus* [E] – A total of 6 birds seen during the pelagic at Queen Charlotte Sound (Dec 5). Rare endemic.



ARDEIDAE

42. **Great Egret** *Area modesta* – A total of 4 distant birds in the Okarito area on Dec 12. Very rare native.

43. **White-faced Heron** *Egretta novaehollandiae* – Common throughout the tour, first seen at Sandspit (Nov 25). Abundant native.

THRESKIORNITHIDAE

44. **Glossy Ibis** *Plegadis falcinellus* – A single bird at the sewage works near Blenheim (Dec 7). Rare Australian vagrant.
45. **Royal Spoonbill** *Platalea regia* – Seen on 5 days, including breeding colonies near Blenheim (Dec 7) and at Nuggetpoint. Common native

ANATIDAE

46. **Black Swan** *Cygnus atratus* [I] – One of the very many and common introduced species. Common throughout the tour. Common Australian introduction.
47. **Canada Goose** *Branta canadensis* [I] – As previous species. Common North American introduction.
48. **Greylag Goose** *Anser anser* [I] – Again an introduced species, but only seen (10+) on Dec 1. Common European introduction.
49. **Paradise Shelduck** *Tadorna variegata* [E] – Common throughout the tour. First seen at Tawharanui Regional Park (Nov 29). Common endemic.



50. **Blue Duck** *Hymenolaimus malacornychos* [E] – Stunning and close views of two birds along and at the river near the campground at Whakapapa (Dec 2). Uncommon endemic.



51. **Grey Teal** *Anas gracilis* – Seen on at least 6 days during the tour. Common native.

52. **Brown Teal** *Anas chlorotis* [E] – A total of 6 birds seen at the Tawharanui Regional Park on Nov 29. Rare endemic.



- 53. **New Zealand Scaup** *Aythya novaeseelandiae* [E] – Common bird, seen in considerable numbers throughout the tour. First seen at Rotorua (Dec 2). Locally comon endemic.
- 54. **Mallard** *Anas platyrhynchos* – Again, a common and widespread introduced species. Abundant European introduction.
- 55. **Grey Duck** *Anas superciliosa* – Seen on 5 days in low (1-2) numbers, first seen at Sandspit (Nov 26). Birds may have been hybrids (Grey Duck x Mallard). Very rare native.
- 56. **Australian Shoveler** *Anas rhynchos* – Seen on 5 days, common. Common native.

ACCIPITRIDAE

- 57. **Swamp (Australasian) Harrier** *Circus approximans* – Common throughout the tour. Abundant native.

FALCONIDAE

- 58. **New Zealand Falcon** *Falco novaeseelandiae* [E] – The only endemic New Zealand raptor. A bird seen briefly in the fog (without binoculars) when flying over our head during the Tongariro Alpine crossing (Dec 3). Annelien saw a bird at Motuara Island (Dec 6), and together we had great views of an adult bird circling close to the Homer tunnel (Dec 17). Uncommon endemic.

PHASIANIDAE

- 59. **Ring-necked Pheasant** *Phasianus colchicus* [I] – Heard several times on South Island. Common European introduction.
- 60. **Brown Quail** *Coturnix ypsilophora* [I] – Especially common on Tiritiri Matingi Island (Nov 27-28). Locally common Australian introduction.



RALLIDAE

61. **Weka** *Gallirallus australis* – Rather common, seen on 6 days, first seen during the Queen Charlotte cruise (Dec 6), most common at Stewart Island (20+ birds on Dec 20). Several subspecies seen: *greyi* (NI), *australis* (W of SI) and *scotti* (St Island). Locally common endemic.



62. **(South Island) Takahe** *Porphyrio hochstetteri* [E] – A reintroduced species. One seen near the light house of Tiritiri Matingi Island (Nov 27-28), and at least 10 birds (including heavily ringed juveniles) at the Tawharanui Regional Park on Nov 29. Very rare endemic.



63. **Purple Swamphen** *Porphyrio melanotus* – Rather common throughout the tour, seen on at least 6 days, most common (50+) birds at the Tawharanui Regional Park on Nov 29. Abundant native.
64. **Australian Coot** *Fulica atra* – Surprisingly uncommon. Only 3 birds seen at the Blenheim sewage works on Dec 7. Locally common native.

HAEMATOPODIDAE

65. **South Island Pied Oystercatcher** *Haematopus finschi* [E] – Common, especially on the South Island. First seen at Mangere Bridge (Dec 1). Abundant endemic.



66. **Variable Oystercatcher** *Haematopus unicolor* [E] – Most common at the North Island, first seen at Sandspit (Nov 25). Uncommon endemic.

RECURVIROSTRIDAE

67. **Pied (Black-winged) Stilt** *Himantopus himantopus* – Common throughout the tour, for example over 200 birds at Miranda (Dec 1). Interbreeds with next species, thus threatening even more the Black Stilt. Abundant native.
68. **Black Stilt** *Himantopus novaezelandiae* [E] – A distant hybrid together with many Pied Stilts seen at Mary Ashly Estuary (Dec 9 and 10). For sure, this is one of the rarest waders in the world. The extensive gravel plains near Mount Cook are this species stronghold. At a second visit near the North end of Lake Pukaki on Dec 15, we finally (despite the strong winds) spotted two distant adult birds apparently sheltering for the wind. Also a total of 3 immatures seen, both legs heavily colour banded. These immatures are very confusing because they do have some white quite similar to hybrids, and therefore are not easily distinguished from hybrids. Also a single Pied Stilt was seen, showing that also this 'major stronghold' seems at risk. The Black Stilt is markedly larger than Pied Stilt. Very rare endemic.



CHARADRIIDAE

69. **Masked Lapwing** *Vanellus miles* – Common throughout the tour, seen almost daily. Abundant native.
70. **Banded Dotterel** *Characrius bicinctus* [E] – A less “abundant endemic” than our bird book suggested. Seen on 4 days, first at Miranda (Dec 7) and highest count (20+) on Dec 15. Abundant endemic.



71. **New Zealand Dotterel** *Charadrius obscurus* [E] – Seen in low numbers at the North Island. First observation was a total of 8 distant birds at Sandspit (Nov 25), also a first breeding bird at Tiritiri Matingi Island. Locally common endemic.



72. **Black-fronted Dotterel** *Euseyornis melanops* – Two birds at a little pond or lake between Blenheim and Kaikoura (Dec 7). Locally common native.
73. **Wrybill** *Anarhynchus frontalis* [E] – Ten birds at the mudflats of Mangere Bridge, later about 50 birds at Miranda (Dec 1). Also about 10 birds at their breeding stronghold at the North end of Lake Pukaki on Dec 15. Locally common endemic.



SCOLOPACIDAE

74. **Red Knot** *Calidris canutus* – Over 500 birds at Miranda (Dec 1). Abundant arctic migrant.
75. **Red-necked Stilt** *Calidris ruficollis* – Two birds at Mangere Bridge (Dec 1). Common arctic migrant.
76. **Curlew Sandpiper** *Calidris ferruginea* – Two birds at Miranda (Dec 1). Uncommon arctic migrant.
77. **Bar-tailed Godwit** *Limosa lapponica* – Seen on 4 days, by far the highest numbers (5,000+) at Miranda (Dec 1). Abundant arctic migrant.
78. **Marsh Sandpiper** *Tringa stagnalis* – Two birds at Miranda (Dec 1). Uncommon arctic migrant.
79. **Ruddy Turnstone** *Arenaria interpres* – A total of 8 distant birds at Kaikoura (Dec 7). Common arctic migrant.

LARIDAE

80. **Southern Black-backed (Kelp) Gull** *Larus dominicanus* – Common throughout most of the tour, first seen at Sandspit (Nov 26). Abundant native.

81. **Red-billed Gull** *Larus navaehollandiae* – A very common bird, seen almost daily and up to 100+ birds per day, first seen at Sandspit (Nov 25). Abundant native.



82. **Black-billed Gull** *Larus bulleri* [E] – Clearly less common than previous species, seen at the various coasts and island but generally in smaller numbers than previous species. First seen at Sandspit in small mixed flocks (Nov 25). Locally common endemic.



STERNIDAE

83. **Caspian Tern** *Hydroprogne caspia* – Seen in low numbers, 1-4 birds per day, on 7 days. Again, first encountered at Sandspit (Nov 25). Uncommon native.
84. **Little Tern** *Sternula albifrons* – Clearly not a common species in New Zealand, only two birds at Kaioura (Dec 7). Uncommon Asian migrant.
85. **(New Zealand) Fairy Tern** *Sterna nereis* – Six distant breeding birds at Waipu (Nov 30). Very rare native.
86. **Black-fronted Tern** *Chlidonias albostratus* [E] – Seen on 6 days, first seen well during the whale watching tour at Kaikoura (Dec 9). Locally common endemic.

87. **White-fronted Tern** *Sterna striata* – Common throughout the tour, seen first at Sandspit (Nov 25). Abundant native.

STERCORARIIDAE

88. **Arctic Skua** *Stercorarius parasiticus* – Seen in low numbers on 6 days, first encountered at Tiritiri Matingi (Nov 27). Common Arctic migrant.
89. **Brown (Southern) Skua** *Catharacta antarctica* – Great views of 3 single birds during the pelagic at Stewart Island (Dec 20). Locally common native.



COLUMBIDAE

90. **Rock Pigeon** *Coluba livia* [I] – Seen on various days. Common European introduction.
91. **New Zealand Pigeon** *Hemiphaga novaeseelandiae* [E] – A spectacular bird, rather common, seen almost daily throughout the tour, first seen at Sandspit (Nov 25). Common endemic.



92. **Spotted Dove** *Streptopelia chinensis* [I] – Seen on 2 days. Locally common Asian Introduction.

PSITTACIDAE

93. **Kea** *Nester notabili* [E] – Seen or heard 7 days, first seen at very close range at Arthur's Pass (Dec 10). A bold and curious bird. Locally common endemic.



94. **Kaka** *Nester meridionalis* [E] – A single bird flying over at Sandspit (Nov 26). By far most common at Stewart Island (over 20 birds) on Dec 19. Locally common endemic.



95. **Eastern Corella** *Platycercus eximius* [I] – Seen on 5 days at the North Island. Locally common Australian introduction.

96. **Red-crowned Parakeet** *Cyanoramphus novaezeelandia* [E] – A re-introduced species, seen in good numbers at Tiritiri Matingi (Nov 27-29), and at Stewart and Ulva Island (Dec 19-20). Locally common endemic.



CUCULIDAE

97. **Shining Cuckoo** *Chrysococcyx lucidus* – A single bird heard calling at Queen Charlotte Park (Dec 5). Common native.
98. **Long-tailed Cuckoo** *Eudynamys taitensis* [E] – A single bird flying in a split second when we returned, quite tired, from the Tongariro Alpine Crossing (Dec 3). Without any doubt a ‘BVD’ (“better views desired”). Locally common endemic.

STRIGIDAE

99. **Morepork** *Ninox novaeseelandiae* – Heard on 4 nights, first at Sandspit (Nov 25). Abundant native.

ALCEDINIDAE

100. **Sacred Kingfisher** *Todiramphus sanctus* – Seen almost daily at North Island, first seen at Sandspit (Nov 25). Abundant native.

HIRUNDINIDAE

101. **Welcome Swallow** *Hirundo neoxema* – Common, seen (almost) daily throughout the tour, first Sandspit (Nov 25). Abundant native.

ACANTHISITTIDAE

102. **Rifleman** *Acanthisitta chloris* [E] – A male and female seen at Tiritiri Matingi (ssp. *granti*; Nov 27). More common on South Island, e.g. over 30 birds (ssp. *chloris*) along the Hooker Track at Mount Cook (Dec 15). Also seen on Stewart Island. Locally common endemic.



103. **Rock (South Island) Wren** *Xenicus gilviventris* [E] – Pff. Not so easy as suggested in trip reports. A male briefly seen on a large boulder near the entrance of the Homer Tunnel (Dec 17). Uncommon endemic.

ZOSTEROPIDAE

104. **Silvereye** *Zosterops lateralis* – Seen on 7 days, probably under recorded. First seen at Sandspit (Nov 26). Abundant native.

ACANTHIZIDAE

105. **Grey Warbler** *Gerygone igata* [E] – Common, seen or heard throughout the tour. First seen at Sandspit (Nov 26). Abundant endemic.

CALLAEIDAE

106. **North Island Kokako** *Callaeas wilsoni* [E] – A highly threatened and re-introduced species. A single bird seen very well on Tiritiri Matingi (Nov 27), less good views of another 5 birds early morning of Nov 28. Rare endemic.



107. **South Island Saddleback** *Philesturnus carunculatus* [E] – Four re-introduced birds at Motuara Island (Dec 6). Including 2 immatures. Both Saddlebacks are noisy and vocal birds. Locally common endemic.



108. **North Island Saddleback** *Philesturnus rufusater* [E] – Again a re-introduced species, seen daily up to 50+ birds at Tiritiri Matingi (Nov 27-28). Also several birds seen in the Taharannui Regional Park (Nov 29). Locally common endemic.

109. **Tui** *Prosthemadera novaeseelandiae* [E] – Common throughout the tour, although more seen at North Island. First seen at Sandspit (Nov 25). A great singer with a beautiful plumage. Abundant endemic.



NOTIOMYSTIDAE

110. **Stitchbird** *Notiomystis cincta* [E] – Again, a re-introduced species, seen up to 10 birds per day at Tiritiri Matingi (Nov 27-28). Rare endemic.



MELIPHAGIDAE

111. **Bellbird** *Anthornis melanura* [E] – Common throughout the tour, most common at North Island. First seen at Tiritiri Matingi (Nov 27). Locally common endemic.

MEGALURIDAE

112. **Fernbird** *Bowdleria punctata* [E] – Three single birds seen well at Tiritiri Matingi (Nov 27). Locally common endemic.

PACHYCEPHALIDAE

113. **Brown Creeper** *Mohoua novaeseelandiae* [E] – Again, not an easy to find endemic, perhaps due to the timing of our visit. Heard on Dec 17, a single distant bird seen at the Gunn Lake trail (Dec 16) and another 3 birds at Ulva Island (Dec 19). Locally common endemic.
114. **Whitehead** *Mohoua albicilla* [E] – Seen on 4 days, highest counts (50+ per day) at Tiritiri Matingi (Nov 27-28), but also seen -2 birds- at Pururoa National Park (Dec 2). Locally common endemic.
115. **Yellowhead** *Mohoua ochrocephala* [E] – A re-introduced species, 2 birds seen feeding quietly on the ground and not “high in the canopy” as mentioned in the field guide (Dec 19). Rare endemic.



RHIPIDURIDAE

116. **New Zealand Fantail** *Rhipidura fuliginosa* - Seen on 5 or 6 days in moderate numbers on both North and South Island, first seen at Sandspit (Nov 25). Abundant native.

STURNIDAE

117. **Starling** *Sturnus vulgaris* [I] – Seen almost daily, a common and widespread introduced species. Abundant European introduction.
118. **Myna** *Acridotheres tristis* [I] – Seen daily on North Island where introduced. Locally abundant Asian introduction.

ARTAMIDAE

119. **Australian Magpie** *Gymnorhina tibicen* [I] – A common and widespread introduced species. Abundant Australian introduction.

PETROICIDAE

120. **Tomtit** *Petroica macrocephala* [E] – Heard and seen in low numbers (1-2 birds per day) throughout the tour, except for most days at the North Island. First seen at Pururua National Park (Dec 2). Common endemic.
121. **North Island Robin** *Petroica longipes* [E] – Most common (10+ per day) at Tiritiri Matingi, where this species has been re-introduced (Nov 27-28). Otherwise rare. Uncommon endemic.
122. **South Island Robin** *Petroica australis* [E] – Seen in low numbers on 3 days, first seen at Picton along a trail from Shelley's Beach to Bobs Bay (Dec 7). Uncommon endemic.



TURDIDAE

123. **Blackbird** *Turdus merula* [I] – A common and widespread introduced species. Abundant European introduction.

124. **Song Thrush** *Turdus philomelos* [I] – Again, a surprisingly common and widespread introduced species. Common European introduction.

PRUNELLIDAE

125. **Dunnock** *Prunella modularis* [I] – Seen in low numbers mainly during the second half of the tour. Common European introduction.

ALAUDIDAE

126. **Skylark** *Alauda arvensis* [I] - Heard and seen throughout the tour. Common European introduction.

MOTACILLIDAE

127. **New Zealand Pipit** *Anthus novaeseelandiae* [E] – At least 10 birds seen well at the Tongariro Alpine Crossing (Dec 3). Also a single bird seen on Dec 15. Uncommon endemic.



PASSERIDAE

128. **House Sparrow** *Passer domesticus* [I] – A very common and widespread introduced species. Abundant European introduction.

FRINGILLIDAE

129. **Chaffinch** *Fringilla coelebs* [I] – A common introduced species. Abundant European introduction.
130. **Redpoll** *Carduelis flammea* [I] – A less common introduced species, seen in low numbers on 5 days. Common European introduction.
131. **Goldfinch** *Carduelis carduelis* [I] – Seen or heard throughout the tour. Common European introduction.

132. **Greenfinch** *Carduelis chloris* [1] – Again, a common introduced species. Common European introduction.

EMBERIZIDAE

133. **Yellowhammer** *Emberiza citrinella* [1] – A very common and widespread introduced species. Common European introduction.

MAMMALS

Common Brushtail Possum *Trichosurus vulpecula* [I]– One of the many introduced mammal species. Seen many road kills, but good views of a single (grey) individual at Ocean Beach, Glory Cove, on Dec 19.

European Rabbit *Oryctolagus cuniculus* [I]– Common and widespread.

Hedgehog *Erinaceus europaeus* [I] – Seen one or two road kills.

Chamois *Rupicapra rupicapra* [I] - A single animal along a walking trail at Cullary Gorge, Dec 12.

New Zealand Fur Seal *Arctocephalus forsteri* [E] – Seen on various days. First seen in fair numbers at the Kaikura Peninsula on Dec 7. Also good numbers at Stewart Island.



New Zealand Sea Lion *Phocarctos hookeri* [E] – A few seen, both males and females. At close quarters, the males are huge and impressive. Endangered.





Bryde's Whale *Balaenoptera brydei* – A single seen at the Hauraki pelagic on Nov 26.



(Great) Sperm Whale *Physeter macrocephalus* – A total of 3 males seen during the Kaikura whale trip on Dec 9. The world largest carnivore.



Dusky Dolphin *Lagenorhynchus obscurus* – Seen at Kaikura (Dec 8) and at Milford Sound (Dec 17).

Short-beaked Common Dolphin *Delphinus delphis* – Seen during the Hauraki pelagic (Nov 26) and near Stewart Island (Dec 19).



Hector's Dolphin *Cephalorhynchus hectori* [E] – A small and dark dolphin, endangered. Seen near Porpoise Bay, Dec 21.



FISH

Mako Shark *Isurus oxyrinchus*– Good views of a single attracted to the chum during the Hauraki pelagic of Nov 26.



Smooth Hammerhead *Sphyrna zygaena* – As previous species, excellent views. Vulnerable.



Ocean Sunfish (Common Mola) *Mola mola* – A single seen during the Hauraki pelagic.



