

# NEW ZEALAND (February) 2018    Lars Olausson



Mount Cook.

## Introduction

A visit to New Zealand is from a bird perspective rewarding any time of the year. Even though early breeding season when birds are singing is a better option than our late summer visit. Earlier and later in the season means also more seabird species and in higher numbers.

We didn't find any option to join a Hauraki Gulf pelagic trip or one on a larger vessel around Stewart Island.

We went for a family vacation, my wife are not a keen birder but are really enjoying forest walks, beaches and spectacular nature. To combine this with birds is easy on New Zealand though most of the high quality bird watching is made in regional parks or sanctuaries that often require short visits or only part of a day and rarely a full day

*So remember this when continuing reading the report – this was NO HARD CORE birding trip – it was a family trip| vacation.*

Overall we had good weather with temperatures well above the 30's on many days.

We had rain the last day in Dunedin and on our way south through the Catlins, as well as one day on Stewart Island, otherwise mostly sunshine, moderate winds and lovely summer weather.

We were lucky to avoid the cyclone Gita when "she" was hitting the South Island. At that time we were driving well north of Wellington. We luckily avoided a storm on the North Island when we were on the South Island. These unpredictable weathers can destroy a well-planned vacation so we really advice people to download a weather app or check the weather reports on the TV and be prepared to change route, even in February.

Important are also to check road closures to avoid unplanned routes, for example was the road both north and south of Kaikoura re-opened again in mid-December 2017 after the earthquake 2016. BUT after the cyclone Gita they were closed again with short notice due to heavy landslides. We met a birding couple on Tiritiri who wasn't aware of this and they had to drive an extra 400+ un-planned km. They were not happy when we told them. (See link and comment below in useful link section).

During our stay travelers got stuck in Haast Pass because of snowfall and a couple of weeks later many tourists found the road to Abel Tasman National Park cut off by landslide and flooding in the footsteps of the cyclone Gita. Just give a few examples of what can happen due to rapid weather changes.

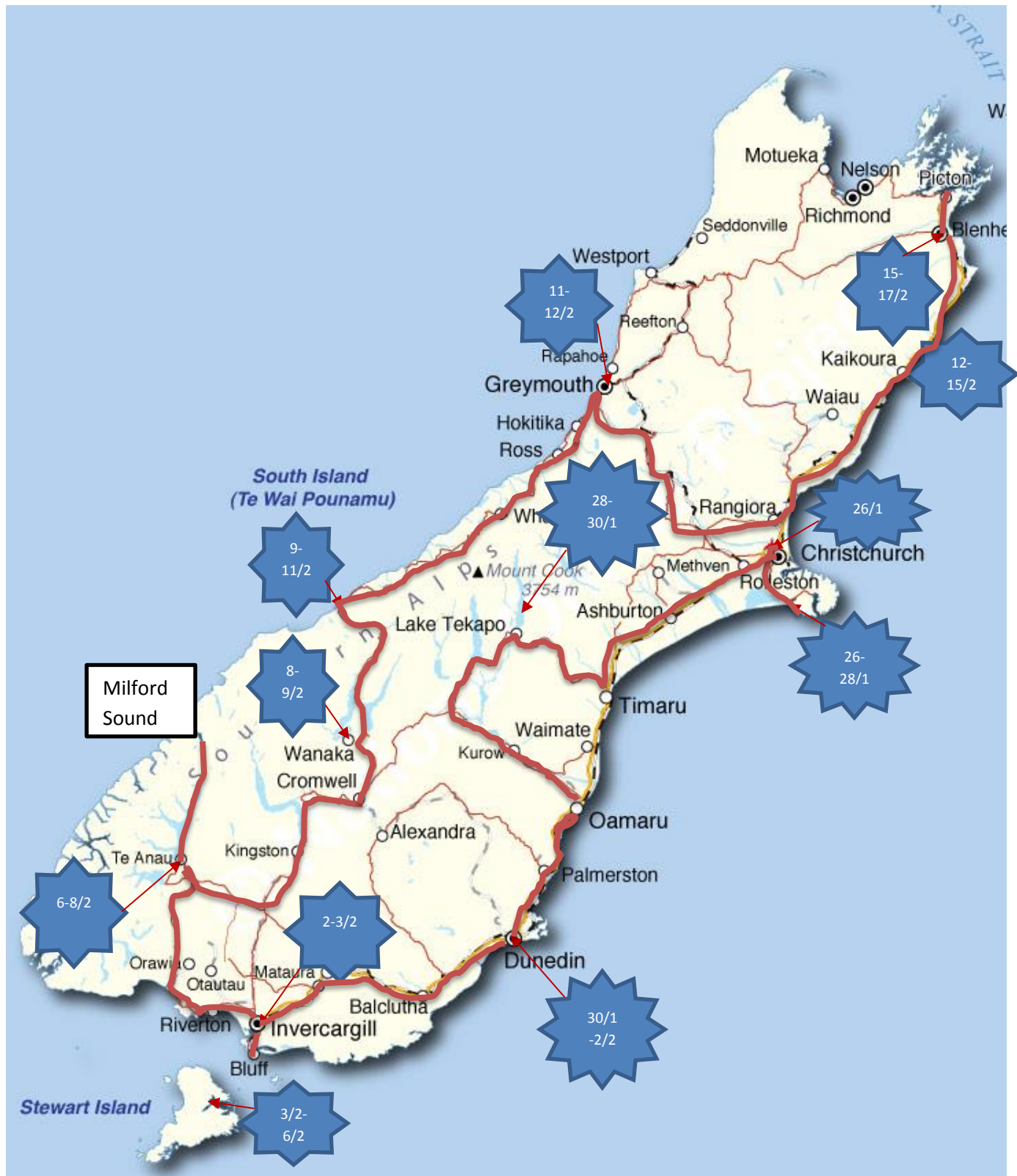
## **Planning**

We started our planning by reading travel guides and ready self-drive routes from various travel agencies, as well as I read a number of birding trip reports. We also looked a lot of travel videos on YouTube.

Thereafter we wrote down what we wanted to see and where those sites were situated. We then started to make our own itinerary from the knowledge that we had 5 weeks to spend on this vacation. After we had a ready plan for driving from Auckland to the South Island, including a few days north of Auckland, a visit to Stewart Island and a flight from Christchurch to Auckland and then back home towards Europe.

During that process we realized that a lot of ready journeys for groups started in Christchurch so there must be a good chance to get there from abroad and start our own journey on the South Island and end on

## South Island



Our route on the South Island, dates are overnight stays.

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the north. This meant that we could save the flight from south to north and have that day for real vacation, instead of wasting a day on airports and all the logistics around flights. So we re-scheduled the whole trip.

After we had picked out the overnight locations, how many nights we would like to stay on each overnight place we sent an enquiry to the Swedish travel agency Söderhavsresor ([www.soderhavsresor.se](http://www.soderhavsresor.se)) and asked for an offer of the whole package.

As we had from the beginning decided to arrive home at least three days before going back to work we ended up with some problems getting flight tickets. We wanted to use the new route from Stockholm to Singapore (Singapore Airlines) with a touchdown in Moscow, instead of going through London/Heathrow with an extra four to five hours in the air. So finally we got six weeks instead of five. So what we said!!

After that process we got a new offer from Söderhavsresor for the whole package. We changed some accommodations and then decided to accept the offer.

Söderhavsresor then arranged with all the bookings; flights, car rental and accommodation, as well as the ferry to Stewart Island, between South and North Island (without changing car), a Milford Sound cruise and the ferry to Tiritiri Matangi with a guided walk included.

All this worked out excellent so we can really recommend their services.

### **Birding strategy**

Birding in New Zealand is very much depending on the predator free islands and mainland sanctuaries as well as a number of pelagic trips in different parts of both islands.

Going in February, as we did, is not the best option for birding, Kokako is moulting and very quiet and if the weather is calm and warm there will be less sea birds.

We didn't go for any major organized pelagic trip around Stewart Island or in Hauraki Gulf and because of that we missed maybe 5-10 species.

Finding most of the endemic land birds were no problem at all this time of the year. Although we missed the Kokako and the Rock Wren the overall result was good.

### **Literature and other useful help.**

As field guide we used The Hand Guide to the Birds of New Zealand, Hugh Robertson & Barrie Heather, illustrated by Derek Onley, the revised and updated third edition, 2015.



As a traveler guide we used the Lonely Planet Guide, 2014 and the Swedish Första Klass Reseguider, Nya Zeeland (an English name should be: First Class Travel Guide, New Zealand).

We bought a travel map from the Swedish Kartbutiken, International travel Maps New Zealand, scale 1:950,000 (waterproof edition).

The rental car had an integrated navigator system and we down loaded maps from the app Navmee GPS and New Zealand offline (also an app) to our Ipad, both used offline when travelling.

### More useful links

[www.metservice.com](http://www.metservice.com) very useful weather information

<https://ebird.org/newzealand/home>

<http://www.birdingnz.net>

<https://www.stewartisland.co.nz>

<http://regionalparks.aucklandcouncil.govt.nz>

(Covers Tawharanui, Shakespear and more parks)

For information of high and low tide we used the app NZ tides.

***Last, but not least, keep an everyday look at road conditions as they changes rapidly.*** We used:

<http://www.journeys.nzta.govt.nz/traffic/?layers=road-closures>

### Visited sites of importance.



Blue Penguin, Akaroa Harbor

**Akaroa Peninsula** is not more than 1 ½ hour drive from Christchurch and we wanted to catch up with some sleep before hitting the road for longer drives. There are a lot of bays along the last stretch of the road to explore and look for oystercatchers and gulls.

The harbor cruise is maybe the best place in New Zealand to look for the rare *Hector's Dolphin*. We also saw *Little Penguins*, both on the water and onshore. (Link in the daily log).

**Best birds:** Blue Penguin, Spotted Shag.

**Lake Pukaki/Glentanner** is one of the few places to go to in search of Black Stilt. My research brought me to the Glentanner airfield at the northern end of Lake Pukaki. After having had a look over the area from a parking space just after the sign "Glentanner" we decided that the distance was too far. Drove another few hundred meters along the main road and found a small gravel road (to the right) that ended by a fence, just some hundred meters from the main road. There was enough space to park beside the road in front of the gate. From here we walked along the first stream towards the lake shore, passed a small stream and found a smallish height of pebbles which we carefully climbed and from here we could easily scoop the shore. We had no problem to find the Black Stilts, although they were feeding scattered from each other and most of them were quite distant, but some really close, giving us excellent views.

**Best birds:** Black Stilt, NZ Falcon, Black-fronted Tern.

**Otago Peninsula** is most famous for the mainland colony of Northern Royal Albatross at Taiaroa Head. From the Albatross Center one can get a guided walk but the albatrosses can easily been viewed from the platform just a short walk from the parking area, although no nest are visible from here (the guided walk shows nests).

The peninsula also offers several spots for Little Blue and Yellow-eyed Penguins. The latter seen from Sandfly Bay, signposted from the road towards the albatrosses. Beware of a really hard walk down to the beach and back up over steep sand dunes, two steps up and one back. But it was well worth it at the end.

**Best birds:** N. Royal Albatross, Yellow-eyed Penguin, Otago Shag.

**Stewart Island** is NZ Third Island and almost entirely a national park. There are a lot to do with many roads to explore by foot or bike, but quite steep hills to pass over. (There's a bike rental shop in Oban that got electric bikes).

The kiwi walk to see ***Southern Brown Kiwi*** on Ocean Beach is now run by Stewart Island Experience. Despite bad judgements in trip reports that I read prior our journey we made a booking online in advance to be sure of having at least the possibility to see a Kiwi.

<https://www.stewartislandexperience.co.nz>

The have probably got too many claims so they have to change behavior and route. We saw two kiwis on the beach and that was magical.



Ulva Island

More musts are Ulva Island and at least one pelagic trip.

To Ulva one need to book a water taxi, do that in advance (a few hours before travel) because they can be quite busy and can't always pick up or drop off the time one has planned. Ulva is another magical place to visit and with a small chance of seeing a kiwi in daylight.

Rakiura Charters <http://www.rakiuracharters.co.nz/> runs the water taxi service, but they can also arrange private pelagic trips. If there are just a few participants they use a smaller boat and don't go enough far out. The good thing is that the skipper knows where to go for Fiordland Crested Penguin. They try to keep an eye of them even when they are moulting (late NZ summer) and during that time they can be quite tricky to catch up with.



**Best birds:** Southern Brown Kiwi, Fiordland Crested Penguin, Yellowhead, South Island Saddleback.

**Kaikoura** is the place to go to for pelagic trips to see both sea birds and whales. <http://www.albatrossencounter.co.nz/albatross/> or <https://www.whalewatch.co.nz/>

Both trips are run very professionally and with a high score rate, of course depending on time of the year.

There are also some historic places from whale catching era and also a nice walking track along the coastline south of town.

Don't forget to pay the museum a visit and learn about the chaotic minutes of the huge earthquake in November 2016 and the life after the nature catastrophe.

**Best birds:** Antipodean Albatross, Westland Petrel.

**Lake Elterwater** was only visited as a coffee break. There's a small platform just 50 meters away from the parking area. A lot of ducks and shelducks were seen but we also saw a couple of the long staying Hoary-headed Grebes here.

**Best birds:** Hoary-headed Grebe.

**Queen Charlotte Sound** cruise is to secure sightings of the King Shag. We booked this cruise well in advance. The first stop for us was just a rock, but looking carefully there were a few King Shags. We also got an hour on Motuara Island, where there are released saddlebacks, parakeets and other NZ endemics to see.

The cruise is also good for seeing Hector's Dolphin, although we had tough times and saw just two animals briefly.

[http://www.e-ko.nz/product/Wildlife-Island-Sanctuary-and-Dolphin-Cruise-\(Motuara-Island\)](http://www.e-ko.nz/product/Wildlife-Island-Sanctuary-and-Dolphin-Cruise-(Motuara-Island))

**Best birds:** NZ King Shag, Yellow-crowned Parakeet.

**Zealandia** is a stunning sanctuary in the suburbs of Wellington and well worth a visit if staying overnight in town and have a day to spend.

<https://www.visitzealandia.com/>

We joined a night walk including search of Little Spotted Kiwi and other wildlife and it was one of the best guided tours I ever participated in.

On a daytime visit there's a lot of Kaka flying around and also visiting their special feeders. The Stitchbird also have special designed feeders.

The track behind the dam at the far end of the sanctuary was where we found them.

Saddlebacks are a little here and there along the well maintained trails and according to the guides they also breed outside the sanctuary.

A pair of Takahe is also taken care of.

To get there take the cable car up to the botanical garden and walk 100 meters to the free shuttle bus pick up area. It's also possible to go there by car.

**Best birds:** Little Spotted Kiwi, Takahe, Brown Teal, Stitchbird, North Island Saddleback.

**Manawatu Estuary** is situated on the west coast of the North Island just north of wellington. We hadn't plan to go there at all, but as the wind was supposed to get close to storm on the east coast we decided to stay on the west side of the island instead. A stop at this estuary is often included in organized birding trips.

We stopped in front of the estuary along a no exit road but soon we found directions to reach the drivable beach with a parking space ahead. We parked here and walked towards to the beach. Not as spectacular as Miranda, neither that size but well worth a visit.

**Best birds:** Wrybill.

**Tokaanu Wharf** road is well signposted from the main road on the south side of Lake Taupo and in good condition. As we were late in the season there were no booming bitterns. A visit an early morning at the start of the breeding season is surely rewarding.

Our first visit was quite windy and therefore we just had a quick stop and easily found the grebe.

**Best birds:** New Zealand Grebe and New Zealand Pipit.

**Tongariro River Walk** in the village of Turangi is a good place to search for the Blue Duck.

We found a parking space along the Tahawai Street (no exit) and followed the track to the hanging bridge and on the other side we had a quite long walk along the river. We noticed several fly fishing people and thought that the ducks should be long gone, but on our way back we found a pair resting on rocks just a few hundred meters downstream the bridge.

**Best birds:** Blue Duck

**Pureora Forest** is on the west side of Lake Taupo and consists of a patch of mature forest with a canopy tower. Kokako still breeds here even though we didn't see or hear any (see below on Tiritiri part). Kaka

is flying around the tower as well as Yellow-crowned Parakeet and other NZ endemics. An early morning visit in the breeding season is probably a very good option, rather than our mid-day, late February visit.

**Best birds:** (North Island) Kaka, Yellow-crowned Parakeet.

**Miranda Shorebird Center** is a spectacular place with thousands of godwits, oystercatchers and wrybills. When we visited the place there was a local guide picking out the different species for those not familiar with their waders. A high tide (plus 2 to minus 2 hours) is almost a must to get close views of the birds. Visit the shorebird center and purchase a Wrybill T-shirt after a successful watch!!!

**Best birds:** Wrybill.



The bird hide at Miranda

**Shakespear Regional Park** is on the outer end of a peninsula just a few kilometers by car from Gulf Harbour and by boat away from Tiritiri Matangi. And yes, there are species moving from Tiritiri to Shakespear. Red-crowned Parakeet was supposed to have bred there this season our Tiritiri guide told us. But the Bellbird, which was very common on the nearby Tiritiri, does NOT breed here, despite they have tried to release them, the Bellbirds always return back to their original "home".

This park had open gates 24/7 so kiwi search on our own was done.

**Best birds:** Little Spotted Kiwi, Morepork, Red-crowned Parakeet.



Tiritiri Matangi

**Tiritiri Matangi** is maybe the most well-known predator free island in New Zealand and one can understand why after a visit. There are options to stay overnight and increase the chances of bird observations, night active birds included.

It's just a short boat trip (25-30 minutes) from Gulf Harbour, or an hour and a half from Auckland.

We walked the Wattle track with our guide, through four Kokako territories (without luck), past Stitchbird feeders and out on the open space around the lighthouse, where there were no sign of any Takahe on our visit. The local guides did a good search for them, but no!

We were also shown some Giant Weta, not to mix up with Weka.

<https://tiritirimatangi.worldsecuresystems.com/home>

**Best birds:** Brown Teal, Stitchbird, Red-crowned parakeet.

**Tawharanui Regional Park** is situated on the peninsula just north of Snells Beach. As with every other sanctuary or regional park we visited the trails and tracks were well maintained and well-marked. The park presents a wide variety of habitats from beaches (NZ Plovers present on the dunes above the beach itself), a lagoon (Buff-banded Rail and Brown



Teal present) and an amazing patch of forest where the number of Bellbirds singing was not possible to even estimate. Look for Brown Teal along the trail that follows the woodland stream. We found the Takahe here as well, NOT by all the Pukekos (Swamphen) on the open grassland.

We could not see any 24/7 open entrance here so I guess one must stay in their camping ground inside the fence or join a guided walk to have a chance of seeing kiwis. Check the web site link above.

The head of the peninsula have sea bird colonies, among them the first mainland breeding site for Common Diving-Petrel. It's not that far away to Little Barrier Island from the head of the peninsula.

**Best birds:** Brown Teal, Takahe.

**NOTE:** at both Shakespear and Tawharanui parks there were nice beaches for swimming activities and loads of people on weekends. At our first visit to Tawharanui we had to leave as there was no parking space. Shakespear is a little different though the forest is well away from the beach and with a parking space of its own, but a lot of people walking around everywhere. We made a short walk through the forest just to look how the condition of the trail looked like before going there in darkness.

## **Daily log with accommodation review**

**26/1.** We arrived to Christchurch 12.50. After a slow arrival process through the customs we could finally pick up our luggage and the rental car. After a smooth paper work process at GO Rentals we then went out on the wrong side of the road to drive the 80 km to Akaroa. It took us about one and half hour to reach our accommodation; Akaroa Village Inn. Went in to the town center and bought some breakfast supplies for the next two mornings and also found us a place for a late lunch. Ended the day with a walk along the road following the coastline and found our first New Zealand endemic – the pigeon

<http://www.akaroavillageinn.co.nz/>

This was a good choice, walking distance to the waterfront, clean and spacious rooms and also with a small outdoor area for having a breakfast.

**27/1.** After breakfast we went to the ticket office of Akaroa Dolphins and booked a harbor cruise in the afternoon, nice and really recommended. Cost 80 NZ\$ each.

<https://www.akaroadolphins.co.nz/cruise/akaroa-harbour-and-dolphin-cruises/>

When that was sorted out we walked around in the neighborhood, found a small reserve called Tane. It was just a short walk through a small patch of forest.

Later we took the car and drove the scenic Summit Road over parts of the Banks Peninsula, through Duvauchelles and back to Akaroa.

Overnight again at Akaroa Village Inn.

**28/1.** Long drive from Akaroa to Tekapo, around 340 km. Stopped at Lake Ellesmere for a little birding and Peel Forest for a walk and to have a look at the giant trees. Arrived at Tekapo for a late lunch, check in and off we went towards Mt Cook in a wonderful summer weather; calm, clear skies and +25C degrees. We stopped at the very first gravel road to right, after the Glentanner sign (and airport). Parked in front of a gate and started to walk towards the shores of Lake Pukaki. After just a few hundred meters we met a birder who just seen Black Stilts. After following his directions we could count 14 individuals along the shore line.

Accommodation; Lake Tekapo Village Motel. Stunning views over the lake and otherwise OK room standard, no breakfast included.

<http://www.laketekapo.com/>

**29/1.** After breakfast we drove all the way up to Mt Cook in wonderful summer weather, temperature reaching +32C. We walked some tracks and enjoyed the stunning views. We also paid a visit to Alpine Lavender Farm. Had lunch in Twizel, where we also paid a visit to the tourist information. ***When asking around the Black Stilt protection program they told us that the guided tours are not run any longer and the hide mentioned on their web page is closed. The tourist information directed us to the DoC (Department of Conservation) office in Twizel.***

Overnight again at Lake Tekapo Village Motel.

**30/1.** Drove to Dunedin, appr 250 km. Weather still fine until we reached the coast where a thick fog rolled in. Stopped at Moreaki Boulders and had a look at those odd stones. Drove to Dunedin and checked in at our hotel, Kingsgate Hotel.

<https://www.millenniumhotels.com/en/dunedin/kingsgate-hotel-dunedin>

It turned out to be an OK hotel within walking distance to the city center. Breakfast included.



Moreaki Boulders

We ended the day with a trip to the albatross colony at Taiaroa Head and a penguin watch at Sandfly Bay. Both attempts were successful.

**31/1.** After a late breakfast we visited Dunedin Botanical Garden, the amazing Tunnel Beach at Waldronville, 11 km southeast of Dunedin and with an hour at the albatross center in the late afternoon. Still in lovely summer weather, but that was going to change overnight. Slept again at Kingsgate Hotel.

**1/2.** We woke up to a grey sky, heavy rain and temperatures down to +13C. Leftovers from a tropic cyclone that made a lot of flooding in Dunedin during the day (although we didn't see anything of that). Drove in random north out of town and finally ended up at Orokonui Eco Sanctuary where we had lunch. Drove a scenic route (according to the road signs) and stopped at a place called Shag Point which could have been a great place without the rain and wind. Overnight stay again at Kingsgate Hotel, Dunedin.

**2/2.** After breakfast we started the drive to Invercargill, only around 200 km, so we drove the Southern Scenic Road. The weather was cold, windy and some showers during the day. First stop just happened to be at a wetland called Sinclair (in the village of Clutha) where we walked

around for an hour or so. We visited several of the view points along the way through the Catlins, such as Nugget Point, Curio and Purpoise Bay, (fossil trees) and more. Ended the day with a walk at Stirling Point, Bluff after we had found our hotel in Invercargill, the Hotel Quest.

<http://www.questapartments.co.nz>

OK room for one night's sleep, included a small breakfast box in the cooler.

**3/2.** Had a quite lazy morning with packing those belongings we needed for the 3 nights on Stewart Island and drove the 25km to Bluff. Checked in and got our tickets for the ferry crossing. Though we were quite early we headed out to Stirling Point and had a nice walk along the track, adding Tomtit to the list. Drove back to the ferry and parked the car in a fenced off area. The ferry departed from Bluff 11am and arrived to Stewart Island one hour later. We were picked up at the ferry by our lodge owner from Bay Motel, got a 5 minute city tour before the check in. The afternoon spent in a lazy way waiting for our pre booked Kiwi night tour.



We took the boat to Oban, Stewart Island.....

Bay Motel <https://baymotel.co.nz/> (no breakfast included) is situated halfway up the road towards the water taxi bay with nice views over the harbor and lots of birds in the neighborhood. It was clean and with spacious rooms and a nice veranda to birdwatch from.



This is a place we recommend.

**4/2.** Early morning after the Kiwi tour though we had a pre booked pelagic trip with Rakiura Charters at 9 am.

<http://www.rakiuracharters.co.nz>

As we were only four people on this trip they used a rather small boat and in the windy conditions the skipper didn't/couldn't go as far out as he actually wanted. I was a little disappointed about that, even though we did see some good birds.

A couple of hours of the afternoon were spent on Ulva Island.

Night again at Bay Motel.

**5/2.** Woke up to a heavy rain and that was going to last for almost the entire day. We took a chance and booked a water taxi to Ulva Island and lucky us the rain stopped in the late afternoon.

Overnight once again at Bay Motel.

**6/2.** It was now time to leave this wonderful island and its environment, although we recorded a lot of rain the last one and a half day. The ferry from Oban departed 12.00 and one hour later we arrived to Bluff. Paid for the parking and started to drive towards Te Anau, a drive of around 200 km.

We arrived to our overnight stay at Te Anau Lodge at 5 pm. It was an old house with a fascinating story.

Our room was rather small but OK for a couple of nights sleep and the stay included breakfast of good standard.

<http://www.teanaulodge.com/>

**7/2.** We woke up to a morning with a clear blue sky, but chilly. After breakfast we packed the car for a full day trip to and out on Milford Sound. The temperature on the display in the car showed +5C.

The drive Te Anau-Milford Sound is around 120 km one way. We had picked out several places to visit along the way; Homer Tunnel (no Rock Wren but Kea), Monkey Creek, Lake Gunn Nature Trail (red beech forest), Knobs Flat and we also had a pre booked cruise on the sound in the afternoon.

<http://www.southerndiscoveries.co.nz/milford-sound/milford-sound-cruises>

We stopped at Homer Tunnel an hour on the way back home too, but again no Rock Wren, but more Kea's.

Overnight stay again at Te Anau Lodge.



A classic Kea on our rental car.



Milford Sound

**8/2.** This day was from the beginning saved as an extra day for Milford Sound and the other places along the road. As we had magnificent weather on our main day we left Te Anau and drove in moderate pace towards Wanaka. We arrived there in time for lunch. Thereafter we drove to the hotel and checked in. The total distance today was 225 km. In the afternoon we visited Wanaka Lavender Farm.

Overnight stay: Grand Mercure Oakridge Resort with breakfast included.

<http://www.oakridge.co.nz/>

A good place to stay and the breakfast was of good standard.

**9/2.** We left Wanaka around 9 pm and started drive the 140 km towards Haast. Our intention was to stop at various locations along the road through Haast Pass. We managed to stop at the Blue Pools and had a cup of coffee at a picnic site. Bridle Track was not possible to stop at, or even close to, because of a huge road work with traffic lights. So we had to cancel that walk. Instead we drove to our hotel in Haast and checked in. Instead of the planned walk at Bridle Track we decided to drive to Monro Beach Walk instead and had an afternoon walk through a lovely piece of forest. Before that we drove a short stretch against Jackson Bay and found a small estuary called Hapuka. A well maintained board walk was found and we took the short walk to the estuary and had a look. One of the three Great Herons we recorded was seen here.

Overnight at Heartland World Heritage Hotel, Haast, with breakfast of buffet style included. Here were also good dining options as well as a bar style restaurant around the corner. This was not a bad option at all, although we noticed that there were tourist buses arriving rather late in the evening so this was probably a popular overnight stop between Greymouth and Queenstown.

<https://www.scenichotelgroup.co.nz>

**10/2.** This day was planned as spare day if we should have been hit by heavy rains or failed with any bird species (read Yellowhead) the day before. After breakfast we drove the 50 km to Jackson Bay and had a lazy walk down to the sea along the track through Wharekai Te Kou walk. It turned out to be a rather short walk to a small beach. A nice Tomtit entertained us while we enjoyed the sea and the sun.

The rest of the day we had vacation and just didn't do anything but reading a good book.

Overnight stay again at Heartland World Heritage Hotel.

**11/2.** We woke up to a grey sky, had our breakfast and then we checked out and started the 320km drive to Greymouth. This turned out to be a long drive in pouring rain, mostly it was raining cats and dogs. Because of the rain we didn't stop anywhere except for a lunch somewhere along our way. The road up to Fox Glacier was closed due to road work (landslides) and Franz Josef Glacier turn off we passed in heavy rain, so no touristy glacier watching for us.

Arrived to Greymouth around 2pm, checked in and had a cup of coffee on the room. Packed a bag with umbrella and rain clothes and drove to Pancake Rocks. When we arrived the rain had almost stopped. My intention was also to drive Bullock Creek Road in Paparoa N.P to try to locate Great Spotted Kiwi but as this turned out to be a gravel road through a swamp forest the tourist information warned us because of the rain, both today and earlier. We went there anyway and had a look, but the road was narrow without any signs of places to meet another vehicle, so we decided to cancel this night tour. Another spot where this kiwi might be possible is along Punakaiki River Trail, 1 km south of Pancake Rocks.

Overnight at The Ashley Hotel, Greymouth, and breakfast included, a good option for an overnight stay along the road.

<http://www.hotelashley.co.nz/>



Pancake Rocks



**12/2.** Got up early and had our breakfast, checked out and started the drive to towards Kaikoura. A total distance of around 330 km. We decided to take the road via Arthur's Pass (the other option is via Lindis Pass) and this road was spectacular and at some stretches breathtaking. Stopped in Arthurs Pass (heard a calling Kea) but the weather was cold, grey and windy so we headed towards the east coast rather quickly. Very slow speed along the coastal road south of Kaikoura because of many road works still ongoing after the earthquake a couple of years ago.

Overnight stay: Nikau Lodge, Kaikoura, breakfast included, where we arrived at 4pm. <http://www.nikaulodge.com/>

A small family run lodge with rather spacious rooms and a wonderful view over the sea and just a five minute walk to the town center. The walk to the Albatross Encounter is to the right when reaching the main street from Nikau and the Whale watching Center is to the left and a little longer walk, maybe 10-15 minutes.

The new owners had just been running the lodge since January this year.

We rank this lodge very high, absolutely top two among all our different overnight stays. The best breakfast we had was served here.

**13/2.** Kaikoura all day, first a pelagic trip with Albatross Encounter 8:45am that ended at lunchtime.

After lunch we drove to Fyffes Whale House (historic place) and from here we walked up the hill and followed the track along the coastline south a couple of km's and the back again along the shore. The weather had improved quite significant since yesterday's grey skies. It was now summer weather again with temperatures in the high 20's or even higher.

Overnight stay again at Nikau Lodge, Kaikoura.

**14/2.** Kaikoura all day, first a Whale Watch trip, that started 10:30 with a short bus ride to Kaikoura harbor.

We were out on the sea for a little more than two hours. This was a very professional run trip with a high scoring rate of Sperm Whale observations. We were lucky to see two of these huge whales, and as a real bonus the whale watcher in the lookout chair spotted Orca's just a few minutes after departure.

The rest of the day was spent with leisure, except that we had an evening walk around South Bay for an hour or so.

Overnight stay again at Nikau Lodge, Kaikoura.



A part of the new shoreline, after the earthquake, south of Kaikoura.

**15/2.** Today it was time to leave this lovely little town and drive the 160km north along the coast to Blenheim. The drive was quite slow because of all the road works, but that was a minor problem to compare with driving +400 km extra on an inland detour to reach our destination. Along the road the sign of the earthquake was very obvious. The road was reopened in mid-December 2017 and closed again mid-February when the downgraded (to tropical storm) cyclone Gita hit the South Island badly with severe landslides and flooding's.

The road is a very scenic one when following the coast. We made a combined coffee – bird watching stop at Lake Elterwater. Scored with the long staying Hoary-headed Grebe(s), a rare Australian visitor.

Overnight at Bella Vista Blenheim Motel, Blenheim, no breakfast included.

<http://www.bellavista.co.nz/our-motels/blenheim>

After having checked in (around 2pm) we drove to Picton and then towards Nelson a short stretch and took the Havelock scenic road back to Picton.

If you are, as we were, going to make an overnight stay because of a Charlotte Sound trip or have an early ferry departure, avoid Blenheim and stay in Picton instead. Otherwise our hotel was of motel standard with quite spacy rooms and OK standard for a night's sleep.

**16/2.** Breakfast on the room, then we drove to Picton and confirmed our tickets for tomorrow's ferry ride to the North Island and the rest of the day before lunch we just had a lazy day. At 13:00 it was check-in for the Charlotte Sound/Motuara Island trip. This is a tour to recommend for securing the King Shag. We also did see some Hector's Dolphins and other wildlife (mostly birds of course).  
Overnight Bella Vista, Blenheim again.

**17/2.** Now it was time to leave the South Island and our departure was already 09.05, with arrival to Wellington 3 hours later. It went out to be a calm, nice boat ride with sea bird watching. Although compared to many other trip reports we didn't see that much with birds. I guess mainly because of the season and the summer weather.

<https://www.greatjourneysofnz.co.nz/interislander>

We checked in at Comfort Hotel, in Wellington city center (Kuba St) around lunchtime. Small, rundown rooms, not any comfort at all. Avoid this hotel. They also charged 30NZ dollars per night for parking space (garage) which came as a surprise at the check in and they also charged an extra 2% because we paid with card (plastic money). The breakfast was OK though.

<http://www.cqwellington.com/>

After a lunch at a nearby restaurant we took some belongings and walked (20 minute walk) to the Cable Car and went to the botanical garden where we walked around for some hours, before making the same tour back to our hotel.

**18/2.** Wellington all day. After breakfast we once again walked to the Cable Car, and up at the bot. garden we walked the few meters to the shuttle bus (minibus) and had a free ride to visit Zealandia. First of all we booked a guided kiwi tour for tonight. Lucky us, there were only two spaces left, at a cost of 75 NZ dollars each – BUT that included a free day visit. After some hours in the sanctuary we took the same way back to our hotel. We went out on the town for dinner before we drove up to Zealandia for the guided night walk. This turned out to be one of the best guided walks we have ever had. We were told the history behind the sanctuary and also their future needs and challenges and on top we did see 3 Lesser Spotted Kiwis and several Tuataras' (ancient lizard species) among other wildlife, such as Long-finned Eel.

<https://www.visitzealandia.com>

Overnight stay at Comfort Hotel, Wellington again.

**19/2.** We left Wellington after breakfast for the drive further north. From the beginning we had planned to visit Castle Point but as the weather report said very strong winds on the east coast we cancelled that visit and stayed along the west coast instead. The downgraded (to a tropical storm) cyclone Gita was on the move towards the South Island with very strong winds ahead. We had a birding stop at Manawatu Estuary and found our first Wrybill's before we arrived to our overnight stay in Palmerston North, at Hotel Coachman, breakfast included.

<https://www.coachman.co.nz/>

It was a good motel to stay overnight along the road, spacious rooms and a nice breakfast.

**20/2.** After our morning meal we started the drive towards Taupo, on the north shore of the lake with the same name, a drive of around 300 km with several stops along the road. While driving towards Tongariro N.P the weather changed and went colder, more windy and cloudy, and also some showers did hit us. We decided to be touristy and drove all the way up to the Chateau (castle). On the way back we stopped at Whakapapanui Stream and to our surprise there was a Blue Duck sleeping on a rock downstream. Continued to Tokaanu Wharf and succeeded with the New Zealand Grebe in rather windy conditions. Drove on to Turangi and found the Tongariro River Walk, where we on our way back to the car, found a pair of Blue Duck. Thereafter we drove to our hotel in Taupo, the Wellesley Hotel on Lake, with breakfast included.

<http://www.wellesleyhoteltaupo.co.nz/>

An OK place to sleep a couple of nights.

**21/2.** From the beginning the plan was to have this as a spare day if the mission to find Blue Duck would have failed so far. Instead we made it to a full day as tourists and visited Huka Falls, Pureora Forest where we spent a couple of hours in the canopy tower and then ended the day with a second visit to Tokaanu Wharf.

The night was spent at Wellesley Hotel on Lake again.

**22/2.** After breakfast we once again loaded our luggage and hit the road for the drive to Miranda, around 210 km. Along the way we stopped at TeWaihou Walkway (blue pools). Stretched our legs and walked to and then along the stream for km or so. Continued to our motel at Miranda and checked in before we visited Miranda Shorebird Center.

<http://www.miranda-shorebird.org.nz>



The visit itself was quite an impressive one, with thousands of waders and the 1800-2000 Wrybills alone was an experience of its own.

Overnight at Miranda Holiday Park, no breakfast included.

<http://www.mirandaholidaypark.co.nz/>

A well-equipped and spacy cabin for the two of us.

**23/2.** Today we had one of the shortest parts to drive on our trip, only around 120km to Gulf Harbour. We decided to take the slow road along the coast and avoided the toll road around Auckland. Arrived rather early so we had lunch and then the check-in at Gulf Harbour Lodge, no breakfast included. The hotel was OK with well sized room including a small balcony, but reception service was not acceptable as they wanted to charge us for the room, even though all our accommodations were prepaid. <http://www.gulpharbourlodge.com/>

In the afternoon we went to the nearby Shakespear R.P and walked around for a couple of hours. Decided to go back there in the evening and try for kiwis. Didn't see any this time but we heard one male and one female, and we also had nice views of a haunting Morepork. This park is open all day through a sliding gate with parking area just outside the entrance. Beware of this as a popular place for people to look at the glow worms so it might not be as quiet as one hope during a kiwi search.

**24/2.** Day trip to Tiritiri Matangi. Departure from Gulf Harbour 9:50am and returning from Tiritiri Matangi at 3:30pm, arrives to Gulf Harbour 3:50pm. We also had a guided tour on the island included in our ticket. I was first disappointed of not having all the hours on my own, but our guide Karin (originally from Germany) was an outstanding person and professional guide. She was also in charge of the Kokako rescue program, but despite that we couldn't find any even though we walked through four territories. The main reason, Karin said, was that they were moulting at this time of the year and is very quiet during that period. We walked Wattle track with her and she found us several Weta's and also a much unexpected Fernbird.

Ferry bookings: [www.360discovery.co.nz](http://www.360discovery.co.nz)

Overnight again at Gulf Harbour Lodge.



Giant Weta

**25/2.** Time to leave Gulf Harbour and drive the less than 60km to Snells Beach. Before going to the accommodation we drove to Omaha Beach in search of New Zealand Plover. No problem to find a few inside the fenced off area for the protection of this endangered wader species. Along the road back towards Snells Beach we took a detour and had a look at Tawharanui R.P, another of these fenced off, predator free (at least almost) sanctuaries. But it was crowded with weekend visitors and bathing guests so we left quickly and drove to our lodge.

Overnight stay at Mahurangi Lodge (B&B style), breakfast included. Here we stayed by an elderly couple, we guess early 70s. They told us that we were probably their last guests as they were closing down. The whole place was rather rundown but in a sort of way charming, but we wouldn't recommend it in this shape.

<http://www.pacificviewslodge.co.nz/>

**26/2.** After breakfast we went to Tawharanui R.P. and walked around until lunchtime. The Bellbird chorus was magnificent when we walked through the rainforest. As it was Monday there were only 2-3 cars before us so it was really a contrast to yesterday. We also found more N.Z. Plovers, Brown Teals, and a Takahe among other species. Inside here is also a population of North Island Brown Kiwi and the tip of the peninsula have the first mainland breeding colony of Common Diving-petrels as well as Grey-faced Petrel. Definitely a sanctuary to visit if time can aloud that short detour.

We couldn't find any way to get in there at nighttime unless staying at their campsite or joining a guided walk.

<http://regionalparks.aucklandcouncil.govt.nz/tawharanui>

Overnight again at Mathurangi Lodge.

**27/2.** Now was the time for us to leave and drive to our final destination on New Zealand, Auckland, for an overnight stay before going back home.

The drive to Auckland the short way was appr 90 km but we drove smaller roads, avoiding the toll road again and felt a bit as real tourists, not birding tourists. Arrived to the hotel shortly after 1pm and checked in. Then we continued our touristy behavior and had a city walk with a nice dinner included.

Overnight at Auckland City Hotel, Hobson St in the city center, breakfast included. This was another of those hotels that charged extra for the parking lot (30NZ\$ per night), otherwise good rooms and an OK breakfast.

<http://www.aucklandcityhotel.co.nz/>

**28/2.** Left our accommodation after breakfast and drove to the international airport south of Auckland, a drive that took us around 20 minutes. Returned the car to the rental company and got a lift to the terminal by their shuttle bus. Our departure was at 1.30pm from New Zealand for the flight to Singapore, where we arrived 6.25pm local time. Night at Peninsula Excelsior Hotel, buffet breakfast included.

**The stay in Singapore, both before and after the New Zealand trip is a separate trip report.**

### **Abbreviations**

N.T = Nature Trail

R.P = Regional Park

WBG = Wellington Botanical Garden

**E** = Endemic

**I** = Introduced species

The species list below follows IOC spreadsheet 7.3 2017. We recorded 119 species (+ Wild Turkey and Peafowl, which I didn't bring in to the species list. Both those species were only seen around Auckland).

## Species list

### **Southern Brown Kiwi** (*Apteryx australis*) **E**

2 seen and 1 male heard on the kiwi trip to Ocean Beach, Stewart Island 3/2 and 1 seen Ulva Island 4/2.



Southern Brown Kiwi on Ulva Island.

### **Little Spotted Kiwi** (*Apteryx owenii*) **E**

3 seen and 1 male heard Zeelandia 18/2 and 1 male and 1 female heard Shekspear R.P 23/2.

*There is around 150 LSK in Zeelandia and they are breeding and doing well according to our guide. In Shekspear there are 20 birds, 10 from Tiritiri and 10 from Kapiti.*

### **Canada Goose** (*Branta Canadensis*) **I**

Common. Seen in various numbers at most of the wetlands and lakes.

### **Black Swan** (*Cygnus atratus*) **I**

Common. High concentrations at Lake Ellesmere and Tokaanu Wharf, Lake Taupo.

*Both lakes hosted at least 1000 swans.*

### **Blue Duck** (*Hymenolaimus malacorhynchos*) **E**

1 seen Whakapapanui Stream, Tongariro N.P and 1 pair seen just below



the hanging bridge Tongariro River Walk, Turangi 20/2.

*Note that the bird in Whakapapanui Stream was seen from the bridge passing the stream along road 48, NOT 47, which also passes the very same stream but earlier on the drive. Road 48 is the final part after taking the last turn up against the Chateau and visitor center.*

*This is a threatened species with a population of around 2500 birds.*



Blue Duck at Whakapapanui Stream and the pair Tongariro River Walk.

### **Paradise Shelduck** (*Tadorna variegata*) **E**

Common. Several wetlands hosted 100 or more.



Paradise Shelduck, male and female.

### **Australasian Shoveler** (*Spatula rhynchotis*)

Seen in small numbers at various wetlands.

### **Pacific Black Duck** (*Anas superciliosa*)

We had two observations of birds that looked like genuine PBD. 1 lonely bird together with a Paradise Shelduck at Te Waihou Blue Springs 22/2 and a small flock of 6 birds Snells Beach 27/2.

*This small flock was keeping themselves together and well apart from the Mallards.*



**Mallard** (*Anas platyrhynchos*) **I**  
Common.

**Grey Teal** (*Anas gracilis*)

Fairly common at most wetlands, highest count was at Lake Ellesmere where we estimated more than 200.

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

A total of 8 were seen Zeelandia 18/2, 1 pair Tiritiri Matangi 24/2 and up to 5 Tawharanui R.P 25-26/2.

*This is duck forages along forest streams late evenings and at nighttime. The estimated population is around 3000 individuals.*



Brown Teal, Tawharanui R.P and in the pond Tiritiri Matangi.

**New Zealand Scaup** (*Aythya novaeseelandiae*) **E**

A common duck on the South Island. Around 200 were seen in a roadside lake just outside Twizel 30/1, around 300 at Sinclair Wetlands just south of Dunedin 2/2 and at least 100 Lake Taupo 20/2.

Smaller numbers also seen in several lakes along our route, mainly on the South Island.

**California Quail** (*Callipepla californica*) **I**

8 seen Akaroa 26/1, a family party of 8 Lake Wanaka 8/2 and 1 pair Shakespear R.P 23/2.

**Brown Quail** (*Coturnix ypsilophora*) **I**

3 seen Tiritiri Matangi 24/2 and 1 Tawharanui R.P 26/2.



California Quail



Brown Quail

### **Fiordland Penguin (*Eudyptes pachyrhynchus*) E**

1 seen off Stewart Island 3/2 and 2 seen on the pelagic trip Stewart Island 4/2.

*The first one found by luck when we were looking at a Yellow-eyed Penguin, as a starter before going to Ocean Beach and the kiwis. For the other two I am sure our skipper new about because he went straight towards them when we left Oban.*

*A tricky bird to find after their breeding season is over as they at this time of the year are moulting and therefor hiding among stones and rocks.*

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

3 seen Sandfly Bay, Taiaroa Head 30/1 and 1 seen off Stewart Island 3/2.

*Another endangered species with a population of only 3500-4000 birds.*



Fiordland Penguin





Yellow-eyed Penguin fighting the sand dunes at Sandfly Bay.

**Blue Penguin** (*Eudyptula minor*)

8 seen on the Akaroa Harbor Cruise 26/1, 4 Stewart Island (Oban Harbor) 3/2, 2 seen on our pelagic trip Stewart Island 4/2 and 5 seen on our way back to Gulf Harbour from Tiritiri Matangi 24/2.

**Antipodean Albatross** (*Diomedea antipodensis*)

2 females Albatross Encounter pelagic trip, Kaikoura 13/2.  
*This split is not yet recognized by Clements.*



Antipodean Albatross

**Southern Royal Albatross** (*Diomedea epomophora*)

2 seen on the pelagic trip off Stewart island 4/2, 2 Albatross Encounter pelagic trip, Kaikoura 13/2 and 1 seen on the whale watching trip off Kaikoura 14/2.

*Recognized as Royal Albatross by Clements.*



Southern Royal Albatross

**Northern Royal Albatross** (*Diomedea sanfordi*)

Around 10 seen at the breeding colony Taiaroa Head, Dunedin 30-31/1.

*This split is not yet recognized by Clements.*

**Shy (White-capped) Albatross** (*Thalassarche cauta steadi*)

The most commonly seen albatross on the pelagic trips. Highest count was around 50 off Stewart Island 4/2. A few was seen even in the harbor, Oban 3-5/2.

*The ssp steadi is the one in New Zealand waters. Some authorities think this is a potential split from cauta.*

**Salvin's Albatross** (*Thalassarche salvini*)

5 seen on the pelagic trip off Stewart Island 4/2, around 15 Albatross Encounter pelagic trip, Kaikoura 13/2 and 5 seen on the whale watching trip off Kaikoura 14/2.





Salvin's Albatross



Buller's Albatross



Shy Albatross



Northern Royal Albatross

### **Buller's Albatross** (*Thalassarche bulleri*)

A fairly common albatross around Stewart Island, 1 even seen in the harbor, Oban 3/2 and 5/2, about 15 were seen on the pelagic trip off Stewart Island 4/2 and 1 seen from the ferry Oban-Bluff 6/2.

### **Northern Giant Petrel** (*Macronectes halli*)

4 Albatross Encounter pelagic trip, Kaikoura 13/2.

### **Cape Petrel** (*Daption capense*)

Only seen on Albatross Encounter pelagic trip, Kaikoura 13/2 and on the whale watching trip off Kaikoura 14/2. Around 20 birds the 13<sup>th</sup> and less than 10 on the 14<sup>th</sup>.

### **Fairy Prion** (*Pachyptila turtur*)

1 seen from the ferry Oban-Bluff 6/2 and 1 seen from the ferry Picton-Wellington 17/2.

### **Cook's Petrel** (*Pterodroma cookii*)

1 seen off Stewart Island 3/2, 1 on the pelagic trip off Stewart Island 4/2 and 1 from the ferry Oban-Bluff 6/2.





Northern Giant Petrel



Cape Petrel

**White-chinned Petrel** (*Procellaria aequinoctialis*)

10 Albatross Encounter pelagic trip, Kaikoura 13/2 and 5 on the whale watching trip off Kaikoura 14/2.

**Westland Petrel** (*Procellaria westlandica*)

15 Albatross Encounter pelagic trip, Kaikoura 13/2, 2 on the whale watching trip off Kaikoura 14/2 and 2 seen Picton-Wellington 17/2.



Westland Petrel



White-chinned Petrel

**Buller's Shearwater** (*Ardenna bulleri*)

3 seen on the Albatross Encounter pelagic trip, Kaikoura 13/2, 3 on the whale watching trip off Kaikoura 14/2 and 1 seen Picton-Wellington 17/2.

**Sooty Shearwater** (*Ardenna grisea*)

Thousands seen from Stirling Point, Bluff to Stewart Island 3/2 and thousands off Stewart Island 4-5/2.

**Flesh-footed Shearwater** (*Ardenna carneipes*)

10 Albatross Encounter pelagic trip, Kaikoura 13/2 and 2 on the whale watching trip off Kaikoura 14/2.

**Fluttering Shearwater** (*Puffinus gavia*) **E**

Around 200 Queen Charlotte Sound 16/2, hundreds from the ferry Picton-Wellington 17/2 and 35 from the to Tiritiri Matangi 24/2.

**Hutton's Shearwater** (*Puffinus huttoni*) **E**

10 Albatross Encounter pelagic trip, Kaikoura 13/2.

**Common Diving Petrel** (*Pelecanoides urinatrix*)

5 from the ferry Picton-Wellington 17/2.

**Hoary-headed Grebe** (*Poliiocephalus poliocephalus*)

At least 2, maybe 3 still at Lake Elterwater 15/2.

*This is a rare Australian vagrant and has been there for quite a while. According to NZ bird forum [www.birdingnz.net](http://www.birdingnz.net) there are 2 pairs breeding there, photos of small chicks. There is also a pair of NZ Grebe in the lake and this is a rare species on the South Island.*

**New Zealand Grebe** (*Poliiocephalus rufopectus*) **E**

Up to 5 seen Tokaanu Wharf, Lake Taupo 20-21/2.



New Zealand Grebe

**Great Crested Grebe** (*Podiceps cristatus*)

1 pair Lake Tekapo 29/1, 3 were seen in a roadside lake just outside Twizel 30/1, 3 Lake Wanaka 8/2 and 1 pair Lake Elterwater 15/2.

**Royal Spoonbill** (*Platalea regia*)

A fairly common species around wetlands on both islands. On the South Island also seen on coastal sites like Taiaroa Head and Nugget Point Catlins.

A total of 201 individuals were logged.

**Great Egret** (*Ardea alba*)

1 Milford Sound 7/2, 1 Hapauka Estuary, Haast 9/2 and 1 roadside bird Haast-Greymouth 10/2.

*A rare breeder around Okarito.*

**White-faced Heron** (*Egretta novaehollandiae*)

Common. A total of 100 were logged.

**Pacific Reef Heron** (*Egretta sacra*)

1 on the Charlotte Sound cruise 16/2 was our only observation.



Great Egret



White-faced Heron

**Australasian Gannet** (*Morus serrator*)

1 ad Taiaroa Head 30/1, 1 ad Nugget Point 2/2, 2 ad on the pelagic trip off Stewart Island 4/2, 1 ad seen roadside south of Kaikoura 12/2, 2 ad Kaikoura 13/2 and 5 there 14/2, 5 ad Charlotte Sound 16/2, 6 ad on the crossing Picton-Wellington 17/2, 1 ad on the crossing to Tiritiri Matangi 24/2 and 2 ad Tawharanui R.P 26/2.

**Little Pied Cormorant** (*Microcarbo melanoleucos*)

Fairly common.



**Spotted Shag** (*Phalacrocorax punctatus*) **E**

Common, especially along the South Island coast. Our first sighting was 75 on the Akaroa Harbor Cruise 27/1.



Spotted Shag



New Zealand King Shag

**Little Black Cormorant** (*Phalacrocorax sulcirostris*)

Fairly common on the North Island.

**Australian Pied Cormorant** (*Phalacrocorax varius*)

Fairly common.

**Great Cormorant** (*Phalacrocorax carbo*)

Fairly common.

**New Zealand King Shag** (*Leucocarbo carunculatus*) **E**

4 ad seen on the Charlotte Sound cruise 16/2 and 3 on the crossing Picton-Wellington 17/2.

*Charlotte Sound is the only place in the world that this species exists. The estimated population is somewhere between 550-650 birds.*

**Otago Shag** (*Leucocarbo chalconotus*) **E**

10 Tairoa Head 30/1 and 5 Shag Point, north Dunedin 1/2.

*A recent IOC split from Stewart Island Shag (Clement's name, and not recognized by them).*

**Foveaux Shag** (*Leucocarbo stewarti*) **E**

Common Stewart Island 3-6/2. A rock we passed by boat held around 300 of this endemic shag.

*Name changed when Stewart Island Shag were split into two species by IOC.*

**Swamp Harrier** (*Circus approximans*)

Common roadside bird of prey, and also the only regular raptor seen on New Zealand (except the falcon).

**Weka** (*Gallirallus australis*) **E**

4 seen on one small island off Stewart Island 4/2, up to 9 seen Ulva Island 4-5/2 and 1 seen Milford Sound 7/2.

**Buff-banded Rail** (*Gallirallus philippensis*)

1 seen in the lagoon Tawharanui R.P 25/2.



Weka



Buff-banded Rail

**Australasian Swamphen** (*Porphyrio melanotus*)

Common.



South Island Takahe in Tawharanui R.P



**South Island Takahe** (*Porphyrio hochstetteri*) **E**

1 pair Zeelandia 18/2 and 1 Tawharanui R.P 26/2.

*Around 250-300 birds is the total population, of which a little less than 50% still lives in the Murchison area, Fiordland N.P.*

*Te Anau has a small bird sanctuary where two pairs are held in captivity and used as foster parents, as this species seems to be kind of a not too good parent.*

**Eurasian Coot** (*Fulica atra*)

50 seen in a roadside lake just outside Twizel 30/1, common Tokaanu Wharf, Lake Taupo 20-21/2.

**Note: Estimated numbers of waders from Miranda are all copied from their web page and latest count.**

**South Island Oystercatcher** (*Haematopus finschi*) **E**

Common. Several flocks of 1000 or more were seen. Miranda Shorebird Center, the coast road from Miranda to Auckland held the biggest flocks.



South Island Oystercatcher

**Variable Oystercatcher** (*Haematopus unicolor*) **E**

Common, but less so than the previous species and seldom seen in flocks more than 45-50 birds. Highest counts were from beaches around Snells Beach 25/2.



Variable Oystercatcher

**White-headed Stilt** (*Himantopus leucocephalus*)

A common wetland and coastal bird. Highest number, around 2000, at Miranda Shorebird Center 22/2.

**Black Stilt** (*Himantopus novaezelandiae*) **E**

14 were seen on shoreline of Lake Pukaki in the evening 28/1.

1 hybrid was seen at Miranda Shorebird Center 22/2.

*One of the highlights of our trip. Thanks for the directions we got from the (local?) birder we met.*

**Masked Lapwing** (*Vanellus miles*)

Common.

**Wrybill** (*Anarhynchus frontalis*) **E**

36 Manawatu Estuary 19/2 and around 1800-2000 Miranda Shorebird Center 22/2.

**Pacific Golden Plover** (*Pluvialis fulva*)

1 Manawatu Estuary 19/2 and around 150 Miranda Shorebird Center 22/2.

**New Zealand Plover** (*Charadrius obscurus*) **E**

5 ad + 2 juv Omaha Beach, 2 Scandrett R.P and 14 Martins Bay 25/2 and 5 Tawharanui R.P 26/2.

*Omaha Beach is one of the best places for this species. Winter flocks of*

80-100 birds are seen according to DoC protection program for this species. All four locals are close to Snells Beach.



New Zealand Plover

**Double-banded Plover** (*Charadrius bicinctus*)

10 Lake Pukaki 28/1, 50 on the beach South Bay, Kaikoura, 20 Lake Grassmere 15/2, 55 Manawatu Estuary 19/2, 20 Miranda Shorebird Center 22/2 and 5 roadside Miranda-Auckland 23/2.

**Bar-tailed Godwit** (*Limosa lapponica*)

25 Karitane, north Dunedin 1/2, 150 passing over Oban 3/2, 100 Manawatu Estuary 19/2, 7000 Miranda Shorebird Center 22/2, 20 roadside birds Miranda-Auckland 23/2, 20 Omaha Beach 25/2 and 4 Snells beach 26/2.

**Red Knot** (*Calidris canutus*)

Around 150 Manawatu Estuary 19/2 and around 1800 Miranda Shorebird Center 22/2.

**Sharp-tailed Sandpiper** (*Calidris acuminata*)

7 Miranda Shorebird Center 22/2.

**Silver Gull** (*Chroicocephalus novaehollandiae*)

Common.



**Black-billed Gull** (*Chroicocephalus bulleri*) **E**

Up to 40 seen Lake Tekapo 28-29/1, 50 Lake Wanaka 8/2 and 5 Lake Horowenua 19/2.

*Much overlooked, we didn't stop for gulls in the inland of South Island. Several hundreds were around Miranda according to their web page, but we were unable to make a safe id on our visit because of the distance.*



Black-billed Gull



White-fronted Tern

**Kelp Gull** (*Larus dominicanus*)

Common.

**Caspian Tern** (*Hydroprogne caspia*)

5 Duvauchelles Bay, Akaroa Peninsula 27/1, 1 ad Kaikoura 14/2, 9 Manawatu Estuary 19/2, 2 Sandspit, near Snells Beach 25/2 and 1 Snells Beach 26/2

**White-fronted Tern** (*Sterna striata*)

Common.

**Black-fronted Tern** (*Chlidonias albostratus*) **E**

Up to 10 seen Lake Pukaki 28-29/1.

**Domestic Dove** (*Columba livia domestica*)

*Fairly common to common, mainly in the bigger cities.*

**Spotted Dove** (*Spilopelia chinensis*) **I**

Only seen on North Island, from Miranda (2 seen 22/2) and northwards, where fairly common.

**New Zealand Pigeon** (*Hemiphaga novaeseelandiae*) **E**

Frequently also seen outside predator free sanctuaries and islands.

Most seen in and around Oban, Stewart Island 3-6/2.



New Zealand Pigeon

**Pacific Long-tailed Cuckoo** (*Urodynamis taitensis*)

1 calling Pureora Forest 21/2, but impossible to find.

**Morepork** (*Ninox novaeseelandiae*) **E**

1 heard Haast 10/2, 1 heard Zeelandia 18/2 and 1 seen + 1-2 heard Shakespear R.P 23/2.

**Sacred Kingfisher** (*Todiramphus sanctus*)

2 roadside birds Taupo-Miranda 22/2, 3 roadside Miranda-Auckland and 1 Shakespear R.P 23/2, 1 Tiritiri Matangi and 1 Gulf Harbour 24/2, 2 Tawharanui 26/2 and 5 roadside Snells Beach-Auckland 27/2.

**New Zealand Falcon** (*Falco novaeseelandiae*) **E**

2 seen Lake Pukaki 28/1.

**Kea** (*Nestor notabilis*) **E**

5 seen around the Homer Tunnel 7/2 and 1 heard Arthur's pass 12/2.  
*Occurs only on the South Island and is highly endangered with a population estimated to be as low as 3000 birds.*

**New Zealand Kaka** (*Nestor meridionalis*) **E**

Up to 12 seen Oban, Stewart Island 3-6/2, at least 5 seen Ulva Island 4 and 5/2, 2 WBG 17/2, common Zeelandia 18/2, 10 Pureora Forest 21/2



and 1 seen Tawharanui R.P 26/2.



Kea



Kaka

**Eastern Rosella** (*Platycercus eximius*) **I**

2 Te Waihou Blue Springs 22/2, 5 Shakespear R.P 23/2, 2 roadside 26/2 and 6 roadside birds 27/2.

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

1 Motuara Island, Charlotte Sound 16/2 and 1 Pureora Forest 21/2.



Yellow-crowned Parakeet

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

1 Ulva Island 4/2 and 1 there 5/2, 3 Shakespear R.P 23/2 and 5 Tiritiri Matangi 24/2.

*When we talked about Shakespear Park with our guide Karin on Tiritiri Matangi she told us that this parakeet just recently started to breed there and that they originally belonged from the Tiritiri population.*

**Rifleman** (*Acanthisitta chloris*) **E**

2 Ulva Island 5/2, 2 Lake Gunn N.T 7/2 and 4 Haast Pass 8/2.

**Tui** (*Prosthemadera novaeseelandiae*) **E**

A common New Zealand endemic species, frequently seen outside the predator free sanctuaries and islands. We recorded our first ones in Akaroa 27/1. Very common Stewart Island 3-6/2.





Tui

**New Zealand Bellbird (*Anthornis melanura*) E**

We recorded our first ones in Akaroa 27/1. Then fairly common to common in most regional parks and predator free islands, except Tiritiri where it's very common. Most impressive though was the song of Bellbirds in Tawharanui R.P.

*In Shakespear R.P there are no Bellbirds even though it's a very short distance from Tiritiri. Compare this with the movement of Red-crowned Parakeet.*



New Zealand Bellbird

**Grey Gerygone** (*Gerygone igata*) **E**

A common New Zealand endemic.

**North Island Saddleback** (*Philesturnus rufusater*) **E**

8 Zeelandia 18/2, at least 10 Tiritiri Matangi 24/2 and at least 10 Tawharanui 26/2.

*The Saddlebacks in Zeelandia are also breeding outside the sanctuary, in the surrounding woodlands, according to our guide. Another threatened species with a population of around 3000 birds.*



North Island Saddleback

**South Island Saddleback** (*Philesturnus carunculatus*) **E**

3 Ulva Island 5/2 and 3-5 Motuara Island, Charlotte Sound 16/2.

*Even rarer than it's cousin on the North Island. Estimated population is around 1500 birds and therefore critically endangered.*

**Stitchbird** (*Notiomystis cincta*) **E**

2 males + 4 female colored birds Zeelandia 18/2 and +10 Tiritiri Matangi 24/2.

*Another of those critically endangered species, the estimated population is less than 1500 birds. The male is really a stunning bird.*

**Australian Magpie** (*Gymnorhina tibicen*) **I**

A common roadside introduced Australian species.





Stitchbird

**Yellowhead** (*Mohoua ochrocephala*) **E**

7 Ulva Island 4/2 and 4 there 5/2.

*After reading several trip reports that this might have been the hardest species to find it was a relief to have this as the first species seen on Ulva Island, just a short walk from the pier. Yellowhead only occurs on the South Island.*

**Whitehead** (*Mohoua albicilla*) **E**

Common Zealandia 18/2, 7 Pureora Forest 21/2, at least 15 Tiritiri Matangi 24/2 and 20 Tawharanui 26/2.

*Occurs only on the North Island.*

**Pipipi** (*Mohoua novaeseelandiae*) **E**

Up to 10 Ulva Island 4-5/2 and 5 seen Lake Gunn N.T 7/2.

**New Zealand Fantail** (*Rhipidura fuliginosa*) **E**

Common.

**Tomtit** (*Petroica macrocephala*) **E**

3 Stirling Point, Bluff, 2 Ulva Island 4/2, 3 Lake Gunn N.T and 1 Milford

Sound 7/2, 5 Haast Pass, 3 Hapuka Estuary, Haast and 5 Monro Beach Walk 9/2, 5 Whare Kai Te Kou Walk, Jackson Bay 10/2 and 1 roadside Greymouth-Kaikoura 11/2.



Tomtit



New Zealand Fantail



**North Island Robin (*Petroica longipes*) E**

Common Zeelandia 18/2, 5 Pureora Forest 21/2, 10 Tiritiri Matangi 24/2 and 4 Tawharanui 26/2.



North Island Robin

**South Island Robin (*Petroica australis*) E**

Common Ulva Island 4-5/2, 5+5 heard Lake Gunn N.T 7/2 and 2 Motuara Island, Charlotte Sound 16/2.



South Island Robin

**Eurasian Skylark** (*Alauda arvensis*) **I**

Fairly common in suitable habitat.

**Welcome Swallow** (*Hirundo neoxena*)

Common.

**Silvereye** (*Zosterops lateralis*)

Common.

**Common Myna** (*Acridotheres tristis*) **I**

A common roadside bird on the North Island, especially around Auckland and northwards to Snells Beach (we didn't go further north on our trip). We saw our first one in Manawatu 19/2, well south of the distribution according to the field guide.

**Common Starling** (*Sturnus vulgaris*) **I**

Common.

**Common Blackbird** (*Turdus merula*) **I**

Common.

**Song Thrush** (*Turdus philomelos*) **I**

Fairly common in suitable habitat.

**House Sparrow** (*Passer domesticus*) **I**

Annoyingly common.

**Dunnock** (*Prunella modularis*) **I**

Less common than expected after reading what others have recorded. Most of those we saw were in heavy moult and I only heard one singing bird.

**New Zealand Pipit** (*Anthus novaeseelandiae*) **E**

1 roadside bird in the Catlins 2/2 and 1 Tokaanu Wharf 21/2.

**Common Chaffinch** (*Fringilla coelebs*) **I**

Common.

**European Greenfinch** (*Chloris chloris*) **I**

Fairly common.





New Zealand Pipit

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

Locally common and less so compared to what others have written in trip reports.

**European Goldfinch** (*Carduelis carduelis*) **I**

Common.

**Yellowhammer** (*Emberiza citrinella*) **I**

Fairly common.

**Cirl Bunting** (*Emberiza cirlus*) **I**

1 heard Otago peninsula and 1 heard Kaikoura 13/2.

## **Mammal list**

**New Zealand Fur Seal** (*Arctocephalus forsteri*)

At least 50 Akaroa Harbor Cruise 27/1 was our first sighting, after that commonly seen around the coasts.

**New Zealand (Hooker's) Sea Lion** (*Phocarctos hookeri*)

1 roosting on Ulva Island 5/2.



Hooker's Sea Lion

**Hector's Dolphin** (*Cephalorhynchus hectori*)

Around 35 Akaroa Harbor Cruise 27/1 and 2 seen on the Queen Charlotte Sound cruise 16/2.

**Dusky Dolphin** (*Lagenorhynchus obscurus*)

4 Kaikoura 13/2 and at least 50 from the ferry between Picton-Wellington 17/2.



Dusky Dolphin



**Killer Whale** (*Orcinus orca*)

A pod of 7 seen just off Kaikoura 14/2.

**Sperm Whale** (*Physeter catodon*)

2 seen off Kaikoura 14/2.



Sperm Whale

Compiled by:

Lars Olausson

Slottsvägen 21

86134 Timrå, Sweden

Cell phone + 46 70 6500592

Email: [birdinglarne@gmail.com](mailto:birdinglarne@gmail.com)