

New Zealand

Kiwis, Kakas & Keas

Sunday 29 October – Saturday 18 November 2017

Leader: Mark Ayre

2017 Cost: £6,399 single room supplement £750



The islands of New Zealand have been isolated for almost 80 million years, resulting in the evolution of a fascinating array of unique plants and wildlife. The islands' avifauna evolved in the virtual absence of mammals; consequently the birds occupied niches, which on other land areas were taken up by browsing mammals, squirrels and mice. It is these unique birds for which New Zealand is renowned – the flightless Kiwi, the endangered Takahe, and perhaps the most enthralling, the Kokako. The waters around New Zealand are home to a wide array of oceanic species; seven species of albatross and two-thirds of the world's penguins breed here. With the arrival of people came rats and stoats, and the island haven that had served ground-dwelling vertebrates and invertebrates for so long was destroyed. Many species became extinct; many more continue to be at risk and are steadily declining in number. Despite this, the human impact has fortunately been less than in most other comparable countries. Nowhere else in the world is there such a rich diversity concentrated in so small an area. Over half of the flora and more than 70 bird species are endemic. They include some of the rarest in the world – Takahe, Kakapo, Black Stilt and the world's rarest penguins, the Yellow-eyed and the Fjordland. So, there is nothing quite like New Zealand – its birds, its scenic diversity and grandeur, its character, its equable climate and its friendly people. All of these make it one of the most pleasurable and rewarding countries to explore. Ornitholidays has travelled to New Zealand on over 23 previous occasions and our local guide for 2017 will be Mark Ayre, an ornithologist and naturalist, who has led our tours for many years. Our airfare will allow you to make various stopovers or extensions to this holiday.

ITINERARY

Days 1 to 4

We leave London in the evening arriving into Auckland on the morning of the third day, where we are met by our guide and then travel a short distance to our hotel, where we stay for two nights. Here we can rest and freshen up after the long flight. We escape from the city to enjoy a gentle introduction to New Zealand birds. We shall watch Australian Gannets soaring towards their rock stack colonies, then stroll through the Kauri forests on the Waitakere Ranges. Here a range of introduced and native birds co-exist including Sulphur-crested Cockatoo, Eastern Rosella, New Zealand Pigeon and Grey Fantail. The next day we take a trip to Tiritiri Matangi, an island sanctuary in the Hauraki Gulf, just north of Auckland. Sailing by ferry to the island we may be passed by Australian Gannets, Parkinson's and Cook's Petrels, and Buller's Shearwater. Many of New Zealand's rare and endangered species now only remain on islands such as this, as the habitat can be protected from introduced predators such as rats and possums. Re-introduced rare species such

as the Saddleback, Stitchbird, Whitehead and Red-fronted Parakeet occur here as well as the unique Takahe and Brown Teal.

Day 5

Within an hour's drive southeast of Auckland lies Miranda Wildlife Sanctuary, a fine feeding ground for many wading birds, which migrate from the tundra of the arctic regions for the northern winter. Among the thousands of Bar-tailed Godwits on the shellbanks or silt flats, we may view Red Knot and South Island Oystercatchers, the rare endemic Wrybill, the endangered Red-breasted Dotterel, Far Eastern Curlew, Whimbrel, several sandpipers, Caspian and Little Terns and Sacred Kingfisher. Later this morning, we travel towards Lake Rotorua, where New Zealand Grebe, New Zealand Scaup and Little Black Cormorant are often feeding or roosting. Rotorua is situated in the central plateau of the North Island, a region of much geothermal activity. We stay overnight at Taupo.

Day 6

We have a dawn start this morning, in order to

experience the haunting call of the endangered Kokako in its natural, misty rainforest environment. Pureora Forest Park contains one of the finest areas of podocarp forest in the country, as well as a large variety of native invertebrates, like the curious Peripatus, and numerous birds. We will have most of today to gain more insight into the nature and conservation of this special forest, and to enjoy the sounds of the New Zealand Kaka, Yellow-fronted Parakeet, Tomtit, New Zealand Robin, Long-tailed Koel, New Zealand Falcon, Whitehead and Grey Gerygone. Later, our day winds up in Tongariro National Park where we stay overnight.

Day 7

This morning we head for the tributaries of the Wanganui River to look for the endangered Blue Duck. Later we may see the endemic Fernbird and Rifleman against spectacular mountain backdrops. Our journey continues southwards to Wellington, where we will embark on a ferry crossing to the South Island. Three hours, however, is at times not enough for all the



Blue Duck



Kaka

wildlife watching to be done! Wandering and Shy Albatrosses often pass by, as do giant petrels, and many shearwaters. Towards the entrance to the Marlborough Sounds Little Penguins, Spotted Shags, and sometimes dolphins can often be seen. A short evening drive will take us to Picton where we stay overnight.

Days 8 & 9

The waters and inlets of the Marlborough Sounds will be our playground this morning. A charter vessel will carry us through Queen Charlotte Sound to a small rocky islet, where a small colony of the rare King Shag breeds and roosts. Close by lies a meeting place of the Tasman Sea and the Pacific Ocean, where we will be able to see several pelagic species at close quarters as they swarm around this rich feeding ground. Before returning to Picton, we will land to introduce ourselves to the curious Weka. Later we drive to Kaikoura, where we stay for two nights. Kaikoura is a breath-taking place where the continental shelf drops abruptly very close to shore, resulting in upwellings of nutrients from the sea's depths, attracting a rich and abundant marine life. Marine mammal options include seeking out Sperm Whales, or Common and Dusky Dolphins. An excellent opportunity for birdlovers and generalists alike is a seabird excursion, where we can see flocks of cawing albatrosses, and numerous petrels and shearwaters, just metres from the boat. The afternoon will be at leisure to stroll on Kaikoura Peninsula.

Day 10

Our journey carries us across the vastness of the Canterbury Plains, and over the main divide via Arthur's Pass, a route once used by the Maori. Black-fronted Terns are regularly seen on the flats leading up to the pass, and in Arthur's Pass National Park we may encounter the cheeky Kea. We stay in Arthur's Pass region this evening and search for Great Spotted Kiwi tonight.

Days 11 & 12

This morning we will travel down the wild and wet West Coast on avenues framed by the green lushness of rainforest. Amongst this landscape is our next stop, the Okarito Lagoon, where in gentle wetlands Fernbirds may be found, as may the striking White-faced Heron, or Great Egret. We may also venture into the forest, to enjoy its

greenness and perhaps see the New Zealand Brown Creeper. We stay at Franz Josef two nights. The next day we have the chance to relax in the vicinity of the renowned Franz Josef Glacier with an evening excursion to look for the endangered Okarito Brown Kiwi.

Days 13 & 14

The next day we travel to Lake Moeraki where a delightful walk to the coast brings us onto a golden beach, where a northern colony of the rare Fiordland Penguin breeds. Later, we leave the West Coast to travel to Lake Ohau, where we stay for two nights. The southern beech forests of Haast Pass may provide us with further opportunities to view forest species such as the endangered Yellowhead. Thereafter we leave the forest behind, journeying through the vast rolling Otago landscape of schist rock, and the tussock land and clear turquoise lakes of the MacKenzie Basin. The braided rivers in this region are the habitat of the endangered Black Stilt, and we will look also for Wrybill and a range of inland waterfowl.

Day 15

We have further opportunities to enjoy the inland waders before the drive down to the east coast and Dunedin where we stay overnight. We take a late afternoon cruise down Otago Harbour to Taiaroa Head. Here at Taiaroa is the only mainland colony of an albatross species. The Royal Albatross, one of the world's largest flying birds, has a small colony. Just below them is a colony of several thousand Bronze Shags and near them smaller colonies of Spotted Shags and Little Pied Cormorants.

Days 16 & 17

We leave Dunedin for Invercargill travelling via the Catlins coast. We stop at the Tautuku Estuary to look for Fernbird. In the mid afternoon we take a flight across to Stewart Island where we stay for two nights. In the evening we make a trip to view Stewart Island Brown Kiwi. The next day we take a charter cruise around the coast of Stewart Island then out into the Pacific Ocean to look for Shy Albatross, Sooty Shearwater, Broad-billed Prion, Mottled Petrel and Brown Skua. The rare Yellow-eyed Penguin may be seen before we return to the more sheltered waters of Paterson Inlet. We land on Ulva Island for excellent viewing of most of the South Island forest birds such as Weka, New Zealand Kaka, Yellow-fronted and Red-fronted Parakeets and New Zealand Brown Creeper.

Days 18 & 19

After an early morning flight back to Invercargill we depart for Fiordland National Park, New Zealand's largest and grandest national park. The landscapes are unrivalled in New Zealand and the Red Beech forests of northern Fiordland are home to an excellent array of forest birds. They are the last stronghold of the Yellowhead, while we may also see an early arriving Shining Bronze-Cuckoo. We stay at Te Anau Downs for the next two nights. The next day, weather and snow permitting, we visit the Upper Hollyford Valley through which the famed Milford Road passes, which contains superb subalpine herbfields and boulderfields. We will look for Rock Wren, one of New Zealand's more secretive birds, which inhabits the boulderfields and cirque basins. These are home to the threatened Kea. There will also be time today for an optional cruise on Milford Sound.

Days 20 & 21

We return across the southern South Island to Dunedin Airport for our flight to Auckland where we connect with the evening flight to London, where we arrive the next morning.



New Zealand Pigeon

Outline Itinerary

Day 1	Depart London
Day 2	In transit
Day 3	Arrive Auckland
Day 4	Auckland
Day 5	Taupo
Day 6	Tongariro National Park
Day 7	Picton
Days 8-9	Kaikoura
Day 10	Arthur's Pass
Days 11-12	Franz Josef
Days 13-14	Lake Ohau
Day 15	Dunedin
Days 16-17	Stewart Island
Days 18-19	Lake Te Anau Downs
Day 20	Depart Dunedin
Day 21	Arrive London

Party Size

Maximum of 12 clients.

Accommodation

Comfortable accommodation in twin/double and single rooms with private facilities.

Transport

By small coach driven by the leader.

Includes

All flights, meals, accommodation, transport, entry fees, services of the leaders, airport taxes and tips.

Gradings

	Good
	120
	Cool to Warm
	Low
	Normal
	Moderate
	Good
	Easy
	Scheduled



Wrybill