

ORNITHOLIDAYS' TOUR TO NEW ZEALAND

Kiwis, Kakas & Keas
03 – 23 November 2009

A Personal Diary

3rd to 5th November

The group left London Heathrow on the 3rd November, and arrived into Auckland in the early hours of the 5th November. Pick up at Auckland airport was smooth with the flight coming in early. Just five minutes out of the airport we turned off and headed to a causeway leading to Puketutu Island, which juts out into the Manukau Harbour. The new VW van proved to be an excellent mobile hide, from where we were able to start observing some of the New Zealand waterfowl. The New Zealand Shovelers were very tame being used to trucks continually driving to the quarry located on the island. Some of the Grey Ducks had young ones along with the Black Swans. It was high tide so we drove round the corner to Ambury Regional Park. We made our way to one of the only hides in New Zealand, where we could avoid the odd shower which was coming through in comfort. It was perfect timing for once as it was high tide and all the birds were roosting on the shell bed. We were able to observe hundreds of Bar-tailed Godwits with a few Lesser Knot hiding on the edge. Much to our delight a pair of New Zealand Dotterel were in front of all the roosting birds; it was apparent that one bird was sitting on a nest while the male bird was moving about feeding.

We concluded our visit with lunch and then were on our way again to Muriwai Beach, which is on the west coast of New Zealand looking out into the Tasman Sea which separates New Zealand from Australia. There were wonderful viewing opportunities of both the White-fronted Terns and the Australian Gannets nesting on the headland at Muriwai. The huge cliffs above the car park had some excellent example of volcanic lava, which had been extruded underwater forming pillow lava. This was a more than adequate start to New Zealand birding after a long journey from Britain.

6th November

Guy Fawkes Night had passed without too many incidents, perhaps helped by the ban on the sale of any sky rockets and the drizzly night. The morning was fine and warm with a south-westerly wind blowing, which caused no problem for landing on Tiri Tiri Matangi. These strong winds provided us with a feeding-frenzy of seabirds just off the island. The Australian Gannets alerted us to the area, with some Black Petrels along with a few Buller's Shearwaters and plenty of Fluttering Shearwaters continually flying by. The Buller's Shearwaters were a great delight to see - grey with the black W on the back. Once ashore our objective was to keep away from the hundred or so school children who were here for the day as well. From past experience we were able to head off along the coast on Hobbs Beach towards the Kawerau Track. The weather was working in our favour as, since it was blowing strongly onto the beach, the birds were all hiding inside the forest. The whole ecosystem on this island is truly remarkable and is a wonderful example of what a predator-free status can do. It is hard to do justice to the place in words, but the close proximity to all the birds and the wonderful variety speak for themselves. Once into the shelter of the valley and the forest we were able to observe a lot of the treasures of the island like; North Island Saddleback, Stitchbird, Red-crowned Parakeet and Whitehead. Up on the crest of the island we had a marvellous encounter with a Blue Wattle Crow or the Kokako, observing how at close quarters you can gain an understanding of how large these birds are.

A few of the Brown Quail were happily doing their business alongside the track as we headed for the lighthouse for lunch with Neil, the over-friendly Takahe at the visitor centre, who hunts for any crumbs that might fall his way. A hundred school kids did not deter him! Just as we were leaving down the Wattle track and I was thinking that we had not had any good views of the North Island Robin, when out popped one on the track. The small pond close to the departing wharf was a lovely place to wait but unfortunately there had been too much disturbance and it only gave us the delightful performance of a juvenile Welcome Swallow being fed. This was the conclusion of a lovely sunny day.

7th November

Friday the 6th November must be the night for most fireworks to be let off, with the Auckland Harbour display taking place in front of the hotel. It was missed by most of the group but was quite a spectacle. We made a prompt departure to head to Miranda in the Firth of Thames so we were there for the rising high tide. Light traffic made for pleasant driving in another beautiful day of sunshine and blue skies. We had a quick glance at the ponds as we drove on to the Miranda Shore Bird Centre to catch up with Keith. Unfortunately Keith was away visiting his parents on the South Island, but we did manage to see his book on the Bar-tailed Godwit which he was getting ready to release last year.

As high tide was approaching we drove back to where all the birds were roosting on the shell bank. Looking over the stilt ponds, which were unusually full of water, there were many stilts, standing around, some on nests, some very close to us with very tiny babies walking about. This pond has always held one or two little treasures but there was nothing special today just a couple of New Zealand Shoveler and a few White-faced Herons. Out at the main shell bank which is a dominant feature of this 'Chenier Plain' birds were coming into land in huge squadrons. A few Wrybill were hiding on the seaward side of the bank and occasionally popped up, giving us a view of their curved beaks. Bar-tailed Godwits were present in huge numbers, covering the sky when they all took to the air. The single Sharp-tailed Sandpiper was easily swallowed up by all the godwits. The shell bank had a large roost of White-fronted Terns, which had one visitor, a Little Tern that flopped into roost. The Black-billed Gulls were at home with a large colony at the end of the shell bank. The Lesser Knot were holding their ground but were out-numbered by the godwits.

After having lunch at the visitor centre we headed away down through the Hauraki Plains making our way to Sulphur Point on Lake Rotorua. All four types of shags were present and nesting along with the resident New Zealand Dabchicks. The lake had a host of waterfowl, introducing us to the New Zealand Scaup. We arrived at Lake Taupo with plenty of time to spare, in full sunshine and with a blue sky. Lake Taupo was at its best and we could see the opposite end of the lake and Mt Ruapehu with its snow-covered top.

8th November

The early morning start was greeted with a day out of the bag, with no frost and a blue sky as the sun rose in Pureora State Forest Park. Our friendly Kokako sang all the time while we enjoyed our breakfast in the field. The Kokako was perched up in the top of the highest tree singing to its heart content while several Kakas flew from tree to tree making their presence known. Two New Zealand Falcons flew high overhead disappearing into the forest. While we were watching a pair of Californian Quail, a Long-tailed Cuckoo gave away its position and couldn't help itself but pay us a visit. We moved on to the watchtower where we could be high up in the tree canopy with a roof over our heads. It was a great experience to be with the trees and all their epiphytes (one tree can carry over a hundred different species of plants, all living happily together).

Heading back to the Whakamaru Ponds which was exceptionally full with water, there were Grey Teal and Australian Coot. Lunch was taken down at the southern shore of the Lake Taupo where we happily watched a couple of Fernbirds right on the edge of the road. There were a number of New Zealand Dabchicks with hundreds of Black Swans feeding on the water. Our next stop was the Whakapapa intake, where much to our surprise there was some form of construction taking place with large diggers driving down into the river and out the other side. So it was with great delight that we found two Blue Duck still in the river, just resting in the shade on some rocks. We decided to stop at Mahuia Rapids just before the turn off to Whakapapa Village to have a look for Richard's Pipit, where there were a couple. Much to our delight right under the road bridge four Blue Duck chicks had just hatched with both of their parents keeping charge. We were able to look down on them in the water and see the young ones dive below the water, as they were unaware of us above. Before going to our hotel for the night we took a tour up the ski field road, visiting the Iwikau ski field village and marvelling at the moonscape scenery. We were able to celebrate one of the member's birthdays with a wonderful mud cake.

9th November

We left Mt Ruapehu and its volcanic scenery behind, heading to Wellington to catch the evening ferry to the mainland. It was primarily a driving day with some stops on the way, so it did not matter what the weather did. In fact the overcast skies helped to keep the temperatures comfortable. Just before Ohakune

(the carrot capital of New Zealand) we headed down country to check out Blue Duck breeding in the reaches of the Manganuiateao River, which then joins the Wanganui River. We had some good views looking down on to the birds as drove alongside the meandering river, which has cut its way into the Papa mud stone country, leaving huge vertical steep walls. This country is very steep and full of slips and slides. We had to drive around various slides that had come down on the road. Once back on the main road our next stop was at the bridge over the Rangitikei River at Bulls. We had some excellent views of Banded Dotterel out on the riverbed.

Then it was on to meet the incoming tide at the Manawatu River mouth. We had perfect timing with lots of waders coming into roost. At our first stop by the Yacht Club there were several Pacific Golden Plovers feeding on the far side of the river bank, lots of Bar-tailed Godwits with a few Lesser Knot joining them. One Sharp-tailed Sandpiper was feeding with knot further down the estuary. There were both Royal Spoonbill and Cattle Egrets roosting on the dead trees in the river. As we were scanning up the river there was a Glossy Ibis feeding. We had to leave before the river made it to high tide so we could get to the ferry on time. The journey out into the Cooks Straight was a windy one with 35 knots blowing from the south. A few Little Blue Penguins were looked down on. Several Cape Pigeons followed the boat with a number of both White-capped and Salvin's Albatrosses going past as well. Dinner was taken on the boat once it got dark and then we checked into our motel.

10th November

We went down to the main wharf, which was undergoing a major construction, to catch up with Dan and head out on his small boat for a morning on Queen Charlotte Sound. With the boat to ourselves we cruised at 20 knots heading for the outer sounds. We first pulled up for some Little Blue Penguins, which surfaced near the boat. The first little pit of rocks, where sometimes the King Shags roost, was a winner with at least eight birds; the boat was able to manoeuvre in close without disturbing the birds. These King Shags are very edgy and once one takes to the air they all disappear. As we moved out to more exposed water we made a detour to watch a pod of Dusky Dolphins hunting for food. There was a feeding frenzy where the dolphins drive the fish up to the surface and the birds come down from the air. Australian Gannets, shags, Fluttering Shearwaters and White-fronted Terns were all involved hunting the fish. We paid a visit to Cook's landing place where he claimed sovereignty at Big Bay. The area was guarded by a couple of friendly Wekas.

We did not have enough time to go all the way to Cape Jackson so we turned back finding a pod of Hector's Dolphins to watch on the way. These are very small dolphins that have a dorsal fin like Mickey Mouse's ear and are the rarest dolphin in the world. At a feeding-frenzy on the way back we picked out a skua, which we all agreed, was a Pomarine. One of the stops on the way to Kaikoura was at the Blenheim sewage pond. There was a good collection of water birds, including a huge colony of Royal Spoonbills, New Zealand Shoveler, Grey Teal, Black Swans and several waders. The pair of Black-fronted Dotterel was a welcome bonus. What caught our attention was very large all black bird, about size of Black-backed Gull flying away. The only conclusion we were able to come to was it was probably an Australian Raven. We drove on to Kaikoura, the sea bird capital of the world, stopping on the way to view the New Zealand Fur Seals at one of their haul-out places.

11th November

The early morning call to go out to sea was not looking good but we turned up anyway. Once the boat staff had heard the report that the fisherman were returning home due to 35 knot winds, the trip was cancelled. We did wait until lunch just in case the front had gone through; it had but it was not calm enough to allow us to go out to sea. We made an afternoon trip up to the forest on the side of Mt Fyfe where a couple of Shinning Cuckoos paid us a visit in the car park. While driving away, alongside the river in the scrub we found a family of Brown Creepers chattering away to themselves. We also took a drive round both sides of the Kaikoura Peninsular, as it was high tide. There were lots of Hutton Shearwaters close in enjoying the rough water with one Giant Petrel. The Ruddy Turnstone we had seen the day before were nowhere to be seen.

12th November

We could not leave Kiakoura without going on the pelagic trip which is regarded as one of the best in the world. So we arranged a special early morning trip, leaving at 6am. The sea was described as moderate and a bit lumpy. The sea was a bit deceiving but everybody managed to survive without adding to the chum. Gary,

our skipper, was a wealth of knowledge with nothing slipping his attention. It seemed we were a bit early in the day for a lot of the birds so we paid a visit to a fishing boat to start with. It was a beautiful scene, with the early morning sun on the fresh snow on the mountains, with small red fishing boat and a gathering of pelagic birds. The flock of Cape Petrels was to stay with us for the rest of the day along with the Giant Petrels. Some of the Wandering and White-capped Albatross came over from the fishing boat to check us out. We moved off to try our own luck at a place known as the 'The Trench' with the chum and birds galore. The albatrosses sat like sheep at the back of the boat competing with the Giant Petrels, which are the ones that always cause trouble. We had good close-up views of these birds, with the ability to see the difference between the northern and southern Giant Petrels. The Cape Petrels had no fear, and were right in amongst it getting whatever came their way. All the Westland Black Petrels tended to hang back along with Royal Albatross, but the one White-chinned Petrel came straight in close to where all the action was. The Salvin's Albatross was easily voted the most beautiful of all the birds, especially when seen close up, the colours on its bill and head were so crisp and neat at such close range. There were so many crippling views of these pelagic birds that words do not do them justice - seeing is believing.

Sadly after breakfast we had to leave Kaikoura and make our way in the direction of the west coast but stopping at Arthurs Pass on the way. While driving round the picturesque coast we stopped to see a couple of Reef Herons at Otumatu Rock, these birds are very much on the decline being displaced by the White-faced Herons. Our next stop was at a wildlife refuge, St Anne's Lagoon where there were a couple of Cape Barren Geese along with a number of waterfowl, even a couple of Australian Coot. We were never far away from the braided rivers in the South Island. Travelling through the Canterbury Plains we saw a range of different farming practices, with the great conversion into dairying relying heavily on pivot irrigation. Then we travelled up the Waimakariri River gorge, over Porters Pass and the Torlesse range. Our long day of travelling ended at the sight of the old Bealey Hotel.

13th November

At the top of Otira Gorge we had a very entertaining time with a couple of Keas, who wanted to pull the rubbers out of the door seals, but the VW was made too well for even a Kea. While on route to Hokitika we saw a couple of Weka on the roadside and one White Heron. I left the group in town to walk down to the river mouth while the VW van was refuelled. Much to their delight they had watched a Fiordland Crested Penguin at the beach edge fishing in the shallow water. Once all together we headed back down the road to check on the sewage ponds, which we had passed as we entered town. A large number of wildfowl including, New Zealand Shoveler, Grey Duck, Black Swans and a couple of Cape Barren Geese were happily living there. The wind was blowing so strongly that all the stops at the various lakes yielded nothing.

With a few hours to spare we headed down to Okarito to see what the plan was for watching the kiwis the next night. The local operator was pleased to see us as this meant we could go a night earlier and make use of the rare fine weather. So it was not long after that we had an early dinner and went back down at Okarito starting on our quest to see an Okarito Brown Kiwi. A further briefing was given and we set off to walk the couple of miles into the forest to get in position before dark. Everyone was arranged so nobody would miss the kiwi coming out of its burrow from its daytime rest. Sure enough we heard the banging of its feet and then the male bird came out in partial light so we all got very good views before he headed away into the bush. Another pair of kiwi came out on the track and even tried to peck Ian our guide. The whole evening was a marvellous experience made all the more memorable with Ian's help and guidance. All evening there were Moreporks calling while we were watching the kiwi made it a day to remember.

14th November

There was no rush to start the day, so for the first part were made a visit to Fox Glacier, taking a walk up to the terminal face. It had all changed from last year, with the access road and car park being completely rebuilt. The walking track was in a completely different place –it was amazing how much erosion had taken place. By the time we started on down the road to Munroe's Beach it was already raining. So the walk in the forest to Munroe's Beach was wet but pleasant. We passed all the people leaving due to the rain so we had the beach to ourselves. As soon as reached the beach we were able to watch six Fiordland Crested Penguins playing in the surf. They seemed to be there for ages with four finally swimming off leaving the young to play on the surf. It was so good to have seen the kiwi the previous night as doing it in such heavy rain would have been rather a trying experience.

15th November

The heavy rain in the night had certainly brought the rivers up as we drove south but later it reduced to showers. We left the coastal forest and climbed up and over the Gates of Hell, making for the top of the Haast Pass to experience the silence of the Beech Forest in all its primeval magnificence. The cool wind was keeping everything well hidden; but at our third stop in the forest we managed to hear a Mohua or Yellowhead singing; but it proved rather hard to locate. We travelled down the valley to the head of Lake Wanaka and then along the lake and up and over to the Neck, to Lake Hawea along this lake and back to the town of Wanaka all in perfect sunshine. After lunch we headed for the Lindus Pass and beyond. We were moving in to the heart of the MacKenzie country, turning off the road at the bottom of the Lindus Pass up and into the Ahuriri Valley. This station is at the head of the valley and is one of the recent acquisitions by the government to secure and protect those special species that live and breed in the braided riverbeds. We began by having wonderful views of the endemic Black-fronted Terns that travel inland to breed in the braided rivers that are characteristic of the New Zealand Mountains in the summer time. After searching every bit of braided riverbed, we were finally rewarded with a pair of Black Stilts happily feeding in the ponds up at the head of the valley. It is the rarest wader in the world, originally only 56 birds were left in the wild, but the population is now steadily on the increase thanks due the efforts of DOC and at the last count was up to 86 birds. This was a very satisfying end to the day as we made our way to Ohau Lodge, where we were going to stay for the next couple of nights. Over the evening meal we would have been able to watch the sun set on Mt Cook if it had not been for the storm at the head of the valley.

16th November

As we left the stormy weather up in the mountains we headed for the blue sky and sunshine down the Ohau River system. At the head of the delta of the Ohau River leading into Lake Ben Moore, we were unable to see anything as a couple of fishermen were disturbing anything that might have been of interest. We proceeded to search the various ponds looking for the unexpected, after a while we decided to start to see if we could call up a Marsh Crake. We had walked round the whole pond calling as we went. Just as we were about to give up, there in the corner not more than three metres away was a Marsh Crake walking out in the middle of the pond on some algae, which covered that corner. It was great to be able to watch the bird and study what it looked like. After lunch at Twizel it was a surprise to find that the hydro canals leading from Lake Pukaki were drained of water for maintenance. A stop was made at the Tasman Delta at the start of Lake Pukaki, just below the Glen Tanner Airstrip. It was fortunate that we were able to drive in comfort in the bus and use it as a hide, not disturbing the birds. Only one Black Stilt was found at the beginning, but the highlight was two Wrybills who were feeding along with a couple of very young birds learning to feed. The Sir Edmond Hillary Centre is the new name of the hotel. Surprisingly enough we all headed out into horizontal rain, which was turning to snow with wind that nearly knocked you off your feet, to make the short walk to look down into the Mueller Glacier. The weather was too appalling to take in all the geological features so went back to the hotel for a hot coffee.

17th November

Some people were beginning to think this word Mt Cook was actually the name of a cloud but as we were enjoying breakfast a perfect day was unfolding. The real mountain poked its head out of the only bit of cloud in the sky. The drive up and over the tussock-covered Lindis Pass was very quiet since it was early in the morning. Having a look around the head of Lake Dunstan we were amazed to count 32 pairs of Great Crested Grebes; this was an unusually high number along with a wide variety of waterfowl. Our next stop was at Kingston so some of the party could photograph the steam trains for friends back home. This tourist attraction at the head of Lake Wakatipu seemed to be closed down even though it has been said a sale has taken place. It looked like the three steam engines had been recently parked up. As we had some time to spare before checking in to the ferry for the crossing to Stewart Island, we had a look out to the huge Awarua Mud flats. This little venture had us believing that surely we would find a wader roost, but we were only able to find a few godwits and one Ruddy Turnstone.

We were lucky to be taking the ferry across to Stewart Island as it was only an hour trip with moderate seas. This trip was said to be better than the bungee jumping offered at Queenstown; as we left bluff waves crashed over the top of the ferry as it travelled along at 25 knots. We had several White-capped Albatrosses all the way across and lots of Common Diving Petrels with the odd Cape Petrel. With the wonderful seafood of Stewart Island under our belts we off again in Phil Smith's boat *Wildfire* to cruise round to Patterson Inlet and then anchor up and walk the short distance to Ocean Beach. It was a beautiful still night and once we were all

ferried across to the shore it was just about dark as we reached Ocean Beach after walking through the forest. I could see with a naked eye a Stewart Island Brown Kiwi on the beach just across the creek. Phil mustered everybody down the beach and across the creek before he illuminated the bird not more than seven metres away. We watched this bird for about 20 minutes while it was feeding on the sand hoppers which feed on the kelp. It was not bothered by us at all or the light. After retreating back along the beach, with us all walking on the seaward side of Phil we encountered another three more birds, one female and two males. We also watched a rat climbing around the bank. This made for a perfect day etched in our memories and sent us very happy on our homeward voyage.

18th November

With a day to spare on Stewart Island and after the morning rain we caught an early water taxi over to Ulva Island. Phil was going to pick us up around midday from the island so we had all morning to wander around. The wind was blowing hard as we landed; this would mean the birds would be keeping to themselves. The cheeky Weka were there to meet us off the boat, and there were several others seen around the island. As we started off on our walk we managed to hear a Yellowhead but that was all. We had some very good views of both Red-crowned and Yellow-crowned Parakeets, the South Island Robins were too friendly nearly landing on our feet. The South Island Saddlebacks were just as noisy as the north island ones but still giving us excellent views. The South Island Kaka were in their natural habitat rather than flying around the town and sitting on the verandas.

We had to return to Oban Harbour to drop off the passengers before starting on our pelagic trip. On the way round Akers Point we spotted four Fiordland Crested Penguins sitting on the rocks, the boat was nicely swung in so everybody could get a perfect view of these birds. As we left Oban behind, heading for Bunker Island, there were a couple of Brown Skuas on one of the larger islands. At Bunker there was a feeding-frenzy of mainly White-fronted Terns and shags. Once on the leeward side of the island we spotted a Fiordland Crested Penguin feeding in the water. As we moved down to the far end of the island there was perfect boulder beach. As we hung around there we found a Yellow-eyed Penguin fishing close into the beach. We were able to watch him each time he surfaced. Then up on the beach was another Yellow-eyed Penguin, looking such a different bird out of the water with very pink feet and white belly. We were able to watch this bird for some time before made our way down to East Cape. The open ocean was very quiet with only the odd Sooty Shearwater, when there are normally hundreds going past. There were plenty of Common Diving Petrels all round the boat with the odd Cape Petrel. There were no big albatrosses but many White-capped with one or two Salvin's following the boat. The island that used to have one tree on it now has none but did have plenty of Stewart Island Shags in both phases, and just when we thought we were going to have a day without Paradise Shelduck we found a pair on the island. We had an early night today having had a variety of birds all day and yet another different pelagic experience.

19th November

The new ferry timetable was great and we were away on the dot of 8am. Those that sat out the back were rewarded with hundreds of Common Diving Petrels, several White-capped Albatrosses and a few Fairy Prions that kept us company. Then we had one Grey Petrel which gave excellent views as it trailed the boat. This certainly made up for the moderate crossing where few passengers were feeding the birds. We were able to head off straight away, not stopping due to the traffic to watch 15 or more Royal Spoonbills feeding on the mud flats around Bluff. After Invercargill we took the quiet scenic route to TeAnau. We called into the fishing village of Riverton and even with the tide out were able to view several waders. There were a couple of Ruddy Turnstone along with Bar-tailed Godwits, South Island Oystercatchers and Royal Spoonbills.

We had the word that the Rock Wrens were hard to find and that there was a sighting of them at Monkey Creek. So we sailed along through the southern scenic route to Manapouri. We stopped at Redcliffs Wildfowl Reserve for lunch, from where we had a wonderful view over the wetland. As the weather forecast was for worse weather we wanted to make the most of the day. We arrived at Monkey Creek, which is completely the wrong environment for Rock Wren as it is where we usually look for Blue Duck. The only bird we could find was a Rifleman which could be mistaken for a Rock Wren if you had not seen a wren! So we went back to a tried and trusted place up in the sub-alpine boulder fields. The weather was threatening with the start of a drizzling shower, which didn't come too much. Within about half an hour out popped the Rock Wren, then followed by its mate. We watch these cute little birds for ages, as they flew on down the track not more than a couple of metres away. One of the wrens was carrying an insect in its mouth so we hoped to see where their

nest might be hidden but it was not possible with all their jumping and bobbing about on the tops of the rocks. After we had started to leave the nature trail we saw a Chamois (mountain goat) which came running off the snow and up onto the nature trail very close to us. It was very interesting to see how low down the snow was for this time of the year. On the way back we were able to sit back and admire the outstanding scenery of the avalanche-prone Upper Hollyford Valley and then the ancient Beech Forest of the Eglinton Valley which is one of the areas where a lot of research is carried out by the students of the University of Otago.

20th November

There was a bad weather forecast for the main divide and Milford and the group was quite happy to forgo the trip over the main divide and seeing the magic of Mitre Peak. Instead there was an option to visit forested area where there were Yellowheads. We had already heard these birds but it would be nice to be able to watch them. Since we were not under any time constraints we wandered about the forest doing a proper search. We went back down the scenic highway to Borland Lodge where there is an outdoor recreation centre. From there we spent the morning searching along the nature trail in the sunshine. We didn't hear a Yellowhead but did get good views of Tomtit, Shinning Cuckoo and Brown Creeper. This area of beech forest has two levels, the lower being more fertile and much denser, and the upper level away from the rivers being more open with less growth below and bigger, taller more mature trees.

After lunch we took a drive up the hydro road which follows the pylons over to Doubtful Sound. We only went as far as the Mt Burns saddle where we could see the aftermath of a huge ancient landslide which had created the Green Lake.

21st November

Today was mainly a driving day, so leaving in the rain was fine. We stopped in Gore for an early lunch and arrived in Dunedin with some time to spare. We headed up to St Clair Beach to get a look over the southern ocean; with the strong southerly blowing there were a few White-capped Albatrosses out to sea passing by. We were hopeful that icebergs sighted off the Auckland Islands would come into view as they were heading to New Zealand. It was only last summer that one was sighted off Dunedin. We met up with the *Monarch* at Weller Rock for the last of our 10 trips out on the water. It has been so rewarding being able to get out on the water, either by a ferry boat or a pelagic cruise, to experience the huge variety of seabirds, especially the endemic ones. With the wind blowing 30 knots down the harbour the water was flat leaving the harbour, which enabled us to be out at the front of the boat getting excellent view of the headland and all its wildlife. On the opposite side of the headland, on the beach was a New Zealand Sea Lion and further away was a Leopard Seal. It was hard to tell they were alive until they moved. As we moved around Taiaroa Head looking at all the nesting birds there were several Royal Albatrosses practising coming into land with a head wind. Other albatrosses were flying in close to the boat as they moved in the wind currents to climb above the headlands. The birds that managed to land, then had a bill to bill talking match with the bird next door. Landings were frequently aborted as the winds held them locked in position. As we moved round the headland, in the lee of the wind, there were several huge colonies of birds nesting on the cliffs. The ones that looked out of place were the Royal Spoonbills who had taken up, every bit of vegetation on the cliffs. They were using the security of the Red-billed Gulls to warn them of any danger. As the boat turned we had the wind on our backs and headed out to sea where we were able to compare the different albatrosses together. The striking size of the Royals over the White-capped Albatross was easy to see. This was a fitting way to remember New Zealand - the seabird capital of the world - with albatrosses gliding effortlessly on the wind.

22nd to 23rd November

This was a packing and organizing day, but there was still time to check out the botanical gardens and look round the museum before leaving in the afternoon. The group caught the flight back to London where they arrived the next day.

We saw 130 different species of birds (and heard two) with the following mammals seen: New Zealand Fur Seal, New Zealand Sea Lion and Leopard Seal, Dusky and Hector's Dolphins and Chamois (mountain goat).

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December 2009

CHECKLIST OF SPECIES SEEN DURING THE TOUR

Species

South Island Brown Kiwi (*Tokoeka*)
 Stewart Island Brown Kiwi (*Tokoeka*)
 Australasian Crested Grebe (*Puteketeke*)
 New Zealand Dabchick (*Weweia*)
 Wandering Albatross
 Southern Royal Albatross (*toroa*)
 Northern Royal Albatross (*toroa*)
 New Zealand White-capped (Shy) Albatross
 Salvin's Albatross
 Buller's Shearwater
 Sooty Shearwater (Muttonbird), (*Titi*)
 Fluttering Shearwater (*Pakaha*)
 Hutton's Shearwater
 Common Diving Petrel (*Kuaka*)
 Grey Petrel
 Black (Parkinson's) Petrel
 Westland Petrel
 White-chinned Petrel (Shoemaker)
 Cape Pigeon
 Southern Giant Petrel
 Northern Giant Petrel
 Fairy Prion (*Titi Wainui*)
 Yellow-eyed Penguin (*Hoiho*)
 Blue Penguin (*Korora*)
 Fiordland Crested Penguin (*Pokotiwaha*)
 Australasian Gannet (*Takapu*)
 Black Shag (Black Cormorant) (*Kawau*)
 Pied Shag (Pied Cormorant)
 Pied Shag (Pied Cormorant) (*Karuhiruhi*)
 Little Black Shag (Little Black Cormorant)
 Little Shag (Little Pied Cormorant)
 Little Shag (*Kawaupaka*)
 New Zealand King Shag
 Stewart Island Shag, Bronze Shag
 Spotted Shag (*Parekareka*)
 White-faced Heron
 Great White Heron (Great Egret)
 Reef Heron (Blue Heron) (*Matuku-moana*)
 Cattle Egret
 Glossy Ibis
 Royal Spoonbill (*Kotuku-ngutupapa*)
 Black Swan
 Canada Goose
 Cape Barren Goose
 Paradise Shelduck (*Putangitangi*)
 Blue Duck (*Whio*)
 Mallard
 Grey Duck (*Parera*)
 Grey Teal (*Tete*)
 New Zealand Shoveler (*Kuruwhengi*)
 New Zealand Scaup (*Papango*)
 Australasian Harrier (*Kahu*)
 New Zealand Falcon (*Karearea*)
 California Quail
 Brown Quail
 Buff Weka
 Stewart Island Weka
 Marsh Crake (*Koitareke*)
 Purple Gallinule/ Purple Swamphen

Scientific Name

Apteryx australis australis (Shaw & Nodder)
Apteryx australis lawryi (Rothschild)
Podiceps cristatus australis (Gould)
Poliiocephalus rufopectus (Gray)
Diomedea exulans (Linnaeus)
Diomedea epomophora epomophora (Lesson)
Diomedea epomophora sanfordi (Murphy)
Diomedea cauta steadi (Falla)
Diomedea cauta salvini (Rothschild)
Puffinus bulleri (Salvin)
Puffinus griseus (Gmelin)
Puffinus gavia (Forster)
Puffinus huttoni (Mathews)
Pelecanoides urinatrix urinatrix (Gmelin)
Procellaria cinerea (Gmelin)
Procellaria parkinsoni (Gray)
Procellaria westlandica (Falla)
Procellaria aequinoctialis (Linnaeus)
Daption capense (Linnaeus)
Macronectes giganteus (Gmelin)
Macronectes halli (Mathews)
Pachyptila turtur (Kuhl)
Megadyptes antipodes (Hombron & Jacquinot)
Eudyptula minor (Forster)
Eudyptes pachyrhynchus (Gray)
Morus serrator (G. R. Gray)
Phalacrocorax carbo novaehollandiae (Stephens)
Phalacrocorax varius (Gmelin)
Phalacrocorax varius varius (Gmelin)
Phalacrocorax sulcirostris (Brandt)
Phalacrocorax melanoleucos (Vieillot)
Phalacrocorax melanoleucos brevirostris (Gould)
Leucocarbo carunculatus (Gmelin)
Leucocarbo chalconotus (Gray)
Stictocarbo punctatus punctatus (Sparrman)
Ardea novaehollandiae novaehollandiae (Latham)
Egretta alba (Linnaeus)
Egretta sacra sacra (Gmelin)
Bubulcus ibis coromandus (Boddaert)
Plegadis falcinellus (Linnaeus)
Platalea regia (Gould)
Cygnus atratus (Latham)
Branta canadensis maxima (Delacour)
Cereopsis novaehollandiae (Latham)
Tadorna variegata (Gmelin)
Hymenolaimus malacorhynchus (Gmelin)
Anas platyrhynchos platyrhynchos (Linnaeus)
Anas superciliosa superciliosa (Gmelin)
Anas gracilis (Buller)
Anas rhynchotis variegata (Gould)
Aythya novaeseelandiae (Gmelin)
Circus approximans (Peale)
Falco novaeseelandiae (Gmelin)
Callipepla californica brunnescens (Ridgway)
Synoicus ypsilophorus (Bosc)
Gallirallus australis hectori (Hutton)
Gallirallus australis scotti (Ogilvie-Grant)
Porzana pusilla affinis (J. E. Gray)
Porphyrio porphyrio (Linnaeus)

Takahe (Notornis)		<i>Porphyrio mantelli</i> (Owen)
Australian Coot		<i>Fulica atra australis</i> (Gould)
Pied Oystercatcher		<i>Haematopus ostralegus</i> (Linnaeus)
Variable Oystercatcher (<i>Torea</i> ; dark phase, <i>Torea</i> pango)		<i>Haematopus unicolor</i> (J. R. Forster)
Pied Stilt		<i>Himantopus himantopus</i> (Linnaeus)
Black Stilt (<i>Kaki</i>)		<i>Himantopus novaeseelandiae</i> (Gould)
New Zealand Dotterel (<i>Tuturiwhatu</i>)		<i>Charadrius obscurus</i> (Gmelin)
Banded Dotterel (<i>Tuturiwhatu</i>)		<i>Charadrius bicinctus bicinctus</i> (Jardine & Selby)
Black-fronted Dotterel		<i>Charadrius melanops</i> (Vieillot)
Wrybill (<i>Ngutuparore</i>)		<i>Anarhynchus frontalis</i> Quoy & Gaimard
Pacific Golden Plover		<i>Pluvialis fulva</i> (Gmelin)
Spur-winged Plover		<i>Vanellus miles novaehollandiae</i> (Stephens)
Ruddy Turnstone		<i>Arenaria interpres</i>
Lesser Knot (<i>Huahou</i>)		<i>Calidris canutus canutus</i> (Linnaeus)
Sharp-tailed Sandpiper		<i>Calidris acuminata</i> (Horsfield)
Bar-tailed Godwit		<i>Limosa lapponica</i> (Linnaeus)
Brown (Subantarctic) Skua (<i>Hakoakoa</i>)		<i>Catharacta skua lonnbergi</i> (Mathews)
Pomarine Skua		<i>Stercorarius pomarinus</i> (Temminck)
Southern Black-backed Gull (Kelp Gull, Dominican Gull)		<i>Larus dominicanus</i> (Lichtenstein)
Red-billed Gull (<i>Tarapunga</i>)		<i>Larus novaehollandiae scopulinus</i> (J. R. Forster)
Black-billed Gull		<i>Larus bulleri</i> (Hutton)
Black-fronted Tern (<i>Tarapiroe</i>)		<i>Sterna albobriata</i> (G. R. Gray)
Caspian Tern (<i>Taranui</i>)		<i>Sterna caspia</i> (Pallas)
White-fronted Tern (<i>Tara</i>)		<i>Sterna striata</i> (Gmelin)
Little Tern		<i>Sterna albifrons</i> (Pallas)
New Zealand Pigeon (<i>Kereru</i>)		<i>Hemiphaga novaeseelandiae novaeseelandiae</i> (Gmelin)
Rock Pigeon		<i>Columba livia</i> (Gmelin)
North Island Kaka		<i>Nestor meridionalis septentrionalis</i> (Lorenz)
South Island Kaka		<i>Nestor meridionalis meridionalis</i> (Gmelin)
Kea		<i>Nestor notabilis</i> Gould
Eastern Rosella		<i>Platycercus eximius</i> (Shaw)
Red-crowned Parakeet (<i>Kakariki</i>)		<i>Cyanoramphus novaeseelandiae novaeseelandiae</i> (Sparrrman)
Yellow-crowned Parakeet (<i>Kakariki</i>)		<i>Cyanoramphus auriceps auriceps</i> (Kuhl)
Shining Cuckoo (<i>Pipiwharauoa</i>)		<i>Chrysococcyx lucidus lucidus</i> (Gmelin)
Long-tailed Cuckoo (<i>Koekoera</i>)		<i>Eudynamis taitensis</i> (Sparrrman)
Morepork (<i>Ruru</i>)	heard	<i>Ninox novaeseelandiae novaeseelandiae</i> (Gmelin)
New Zealand Kingfisher (<i>Kotare</i>)		<i>Halcyon sancta vagans</i> (Lesson)
North Island Rifleman (<i>Titipounamu</i>)		<i>Acanthisitta chloris granti</i> (Mathews & Iredale)
South Island Rifleman (<i>Titipounamu</i>)		<i>Acanthisitta chloris chloris</i> (Sparrrman)
Rock Wren		<i>Xenicus gilviventris</i> (Pelzeln)
Skylark		<i>Alauda arvensis</i> (Linnaeus)
Welcome Swallow		<i>Hirundo tahitica neoxena</i> (Gould)
New Zealand Pipit (<i>Pihoihoi</i>)		<i>Anthus novaeseelandiae novaeseelandiae</i> (Gmelin)
Hedge Sparrow (Dunnoek)		<i>Prunella modularis</i> (Linnaeus)
Blackbird		<i>Turdus merula</i> (Linnaeus)
Song Thrush		<i>Turdus philomelos</i> (Brehm)
North Island Fernbird (<i>Matata</i>)		<i>Bowdleria punctata vealeae</i> (Kemp)
Whitehead (<i>Popokatea</i>)		<i>Mohoua albicilla</i> (Lesson)
Yellowhead (<i>Mohua</i>)	heard	<i>Mohoua ochrocephala</i> (Gmelin)
Brown Creeper (<i>Pipipi</i>)		<i>Mohoua novaeseelandiae</i> (Gmelin)
Grey Warbler (<i>Riroriro</i>)		<i>Gerygone igata</i> (Quoy & Gaimard)
North Island Fantail (<i>Piwakawaka</i>)		<i>Rhipidura fuliginosa placabilis</i> (Bangs)
South Island Fantail (<i>Piwakawaka</i>)		<i>Rhipidura fuliginosa fuliginosa</i> (Sparrrman)
North Island Tomtit (<i>Miromiro</i>)		<i>Petroica macrocephala toitoi</i> (Lesson)
South Island Tomtit (<i>Ngiru-ngiru</i>)		<i>Petroica macrocephala macrocephala</i> (Gmelin)
North Island Robin (<i>Toutouwai</i>)		<i>Petroica australis longipes</i> (Garnot)
South Island Robin (<i>Toutouwai</i>)		<i>Petroica australis australis</i> (Sparrrman)
Silvereye		<i>Zosterops lateralis lateralis</i> (Latham)
Stitchbird (<i>Hihi</i>)		<i>Notiomystis cincta</i> (Du Bus)
Bellbird (<i>Korimako, Makomako</i>)		<i>Anthornis melanura melanura</i> (Sparrrman)
Tui		<i>Prothemadera novaeseelandiae novaeseelandiae</i> (Gmelin)
Yellowhammer		<i>Emberiza citrinella</i> (Linnaeus)
Chaffinch		<i>Fringilla coelebs</i> (Linnaeus)

Greenfinch
Goldfinch
Redpoll
House Sparrow
Starling
Common Myna
North Island Kokako
North Island Saddleback (*Tieke*)
South Island Saddleback (*Tieke*)
Australian Magpie

Carduelis chloris (Linnaeus)
Carduelis carduelis (Linnaeus)
Carduelis flammea (Linnaeus)
Passer domesticus (Linnaeus)
Sturnus vulgaris Linnaeus
Acridotheres tristis (Linnaeus)
Callaeas cinerea wilsoni (Bonaparte)
Philesturnus carunculatus rufusater (Lesson)
Philesturnus carunculatus carunculatus (Gmelin)
Gymnorhina tibicen (Latham)

MAMMALS

New Zealand Fur Seal
Hector's Dolphin
Dusky Dolphins
New Zealand Sea Lion
Leopard Seal

This list represents those birds and other animals as seen by party members of this tour.