

NEW ZEALAND

NORTH, SOUTH, STEWART AND CHATHAM ISLANDS



New Zealand Storm Petrel
(Brent Stephenson)

Saturday January 21st – *Sunday February 12th 2012

Leader: Brent Stephenson

Group size: 8

Birds: 155-170

*An extension to the Chatham Islands until February 20th

The above tour and duration can be extended with regard to flights if you wish to visit relatives in New Zealand.

New Zealand is a truly beautiful country with a low human population and spectacular scenery especially in the alpine zones of South Island. This comprehensive tour of the country takes in all the major birding sites including an optional extension to the rarely visited archipelago of the remote Chatham Islands. We have the opportunity to find almost fifty endemic birds during our tour, including five species of Kiwi,

Fiordland Crested and Yellow-eyed Penguins, Blue Duck, Takahe, Wrybill, Kea, Common Kaka, Saddleback and Yellowhead. On the Chatham Islands, a further seven endemics occur and we have a good chance of locating Chatham and Pitt Shags, Shore Plover, Chatham Oystercatcher and Chatham Parakeet. New Zealand is also a prime location for seabirds including a wide-range of albatrosses, shearwaters and the recently rediscovered New Zealand Storm Petrel.

The following itinerary is easily the best on offer by any UK birding company for New Zealand's unique birds.

Days 1-2: An evening flight with Air New Zealand to Auckland. The second day is lost due to the International Date Line. Arrival is early on Day 3.

Day 3: We commence our tour with a visit to a forested area near central Auckland for a gentle introduction to the country's birds; North Island Tomtit, New Zealand Pigeon, Grey Fantail, Grey Gerygone and Eastern Rosella. Next is Muriwai Beach and its colony of Australasian Gannets, Pied Cormorant and White-fronted Terns. We travel east and check for Laughing Kookaburra, New Zealand Grebe, Paradise Shelduck, New Zealand Scaup, Australasian Shoveler, Grey Teal and for Buff-banded Rails in mangrove habitats. After dinner at Trounson, we rest up and embark on a walk for Northern Brown Kiwi and Morepork.

Day 4: A later start today as we visit the Waipui Estuary, an important region for the highly endangered Fairy Tern. Waders feature heavily at Waipui including New Zealand Plover, Variable Oystercatcher, Pied Stilt and summering Eastern Bar-tailed Godwit and Red Knot. Inland, a small lagoon may have the localised

Australasian Grebe. Transfer to Warkworth for two nights.

Day 5: Today we do a tour of the Hauraki Gulf by boat. There is an opportunity to see Black and Cook's Petrels, Buller's, Fluttering, Little and Flesh-footed Shearwaters, Cook's, Pycroft's and Great-winged Petrels, White-fronted Tern, Grey Noddy, White-faced and New Zealand Storm Petrels. We sometimes see Bryde's Whale, Orca, Bottle-nosed and Common Dolphins.

Day 6: This morning we head for Tiritiri Matangi Island by water taxi from Sandspit. On Tiritiri Matangi several endangered, endemic species can be seen including rare species no longer present on the mainland: North Island Saddleback, Stitchbird, North Island Kokako and Takahe. We should also see Brown Teal, Tui, New Zealand Bellbird, Whitehead, North Island Robin and Spotless Crake. After dinner, we head out to search for Little Spotted Kiwi. Night in Tiritiri Matangi.

Day 7: Today we return to Sandspit and drive south through the city of Auckland.

The flats and shell banks near the Miranda Trust Wildlife Centre are a fantastic place to see seabirds and flocks of shorebirds from Asia. Our main interest is locating Wrybill, a small plover confined to New Zealand, Double-banded Plover, Variable and South Island Pied Oystercatchers. Uncommon waders which are sometimes present include Red-necked Stint, Sharp-tailed, Pectoral, Marsh and Terek Sandpipers.

Day 8: A return visit to Miranda before heading over the Coromandel Peninsula to Whitianga. An afternoon pelagic with Pycroft's Petrel being our main target species. We also expect sightings of Common Diving Petrel, Fairy Prion, Grey-faced, Cook's and Black Petrels. Night in Whitianga.

Day 9: From Whitianga, we make a stop for the secretive Australasian Bittern. Our main interest is the Pureora Forest which has a forest tower where we may find North Island Kaka, Kokako, Yellow-crowned Parakeet, Shining Bronze and Long-tailed Cuckoos, Rifleman and North Island Tomtit. We continue to Taupo for the night.

Day 10: Today we explore Boundary Stream Mainland Island between Taupo and Napier. We have opportunities to see New Zealand Falcon, New Zealand Fernbird, Kokako and Whitehead. We return to Taupo and check a lake for Little Black Cormorant, Eurasian Coot and New Zealand Scaup. Night at Turangi.

Day 11: En route to Fielding, we stop in areas of fast-flowing streams for the extraordinary Blue Duck. Travel to Fielding for an overnight stop. Near Fielding stands of eucalyptus trees may harbour Eastern Rosella and Sulphur-crested Cockatoo. Night in Fielding.

Day 12: Today we visit the Manawatu River Estuary for waders including Pacific Golden Plover and Curlew Sandpiper. Travelling along the Kapiti coast, we make stops for the rare Black-fronted Dotterel and Brown Teal. We take the Cook Strait ferry to South Island. The ferry crossing takes three hours during which time we'll have a chance to look out for seabirds including Gibson's, Antipodean, Black-browed, White-capped and Salvin's Albatrosses, Westland Petrel and Sooty Shearwater. Entering the sound near Picton, we may see Spotted Shag, Fairy Prion and Fluttering Shearwaters. Overnight at Picton.

Day 13: This morning we take a boat trip from Picton to Motuara Island bird sanctuary with opportunities to see South Island Saddleback, South Island Robin and Bellbird. We should see the endemic Rough-faced (King) Shag, found only in the Marlborough Sounds plus Little Penguin, Spotted Shag and Arctic Skua. There are opportunities to see marine mammals: Dusky and Hector's Dolphins and New Zealand Fur Seals. From Picton we drive south to Kaikoura via Lake Grassmere, another hotspot for shorebirds. The many rivers of this part of South Island have the beautiful Black-fronted Tern. At Kaikoura we may see Little Owl and Cirl Bunting, two scarce introduced species.

Day 14: This morning we enjoy the spectacular mix of marine life, seascape and mountains that makes Kaikoura so special by taking a boat trip in search of pelagic birds. Interesting species are Hutton's, Buller's and Short-tailed Shearwaters, White-chinned and Westland Petrels, Southern and Northern Royal, Wandering, Salvin's, White-capped, Buller's, Campbell Islands and Black-browed Albatrosses, Northern and Southern Giant Petrels and Arctic Skua. Afternoon at leisure as Kaikoura offers many activities including whale watching.

Day 15: Travel to the west coast across the Southern Alps making several stops before reaching our destination. New Zealand Brown Creeper resides in the

extensive forests whilst Weka is relatively common near Westport. At Punakaiki we have an evening excursion to hear and possibly see Great Spotted Kiwi.

Day 16: A later start today as we head south to Franz Josef. We visit an area of forest for woodland birds and a slim chance of the very rare Orange-fronted Parakeet and South Island New Zealand Fernbird. Coastal lagoons have Great Egret and Royal Spoonbill. We check into our accommodation at Franz Josef Glacier, a secluded birding lodge in the heart of the South Island podocarp forests. After dinner we have a night excursion for the recently split Okarito Kiwi (the rarest of the kiwis) and Morepork.

Day 17: Today we travel via the Haast Pass to Wanaka. En route, we search for Fiordland Crested Penguin along the coast. At the Haast Pass a number of scarce forest birds reside: south island races of New Zealand Kaka and Tomtit, the endangered Yellowhead, Yellow-crowned Parakeet and Rifleman. Two-night stay at Wanaka.

Day 18: A circular route today visiting the dry and arid Mackenzie Basin. Our main target bird is the world's rarest shorebird, Black Stilt. Further stops may reveal Southern Great Crested Grebe, Chukar and the ever-difficult Baillon's Crake. If the skies are clear we should have views of Mount Cook, New Zealand's highest mountain.

Day 19: We travel from Wanaka to Te Anau with an afternoon visit to Milford Sound and breathtaking views of Mitre Peak. En route we look for New Zealand Falcon and search fast-flowing streams for the south island race of Blue Duck. We also make specific stops for the primitive South Island Wren and extremely tame Keas. Night at Te Anau.

Day 20: Leaving Te Anau, we take the coastal route via Tuatapere to Invercargill. We take the afternoon ferry from Bluff to Stewart Island, the third largest in New Zealand. During one of our evenings we go by boat to a nearby beach to look for South Island Brown Kiwi feeding amongst the kelp washed ashore. We will stay two nights on Stewart Island, as there is so much to see.

Day 21: Morning pelagic into the southern oceans where we expect to see a wide range of albatrosses, Spotted and Stewart Island Shags, Mottled and Cape Petrels, Broad-billed Prion, Brown Skua and the possibility of rarer seabirds including Antarctic Tern. In the afternoon, we are dropped off on Ulva Island in Paterson Inlet, a forested jewel, which will put us into some of the best avian bush walking in New Zealand. Ulva Island

has Stewart Island Weka, South Island Kaka, Tui, Bellbird, Red-crowned and Yellow-crowned Parakeet, South Island Saddleback, Yellowhead, South Island Robin and New Zealand Pigeon.

Day 22: We leave Stewart Island and head towards Oamaru via the scenic Catlin's Coast. Along the way, we stop for gulls, terns and waders and the endemic Hooker's Sealion. At Oamaru we can watch Yellow-eyed Penguins coming ashore.

Day 23: Transfer to Christchurch birding around wetland areas and braided river systems for Wrybill and Black-fronted Terns. In the evening, you either overnight in Christchurch or fly to Auckland and onward connections to Europe.

Day 24: Rest day to catch up with things or for some sightseeing in Christchurch.

EXTENSION

Day 25: Today we fly to the outlying Chatham Islands from Christchurch and transfer to our accommodation.

Day 26: A full day pelagic starting from Owenga on the southeast coast. Our first destination is a group of rocks called the Star Keys holding two endemic shags, Pitt Island and Chatham. From here we visit South East Island, home to the rare and endangered Shore Plover which often feeds on rock platforms. We then head out to Pyramid Rock, home to 4500 breeding pairs of Chatham Albatrosses. Next on the agenda are Mangere and Little Mangere Islands, home to Chatham Parakeet. Other seabirds we may encounter during our time at sea include Northern Royal and Pacific Albatrosses, Northern and Southern Giant Petrels, Fulmar and Broad-billed Prions, White-faced and possibly Grey-backed Storm Petrels and Brown Skuas.

Day 27: This morning we take a flight by small plane to Pitt Island, a unique place with only a handful of inhabitants. Here we meet our local guide and take a tour of the island. Top of the list is a visit to Caravan Bush where we have great opportunities to see Chatham Tui, Chatham Gerygone, Chatham Tomtit and Red-crowned Parakeet. We will learn about the exciting project to translocate endangered Chatham Petrels to this area and the recent introduction of the highly endangered Chatham Snipe. Later in the day, we seek out the endemic Pitt and Chatham Shags. We have lunch with locals at Flowerpot, the only settlement on Pitt Island.

Day 28: Today we head north by road visiting several beaches where we hope to find the endemic Chatham Oystercatcher and Chatham Pipit. After lunch, we have



Blue Ducks (Brent Stephenson)

another pelagic in search of the almost mythical Magenta Petrel. As dusk falls we should witness hundreds of Fairy and Broad-billed Prions and Sooty Shearwaters.

Day 29: This morning we head southwest to visit the largest remaining patch of forest

on Main Chatham, Tuku Nature Reserve. The forest is home to the enormous Chatham Pigeon Red-crowned Parakeet and Chatham Gerygone. The Awatotara Valley is a forest-patch, a beautiful place in which to study these unique birds.

Day 30: Revisit areas on the Chatham

Islands to catch up on anything we have missed.

Day 31: Flight back to the mainland and connections back to Europe with arrival on the following day.

Ground Price: £4595

Single room: £450

Deposit: £500

*Air Fare: £1260

Total tour price: £5855

Chatham Extension: £2695

Single room: £250

Tour Price Auckland/Auckland: £4595 (without extension)

*please refer to our terms and conditions relating to flights on pages 5 and 71

This holiday is fully inclusive of international and internal flights, ferry journey, boat trips, accommodation and meals including a (continental) breakfast, transport, guidance and taxes.

Not included: drinks, items of a personal nature, insurance, air passenger duty taxes and fuel surcharges. Any extra excursions not mentioned in the itinerary.

Accommodation: Generally good, with en-suite facilities. On Tiritiri the accommodation is in bunkhouses and shared for the evening. Food is based on traditional New Zealand cuisine with a European edge. Transport by minibus. Several walks along beaches and through forest. Some are up inclines and a few hours in duration. Pelagic tours can sometimes be in choppy seas.