Eagle-Eye Tours



New Zealand Birding Tour Trip Report 2022

Link: New Zealand Birding Tour Trip Report 2022

Day 0: November 5, 2022 A 3pm meet and greet kicked off the tour. We immediately started our transfer north to the city of Whangarei for our pelagic excursion early in the morning. We stopped along the way at Waipu Cove and were greeted with our target species, the critically endangered Fairy Tern, in addition to a lone Little Tern, Caspian Tern, Ruddy Turnstone, Variable and South Island Pied Oystercatcher, New Zealand Dotterel, an assortment of cormorants (Little Pied, Great and Pied), Sacred Kingfisher, Swamp Harrier and a good chunk of the non-native species that now call New Zealand home (Rock Pigeon, Eurasian Skylark, European Starling, Common Myna, Song Thrush, Eurasian Blackbird, House Sparrow and European Goldfinch).



Pelagic boat @ Abram Tompkins

Day 1: November 6, 2022 An early start was absolutely worth it for our pelagic adventure. White-capped Albatross and Wandering Albatross both showed off very nicely, plus Wilson's Storm Petrel, White-faced Storm Petrel and New Zealand Storm Petrel all made appearances. A good mix of other pelagic species included the Long-tailed Skua, Mottled Petrel, Gray-faced Petrel, Cook's Petrel, Pycroft's Petrel, Parkinson's Petrel, Fairy Prion, Flesh-footed Shearwater, Buller's Shearwater, Sooty Shearwater, Fluttering Shearwater, Little Shearwater and Common Diving Petrel. A lone Pacific Reef-Heron briefly flew in after we departed our pelagic boat.



Buller's Shearwaters © Abram Tompkins

Day 2: November 7, 2022 A stop at a nearby wetland added Australian Shoveler, New Zealand Scaup, Silvereye and Welcome Swallow, in addition to great views of Paradise Shelduck. White-faced Heron, Red-billed Gull, Kelp Gull, Pukeko (Australasian Swamphen) and Masked Lapwing are all regular sightings at this stage of the tour. An afternoon/evening meander encountered Wild Turkey, Ring-necked Pheasant, New Zealand Fantail and Tomtit, plus Morepork and North Island Brown Kiwi were heard nearby. **Day 3: November 8, 2022** A rainy day visit to a regional park and some wetlands produced Canada Goose, Black Swan, Australasian Grebe, Spotted Dove, New Zealand Pigeon, Buff-banded Rail, Pied Stilt, Royal Spoonbill, Eastern Rosella, Tui, New Zealand Bellbird, Gray Gerygone and Australian Magpie. **Day 4: November 9, 2022** Our focus of the day was the predator-free island sanctuary of Tiritiri Matangi. It's an island conservation success story for species translocations and is located only a short ferry ride from the mainland. Several unique species were encountered at close range, which included Red-crowned Kākāriki, North Island Saddleback, North Island Robin, Stitchbird, Little Penguin (resting in a nest box) and Whitehead, plus a prehistoric lizard species called a Tuatara. Before we boarded our ferry back to the mainland we heard the distinct call of a North Island Kokako, but had no time to search out for this species. Back on the mainland we found Brown Teal and New Zealand Fernbird to conclude our day.



EET Group at Tiritiri Matang Island © Abram Tompkins

Day 5: November 10, 2022 We started our day by spotting an African Collared-Dove on a power line and then by driving to an Australasian Gannet colony, which is located on the mainland and allows spectacular viewing of the gannets, their nests and their young. White-fronted Terns also call this colony home. Yellowhammers were spotted in the flax on the trail leading to the gannet viewing platforms. From the colony we proceeded onward to the Miranda Shorebird Centre. Bar-tailed Godwits were numerous, a lone Pacific Golden-Plover was visible, plus Gray Teal, the laterally curved bill Wrybill, Red Knot and Red-necked Stint all showed up.



Australasian Gannet Colony © Abram Tompkins

Day 6: November 11, 2022 It was a very rainy and windy day. We tried our luck birding in mostly enclosed forest and saw fleeting views of New Zealand Kaka and Yellow-crowned Kākāriki. Rifleman, North Island Kokako, North Island Robin and Shining Bronze Cuckoo were all heard, but not seen due to the conditions. A New Zealand Grebe was spotted on Lake Taupo in the evening when there was a short break in the rainy conditions. **Day 7: November 12, 2022** The focus of the morning was on the Whio (Blue Duck) and it delivered within minutes of our first stop at the Tongariro River. Splendid views were had at close range before the current carried the duck down the river and briefly out of sight. The first views of Dunnock were had here along the river. Black-billed Gull, Graylag Goose, Pacific Black Duck, California Quail, Eurasian Coot, Little Black Cormorant and Australasian Bittern were other additions for the day. A total of 5 bitterns were sighted, which is incredible considering it's a cryptic species and the population estimate across New Zealand is less than 1,000 individuals. **Day 8: November 13, 2022** We concluded our time in the North Island today and proceeded to the South Island via ferry, but not before birding a few estuaries and getting our first views of Double-Banded Plover, in addition to more of the regulars. **Day 9: November 14, 2022** A journey into the Marlborough Sounds with a stop at Blumine Island started our day. Along the way to/from Blumine Island we saw King Shag (only found in the Marlborough Sounds), Spotted Shag, Arctic Skua, in addition to Dusky Dolphins, Orcas and New Zealand Fur Seals. When we disembarked at Blumine Island we immediately spotted a Weka, then shortly thereafter we added our target - the Orange-fronted Kākāriki. We heard a South Island Saddleback and a New Zealand Falcon was seen briefly flying past the island. On the way to Kaikoura we encountered Hoary Headed Grebe and Great Crested Grebe at a roadside lake.



King Shags and Spotted Shags © Abram Tompkins



View from Blumine Island © Abram Tompkins

Day 10: November 15, 2022 A morning boat outing granted us spectacular views of numerous pelagic birds, including Northern Giant Petrel, Salvin's Albatross, Northern and Southern Royal Albatross, Cape Petrel, Westland Petrel and Hutton's Shearwater. An afternoon search along the peninsular walkway provided views of Cirl Bunting and a forest walk had Pipipi (Brown Creeper) serenading us.



Wandering Albatross © Abram Tompkins

Day 11: November 16, 2022 A pair of Mute Swans, great views of a New Zealand Falcon, a scattering of Black-fronted Terns and a handful of Kea (the alpine parrot) were spotted today as we transitioned from the east coast to the heart of the mountains where we settled into Arthur's Pass Village for the evening. A Great Spotted Kiwi was heard calling overnight.



Kea © Abram Tompkins

Day 12: November 17, 2022 We spotted Common Greenfinch and Lesser Redpoll on a morning meander, but our primary targets for the day were Great Egret and Okarito Brown Kiwi. We chanced

upon a Great Egret while driving to our planned nighttime kiwi tour and some of us had very brief views of the Okarito Brown Kiwi just after sunset. This particular species inhabits a dense vegetation understory and is best seen when they step into a clearing. **Day 13: November 18, 2022** A travel day didn't turn up too much new in the way of birds, but a number of fur seals were sighted to keep us entertained and then a few Cattle Egrets showed up post-lunch stop. **Day 14: November 19, 2022** A target search for the Black Stilt proved successful. We managed to find one Black Stilt fairly early on and then continued looking for more in the rainy conditions, but our luck had run out at finding one of these extremely rare birds, which number less than 200 birds in the wild. **Day 15: November 20, 2022** Some nice weather (non-rainy) views of Double-Banded Plovers was a welcome sight. A brief stop to show the group a South Island Takahe was warmly welcomed. Takahe are difficult to find in the wild as they are usually far away from the access points so we had to settle for finding one in a managed location. **Day 16: November 21, 2022** An excursion into the expansive Fiordland National Park and a nature cruise in Milford Sound were on today's agenda. An Australasian Pipit provided good views after showcasing their standard behaviour of walking rather than flying. Fiordland Crested Penguin were spotted in Milford Sound and a Long-tailed Koel was spotted while searching for Rock Wren in one of the alpine regions in the national park.



Milford Sound © Abram Tompkins

Day 17: November 22, 2022 We shifted from the South Island further south to Stewart Island on a morning ferry. Upon arrival we took a ferry to Ulva Island, which is a predator free island sanctuary and we were treated with great views of South Island Robin, South Island Saddleback, Yellow-crowned Kākāriki and Mohua (Yellowhead). In the evening we went on another boat excursion and enjoyed views of Yellow-eyed Penguin, Brown Skua and Foveaux Shag, in addition to more views of Fiordland Crested Penguin and Little Penguin. **Day 18: November 23, 2022** We encountered many of the usual suspects again today on Stewart Island, but the highlight of the day was a Southern Brown Kiwi that allowed us in its presence for several minutes. It stood right next to the group and kept going about its feeding routine.

Day 19: November 24, 2022 Highlights of today consisted of a Royal Spoonbill nesting colony, plus seeing our first Otago Shags. In the evening the group decided to watch the Little Penguins come ashore and we were rewarded with no less than 200 penguins sighted in total, including a few

dozen getting quite a fright from a sea lion that was in their path on the beach. **Day 20: November 25, 2022** The final full day of the tour was filled with a mix of native species like Tui and New Zealand Fantail, non-native species like Common Chaffinch and Lesser Redpoll, plus a lone Yellow-Eyed Penguin exiting the surf to return to their nesting location, plus numerous Little Penguins in their nesting boxes. **Day 21: November 26, 2022** The successful tour concluded this morning at the Dunedin International Airport.