

New Zealand

Land of the Long White Cloud

Sunday 18 November to Saturday 8 December, 2007

Principal leader: Tim Earl

Local leaders: Mark Hangar and Michael McSweeney

Highlights:

- Our day on Tiritiri Matangi was super: wonderful weather, we saw all the birds hoped for including six endemics and brilliant views of Spotless Crake, a difficult species. The vegetation had increased greatly since my first visit nine years ago.
- Wonderful views of Blue Ducks, including a family on a rock.
- The boat trip up Queen Charlotte's Sound was brilliant: great birds, stunning scenery, Captain Cook's 5-week home, Little Blue Penguins and our first group albatross.
- Both Kaikoura birding boat trips were as good as its reputation: eight species of albatross, shearwaters and petrels, all amazingly close.
- Seeing Rockwren while soaking wet but so close that binoculars would not focus.
- Yellow-eyed penguins swimming around and under the boat off Ulva Island.
- The night sky when watching Kiwis.
- Black Stilts and Wrybills seen well on two days.
- The interaction between Fiordland Crested Penguins on Munroe's Beach... will they, won't they go into the sea?
- The comment made by a pilot taking us to Stewart Island (heard by the daughter of a wartime Spitfire pilot) after the safety briefing: "Flying conditions bloody good."
- Hector's Dolphins swimming in front of the catamaran off the Otago Peninsular, not to forget the Dusky Dolphins which put on a stunning display for us in Queen Charlotte's Sound.
- Ulva Island with its pristine habitat and abundant New Zealand birds.
- All the open-air picnics which were terrific.

This was a brilliant tour with stunning weather and great scenery. We saw all the main New Zealand endemic species of birds and mammals, had many wonderful boat trips, enjoyed some of the country's wildest unspoilt forests and habitats. The highlights above emphasise the width of this experience... it was not a pure wildlife holiday but gave us all a great taste of New Zealand's unique way of life. Thanks to the efforts of Mark and Michael everyone saw just about all the specialities (with a bit of help from me too). The night skies were heavenly in places – competing with thousands of glow-worms on one occasion and as a backdrop to Brown Kiwis on another. We had superb outdoor picnics and largely got on well as a group. I enjoyed leading everyone around New Zealand and hope that some of you will join me on other Travelling Naturalist or Limosa Holidays tours soon.

Footnote: my infected knee held me up in Auckland for three days after the tour, causing me to miss my booked flight, but I got home eventually after the embarrassment of being pushed around Auckland, Sydney, Bangkok and Heathrow airports in a wheel-chair. My techies in Guernsey told me how to fix the laptop in two seconds (literally) and my mother typed the hand written notes to complete the report below (thanks mum).

Tim Earl
Principal Leader
Guernsey, December 2007

DAILY DIARY

Sunday 18 November To Auckland, New Zealand

A strange day with some of us leaving the UK, others in the air while a lucky few were already in the Land of the Long White Cloud. This meant that Monday was sightseeing, travelling or missing altogether (depending on the route taken to Auckland). For the purposes of this report I will assume the latter and move on to Tuesday.

Tuesday 20 November Meeting in Auckland, Waitakere Ranges park and Murawai gannet colony

Sunny and warm, some cloud later 22°C

Mark, Michael and I went to the airport where we met the last six arrivals while everyone else enjoyed a free half-day in Auckland. We all met at the hotel around 12.30pm and set off for a relaxing afternoon's introduction to New Zealand wildlife.

A few Pied Cormorants and White-faced Herons were seen on the estuaries we passed and a White-fronted Tern in flight was noted. Our first stop was at Waitakere Ranges regional park. Spur-winged Lapwing and Paradise Shelduck were noted on the drive down which went across a golf course. A picnic lunch was first priority (if this set the standard – we were in for a good time, food-wise) but while it was being set up we were sorting out Tuis, Purple Gallinules and an Australian Magpie. All came easily as did a Sulphur-crested Cockatoo or two, New Zealand Fantail and a few Welcome Swallows. The Tuis, or *parson birds* because of their white clerical collars, were particularly good to see in numbers as the park had been subjected to an introduced-predator elimination programme.

Walking the area we saw several delightful New Zealand endemic birds such as Fantail, Grey Warbler, a superb male Tomtit which seemed to be feeding young in a hidden nest, and New Zealand Pigeon, one of which gave us terrific views. Mark showed us the endemic *Kauri* and *Remu* trees which are a feature of the park and have similarities to *Monkey Puzzle* trees. They slough their bark regularly to remove plants, such as *Astelia* and other 'perching lilies', which might have taken up home upon them.

A New Zealand Kingfisher marked our exit – it had a locust like Weta in its beak – as we left for the short journey through delightfully British-looking farmland to Murawai where a man flying in a hang-glider attracted no attention from the birds. Here we spent time wandering between viewing platforms to admire the nesting Australasian Gannets which were surprisingly close. We could, with patience, see eggs, small black newly-hatched chicks and greyer older babies under the adults. Red-billed and Kelp Gulls were noted as was a pair of Variable Oystercatchers.

There were several small colonies of White-fronted Terns which, interestingly, seemed to arrive in small flocks, presumably to reduce the chance of kleptoparasitism from gulls and skuas. Jane found several Common Copper butterflies. A small flock of feral Turkeys was seen on the way back along with a few Australasian Harriers.

We arrived at the hotel at 5.45 and met for the call-over and dinner at 7pm, most of us well ready to turn in but pleased with our first afternoon with New Zealand wildlife. It is worth noting here that the food at the Hotel Grand Chancellor was outstanding. The Nina Restaurant is a separate operation to the hotel (although run and billed seamlessly, as if they are one) run by a young couple, Tim Higgins and Mallory McIntyre.

Wednesday 21 November Tiritiri Matangi Island

Fine and sunny all day, little breeze, calm sea, warm 28°C

We thought luck was shining on us just getting to this wonderful island – last year's group had failed due to gale-force winds – but we also saw all the species for which it is famous, apart from the nocturnal Little Kiwi, but including Spotless Crake, a beautiful but extremely shy bird.

Three Little Blue Penguins were seen on the way over along with a few Australasian Gannets fishing in the flat calm bay. After landing and a briefing we set off along the coastal path to avoid the other folk who had come ashore with us. A Takahe was seen on the jetty from the boat as we moored and another of these huge flightless moorhens was drinking from a dish at the lavatories. A third was seen later in the morning grazing at the top of the island in far more natural conditions.

Such was our pace (Mark was keen to get into areas where the rarities might be found) that we almost missed a pair of nesting Caspian Terns with their well-grown chick. However, progress dropped to zero as we walked under a huge flowering *Pohutu Kawa* or Christmas tree. It was the only one in flower along the whole of Tiritiri's coastal stretch and was heaving with birds, mostly Tuis, Saddlebacks and Bellbirds, feeding on the nectar.

"Ha!" John Andrews said. "Yesterday we struggled to see Tuis. Today we have one hundred and tuis."

Moving on eventually in search of other goodies we saw a few Red-fronted Parakeets and after an anxious search, managed to find a couple of Whiteheads feeding alternately in the canopy and on the ground making location tricky.

Everyone had good views eventually. And as ever, the birds then gave themselves up to us with at least 15 clocked easily.

Stitchbirds were also tricky to start with but again we all saw several females and a stunning male with patience. The rush of these birds came later when we saw them using nectar-feeders put out to ensure their survival. When first introduced to the island they bred well but had a high winter mortality due to lack of food. This highly endangered species is now doing well.

Several pairs of Brown Quails introduced from Australia long before the island was set up as a sanctuary, were seen before Mark heard Kokakos calling. These large Honeyeaters were brought to the island since my last visit and have done so well that some were recently removed to another predator-free sanctuary to further ensure the survival of this species. We caught up with one along a trail which goes through their prime forest habitat (which had grown considerably higher in nine years) It was thrilling to be seeing such rare bird in their natural conditions, completely unafraid of Man. The Garden of Eden must have been much like ancient New Zealand. Mark told us they like to fly down through the forest and then hop through the trees like squirrels to get back up-hill... the things we learn.

Our late lunch was another great picnic sent up to the island's interpretation centre on a trailer when we arrived and followed by a little retail therapy which benefited the Friends of Tiritiri Matangi.

As we were walking down towards the jetty two Kokakos suddenly hopped onto the path and ran downhill for at least 50 yards, much to Mark's confusion. They then had a grand time bathing and drinking, although to my inexperienced eye this looked more like posing on the red-carpet for the paparazzi.

Our resumed progress slowed as we approached a tiny pond to examine its banks and there was a Spotless Crake picking along in full view, bright sunshine and in the middle of the day. Everyone there had great views of this secretive bird. We were so thrilled that a pair of roosting Brown (Auckland) Teals were almost overlooked. Once discovered they swam around the pond a couple of times before hauling out onto a rock and going back to sleep. Such was our elation at the end of this exciting visit that after our return to the mainland we celebrated by forming a crocodile through an Indian couple's supermarket to buy ice-creams. They were bemused but not sufficiently to give the leader a free one (sorry Jamie).

With an early start planned for the morning (the tides were against wader-watching at Miranda) many of us settled bar-bills before turning in.

Thursday 22 November Taramarie wildlife refuge, Miranda, Lake Rotorua and on to Lake Taupo

Overcast and gloomy early clearing to give a fine and sunny afternoon, gentle breeze, warm 25°C

We knew the tides were against us and even leaving the hotel at 7.30am sharp we were still at least an hour too late at Taramarie wildlife refuge, Miranda. The tide was so far out that even Bar-tailed Godwits and Pied Oystercatchers were little more than dots on the mud, Knot even smaller. We worked hard to get reasonable views of the waders although nesting colonies of Black-billed Gulls and White-fronted Terns were closer. I managed to find three small waders which we eventually thought were probably a Red-necked Stint with two Sharp-tailed Sandpipers, but views were far from satisfactory. Kelp Gulls were tugging at the corpse of a Bottlenosed Dolphin on the beach.

We were just leaving the first site when Mark found a pair of New Zealand Dotterels (Plovers) on a shell-bank. Although we were pleased to see them they were not close enough for photography. Worse still, Wrybills, our other main quarry were absent. It was the same story at our second and third stopping places – the tide was just too far out and we retired to the Miranda Shorebird Centre for a coffee and a little consolation shopping. Even that was unsatisfactory: I just could not make myself buy a delightful mug with a Wrybill on it. Not having seen the bird it was tempting bad fate too much. A stop at a pond on the way out gave good views of Grey Teals.

Thus it was that we squared our shoulders and started the long tour of New Zealand, the gloomy weather clearing as we did so to give a bright sunny day. Stopping at Lake Rotorua for lunch, we sorted out Little Pied, Little Black and Great Cormorants, enjoyed super views of New Zealand Grebes (Dabchicks) some of which had youngsters on their backs. New Zealand Scaup were also present in good numbers – we were able to watch them diving and in flight, showing their white wing-bars.

A touristy afternoon was planned with a visit to a hot-spring and geyser establishment (we were saddened that payment has to be made to see a natural wonder) but the entrance fee had risen from New Zealand\$14 to New Zealand\$45 in a year. Instead we drove a way out of town to a site where geothermal activity hits the surface. The shallow pool is only 55°C but has carbon dioxide bubbling up into it and 'steam' coming off giving the appearance of boiling mud. This gave great fun as people tried to get pictures of particular spots 'erupting' with delightful glooping sounds. We left in sparkling mood.

The geological theme continued dramatically as we approached Lake Taupo a few minutes later with superb views of snow-topped Mt Ruapehu beyond the vast caldera which is Taupo. It was hard to imagine the explosion which created

Lake Taupo about 1,975 years ago and sent 100 cubic kilometres of rock and ash into the atmosphere – so much that the world went dark for several days, an event recorded by the Romans and Greeks in their diaries.

We finally drove the short distance to our overnight motel on the lakeside, arriving with time for people to walk the banks before a shower, the call-over and dinner at a local hotel.

Friday 23 November Pureora Forest, Lake Rotoaira and Tongariro national park

Fine and sunny, a little mist early, light cloud cover later, 22°C

A 6.30am start was not welcomed by all although it was easier than the 5.30 scheduled departure. We were aiming for a quiet atmospheric morning in the Pureora Forest where Kokako call over a picnic breakfast. And hey-presto we got it with many other birds as a bonus. The journey to the forest was a little nerve-wracking as thick mist seemed to be lingering over the distant hills. But as we approached there was no sign of it and after a quick comfort stop we set up tables for a picnic breakfast.

The Kokako male was calling on our arrival and put in a few brief appearances. There seemed to be competition though when a Long-tailed Cuckoo also called and then flew over our heads to disappear behind trees. Not for long: it or another appeared soon after and flew along the tree tops calling loudly. The bird or birds put in a third appearance soon afterwards by which time the call was familiar.

The third bird to make us choke on our muesli was a New Zealand Kaka, a surprisingly large parrot. We had little time to watch it before the bird left but another two flew past later giving excellent flight views. A few Yellow-crowned Parakeets were next on the scene, again giving frustratingly difficult views despite their numbers. This was to happen again twice during the morning.

All was not lost because there were many other birds to see and, for some, photograph. Fantails were numerous and entertaining as they flitted around the bushes, sang or hawked insects. Tuis were numerous and noisy while Grey Warblers sang their enigmatic ditties which we finally learned to recognise. The Kokako lead the bird community singing from tree tops with Bellbirds adding a rich mellow accompaniment. It was a delightful session and we all enjoyed the various aspects.

After returning to the lavatories we started the second delightful event of the morning: a walk along the Totara trail, named after the huge trees which mark its conclusion. The path wound through genuine podocarp forest leading us to a host of plants, birds and trees which were the best I had seen in New Zealand. *Tree fuchsias* were dropping the remains of their red (fertilised) flowers which are green until bees have pollinated them. *Umbrella moss* carpeted the floor in places, each clump separate from its neighbours, and held up by a short stem while the biggest *totara trees* were 1,000 years old or more and hosted scores of ‘perching lilies’ which looked just like rainforest bromeliads. And as we walked through this natural cathedral New Zealand Robins acted as choristers. It was brilliant.

Lunch was eaten in a huge clearing in the middle of the forest, chosen because New Zealand Falcons fly across occasionally. I was just rising from my customary 15-minute snooze when Julian spotted one which flew over our heads carrying prey in its talons. What luck...

A stop on the southern tip of Lake Taupo put us among Australasian Shovelers, Black-winged Stilts, New Zealand Grebes but no Fernbirds, our main quarry for the afternoon. We drove on into Tongariro national park making a stop to photograph Mt Ruapehu and Mt Ngaruahoe which was topped with cloud. Our ski-resort motel was on the flanks of the former and most of us enjoyed super views to the north from our rooms. The service did not match the view, however, although our (early) dinner was fine.

A last attempt to see Fernbird was unsuccessful as was the hoped for clear night needed for star-gazing.

Saturday 24 November Blue Ducks, Foxton and across to South Island

Sunny to overcast, increasing north-westerly wind, moderate sea, low cloud and drizzle South Island, 22°C

Maureen and Ted kicked off the day with good views of Fernbird but the rest of us could not find one. A stunning red sky last evening promised good weather for today and we got it. Mt Ngaruahoe was showing like a Christmas pudding dripping white sauce, and we even saw Mt Taranaki in the far distance, a rare sight.

So is a good view of Blue Duck but we got that too. Set to drive 10km down the River Wanganui, looking for the birds whenever possible, Michael spotted one at our very first stop. We tumbled out of the bus and set up telescopes to enjoy wonderful views of the bird, firstly perched on a rock and then later swimming and feeding in the fast flowing river. It went upstream and out of sight so we picked our way down the river to a bridge where I found a family party of Blue Ducks – a pair and one duckling. As we were watching the delightful family life of this rarest of ducks some heard a Shining Cuckoo and with perseverance got good views of at least one, possibly two.

Foxton was our next major stop apart from coffee and comfort. Here we found the tide held up by water driven over a sand bar by the fresh north-westerly breeze. As the tide dropped we watched birds spread out over the estuary. Most were Bar-tailed Godwits and Knot (many of both species were carrying bright colour-rings) but we also found

Turnstone, Sharp-tailed Sandpiper, Caspian and White-fronted Terns. Persistence produced great views of nine Royal Spoonbills and a Pacific Golden Plover (which had legs like Marilyn Monroe, to die for).

After yet another excellent picnic lunch we set off for Wellington reaching the port an hour before the ferry across the Cook Straits (what a wonderful sounding name) sailed for the South Island. We ate dinner for the first half hour moving onto the top deck as we left the picturesque natural harbour. Birds were seen immediately with a range of exotic seabirds zooming past the ship in a brisk breeze. Fairy Prions, Buller's and Fluttering Shearwaters all came past but with difficult light nobody saw all the birds on offer. We did manage excellent sightings of Fairy Prions on approaching Tory Channel and Queen Charlotte Sound, South Island, and a small flock of Fluttering Shearwaters was also clearly seen. Single Flesh-footed Shearwater, Common Diving Petrel, and Shy Albatross were all seen with difficulty in the failing light. It was great fun, however, and gave us a taste of what we hoped would be seen on our Kaikoura birding sea-trip in two days time.

A New Zealand Fur Seal was seen as we sailed up Queen Charlotte Sound to dock in Picton. With no customs to clear we were away and at our over-night motel in just 10 minutes.

Sunday 25 November Queen Charlotte Sound, Fur Seals and Kaikoura

Sunny and hot with occasional bursts of very strong wind, 29°C

Our hopes for good weather on the boat trip up Queen Charlotte's Sound (Marlborough Sound) were realised giving us a super cruise on the m/v Playmate. The luck of this group held out further when we were treated to a number of wildlife spectaculars with lots of Little Blue Penguins seen, a Shy Albatross sitting on the sea as we circled it, hundreds of Fluttering Shearwaters and Fairy Prions, and two pods of Dusky Dolphins which swam around the boat, under it, spy-hopped (putting their heads out of water to look at us) and shot clear of the sea in exuberant leaps.

Fluttering Shearwaters were our first companions with many large rafts passed and scores on the wing along with Australasian Gannets and the occasional Arctic Skua. We pulled up and drifted close to a small New Zealand King Cormorant colony which negated the need to visit distant White Rock to see these rare endemic birds. Instead we headed to Cape Jackson, enjoying the dolphin encounter on the way. We were worried by a big group of snorkellers which were swimming with the dolphins and at one time seemed to be chasing them across the sound.

Cape Jackson has a terrific tide-race where birds congregate to feed on fish and shrimps brought up to the surface by the currents. A Shy Albatross was becalmed and sitting on the water allowing us to get great views and pictures, especially when it stretched its huge wings and, like a mighty sea-plane, took off past us.

There were hundreds of birds in the air over the tide race: mostly Fairy Prions with a smaller number Diving Petrels (but still more than 100). The latter looked like Puffins as they whirred along on wings beating so fast they were invisible. The prions were exciting, energetic little birds which came close to us in their search for food.

We needed to search for food (actually, a cup of tea) too by this time and headed for Ship Cove where Captain Cook had spent several weeks while in this part of the world. Beryl, our Playmate crew member, had cooked shortbread which we enjoyed ashore with a cuppa and Weka. This endemic flightless rail introduced itself to those using the lavatories and then wandered over to Beryl's picnic table to look for crumbs (not much chance there as the shortbread was delicious and mouth-sized. Sorry chum.)

Setting off once more we passed Pied Cormorants nesting in a tree and a super colony of Spotted Shags some of which still had green skin around the base of the bill, a sign of breeding maturity.

Three Sooty Shearwaters had been seen briefly on the way in but no sign of others could be found and we headed back to Picton, about an hour away. This gave the exhausted leaders an opportunity to study bird illustrations on the insides of their eye-lids.

After a fish and chip lunch we set off for Kaikoura pausing briefly to look unsuccessfully for a phalarope which had been seen at Grassmere saltworks. We saw Banded Plovers, Red-necked Stints and Turnstones but all with terrible shimmering views in the increasingly hot and windy day. Indeed, a new record for November temperatures was set in Blenheim as we went through at 32°C.

A stop for coffee and ice-creams was enjoyed thanks to better views of Banded Plover and some sunbathing New Zealand Fur Sea-lions. (The bikini-clad girls were attractive too – an unusual sight on this cold-water coast – but their swim was understandable given the heat.)

Our last stop was at Ohao Point where we missed a pod of Bottlenosed Dolphins spotted from the bus, by a few seconds. Hutton's Shearwaters were streaming past and the rocks had New Zealand Fur Sea-lions draped over them. Some were fighting while one or two of the bulls sported open wounds from their territorial disputes. Many were in the water playing or torpedoing like dolphins.

We arrived at Kaikoura later than planned because of the phalarope twitch making our time here a little rushed which was a shame as Margaret delayed her shower and saw a Northern Giant Petrel, Shy and Salvin's Albatrosses among

other birds following a fishing boat just off the beach. The frustration continued with a meal at a restaurant which took three hours despite having phoned through our order mid-afternoon.

Laundry was done by a few (one of whom needed help from Mary, the pathetic man) in the very efficient machines, and we turned in rather later than usual.

Monday 26 November Kaikoura bird trips

Glorious day with unbroken sun but a rising N to NE wind skuppered the whale-watching trip 26°C

The birding boat trip out of Kaikoura (Albatross Encounter skippered by Gary Melville) had a world-wide reputation for excellence and the two we did today lived up to it. The first was quite exceptional – even stalwarts said it was outstanding – but combined with the optional second trip it left us speechless. We saw eight different species or sub-species of albatross including the bird with the largest wingspan and most romantic name, the fabled Wandering Albatross (three kinds). Shy (two kinds) Black-browed and Royal (two kinds) made up a tally of 64 birds, although there could have been more.

It is not just the statistics which made these trips so exciting. Kaikoura's waters plunge to 3,000 metres deep almost immediately causing the upwellings which attract deep-water seabirds, whales and dolphins. It also means that the boats have little distance to travel before they are in productive areas: indeed, we saw albatrosses from the shore, a rare phenomenon in any part of the world.

Our day started with a walk on the beach for many. Most had great views of Banded Plovers (Dotterel) with tiny chicks while Joan and I found a small pod of Mickey-mouse-finned dolphins, the rare and endemic Hector's Dolphin. We all left early enough to stop a little further down the road to watch these animals to everyone's great delight.

Albatross Encounter left with us and six other folk on board at 9am and headed straight for a fishing boat which was hauling a long net. Fish-heads and offal were being slung over the side and a large group of birds was milling around. We stopped almost alongside and enjoyed the scene with Gibson's, Snowy and Antipodean races of Wandering Albatross picked out (with some debate). Shy Albatrosses were there in numbers too, the majority Salvin's but with a few White-capped Albatrosses.

There was great excitement (at least on the upper deck) when a Southern Royal Albatross appeared. We could see well its all-black wing-tops which had a white leading edge and the dark line running down the bill when it landed on the sea.

Westland Petrels are breeding endemics to New Zealand and we saw many, the dark tip to an off-white bill being the main distinguishing feature although the fact that they were all moulting made it easy to separate them from the few White-chinned Petrels which were present. By far the most common pelagic species was Pintado or Cape Petrel which were fearless as they bobbed under the Wandering Albatrosses' huge beaks to snatch food from the chum-basket. There were two forms of Cape Petrels too – the common local birds and rarer southern sub-species which had far more white along the wings.

A few Sooty Shearwaters were seen along with four Black-browed Albatrosses of the sub-Antarctic race. A few Stinkers or Northern Giant Petrels made up the list but their paler southern cousins remained firmly on my bogey-bird list.

We sampled the delights of a couple of fishing boats before moving to the shallower waters of Kaikoura Bay where vast numbers of Hutton's Shearwaters were feeding with a huge flock of Red-billed Gulls on fish forced to the surface by predators below them. It was a brilliant end to a three-hour trip which seemed to have lasted only half-an-hour.

We had a quick lunch before five of us went out again to snatch an optional birding trip before the scheduled (but again optional) whale watching excursion. Much the same birds were seen with the exception of a Black-billed Gull and a Northern Royal Albatross which also has all-black wing-tops but with no white leading edge. Coming back via Barney's Rock we saw a rare Pacific Reef Heron hiding in a bush.

Sadly, the whale-watching cruise was cancelled due to a rising wind so we visited Kaikoura Peninsula instead enjoying odd views of New Zealand Fur Sea-lions, masses of Hutton's Shearwaters and hand-tame Red-billed Gulls being fed by tourists.

We had another excellent meal at the restaurant, this time served promptly making for a good evening in high spirits.

Tuesday 27 November Kaikoura whale trip, Arthur's Pass and on to Hokitika

Clear and sunny on the coasts, low cloud and drizzle in the mountains, 7°C in the passes to a max of 22°C

Mark surprised us with the news last evening that he had rearranged the whale-watching trip for this morning. So it was that 10 of us drove down to the 'Whaleway Station' at 6.10am, were briefed and taken by bus to the harbour for our excellent catamaran adventure. The on-board educational programme was first-rate. I had expected a dumbed-down commentary but the graphics and information were really well done. We stopped for hydrophones to be used to listen for whales and within 30 minutes the first Sperm Whale had been located on the surface. It was big male (all the

animals off Kaikoura are males) spouting out carbon dioxide from its left-pointing blow-hole in preparation for the next deep dive. After about five breaths its back began to arch and then the tail-fluke broke surface and went up into a 90° position before slipping beneath the waves leaving behind many beaming smiles. Birds were in evidence too with several Salvin's and a few Gibson's wandering Albatrosses, Pintado, Hutton's and Sooty Shearwaters, plus Westland Petrels.

The exercise was repeated with another Sperm Whale before we gave up the biggies and switched to dolphin watching. This too was successful with a stop for one pod of Dusky Dolphins which sported around the boat, breached and generally caused many ooh-aaahs and groans (from photographers who took snaps of the sea where dolphins had been). An attempt to find a second larger pod was unsuccessful and we returned to the harbour where Mark and those who had opted for a later start to the day were waiting.

We set off in good spirits on what was to be the longest day's journey of the tour, although it did not seem onerous. Canada Geese, White-faced and Pacific Reef Herons, and a lone Caspian Tern were spotted from the bus as we drove along the scenic coastal route south of Kaikoura but things became a little less interesting as we turned inland. A stop at Anne's Lagoon coincided with our first (albeit light) drizzle of the trip but we still saw five Cape Barren Geese, three Eurasian Coots, a Grey Teal and several New Zealand Scaup. Black Swans, Mallards and Australasian Shovelers were also noted.

After a comfort stop in Kirwee we passed through Sheffield (with me shouting 'Eh-up me ducks!' to the locals) and started to climb into the central Alps with snow-topped mountains around us. Mark pointed out Matagani plants, named Wild Irishmen by the early settlers as they are grey and prickly, and Wild Spaniards from their long sharp leaves which were like the Conquistadors' swords. Lunch was a chilly affair just after Porter's Pass where even a New Zealand Pipit could not excite people enough to warm them up. We continued up into the mountains twitching Southern Crested Grebe from the bus while waiting at temporary traffic lights (a shameful way to conduct a tour – Ed). Eventually we arrived at Wilderness Lodge (some folk saw Black Duck on the lake).

Wednesday 28 November Okarito Fernbirds (not) Fox Glacier and on to Moeraki Wilderness Lodge

Clear and sunny all day, lovely night sky, 25°C

We had a leisurely start leaving Hokitika at 9am. Ianthe Lake, just down the road, was mirror-like but held no birds: our first productive stop was at Okarito where we tried in vain for Fernbird but saw New Zealand Robin as compensation. Moving on a short way we set up the picnic at an old boathouse and launching site enjoying better weather than yesterday. A roost of Pied Oystercatchers stayed put despite our presence and a rising tide. A Little Black Cormorant was perched in the middle of the river and a Great White Egret was spotted on the way out.

In Potters Creek we had an hilarious stop at automatic loos which played music while we used them, were self cleaning and had dire warnings of doors which opened after 10 minutes 'to prevent loitering'. Our last stop on the journey was at the Fox Glacier where the energetic walked up to a vantage point overlooking its base. The rest of us stayed lower down watching ant-like people on the glacier at some distance. Our reward was a fly-past Kea which was calling loudly. The glacier had been much further down the valley some years ago and had left huge piles of ice when it retreated. Some of these were suddenly melting fast creating pools and 'no-go' areas.

We arrived at Lake Moeraki mid-afternoon and set off for Munroe's Beach while Mark took cases to our rooms. The walk down was through beautiful rain forest and we stopped to admire trees, ferns and a small party of feeding birds. This included three Fantails, two Silvereyes and a pair of Grey Warblers. Some of us saw the yellowish-bellied Tomtit, a South Island sub-species.

We arrived at the beach after 45 minutes and were dismayed to see... no penguins. Sitting on boulders we waited. A New Zealand Fur Sea-lion was seen in the waves but no penguins. Agh! My nerves were twanging. Suddenly something was spotted in the waves – was it? Yes! A Fiordland Crested Penguin swam as far as it could, stood up and walked up the beach. Fifteen pairs of binoculars were trained on it and we all grinned. This was our first penguin on land and it was a cracker. With a shake of its head the two small tufts which marked the ends of its bright yellow eye-stripes stood up like little shaving brushes. The bird looked around and after a short rest to draw breath, waddled up the beach to disappear into the woods.

We were delighted and were just restoring our heart-rates when three more birds appeared out of the rocks heading for the sea. Here things became difficult as some people thought they entered the waves and came out again while others thought three returning penguins took their places on the beach. Whatever the truth (and we will never know) three birds followed the first up the beach and into boulders at the top on their way to nest-sites. We had seen between five and eight of these delightful penguins.

Returning to the lodge and our super rooms, we enjoyed a good dinner before heading off on a clear night to watch small shining objects. Some were Glow-worms. In fact, the woods had hundreds which gradually became more noticeable as the darkness deepened until the banks looked as if they were littered with fairy-lights.

It was all quite magical. Morepork Owls started calling – there were at least six around us and on the other side of Lake Moeraki. And by this time the sky was dark enough for us to pick out the Southern Cross, various nebulae and Orion on our way back. It had been a super night safari.

Thursday 29 November Free day at Lake Moeraki Wilderness Lodge: Eels, penguins and a rainy free-afternoon. Sunny in the morning becoming cloudy with rain by noon lasting until 6pm, 20°C

This was a free day – Mark had gone off to move house prior to his wedding in a fortnight – leaving Michael and me to lead a post-breakfast walk for some, while most people took an optional excursion to see Fiordland Crested Penguins on another beach.

The New Zealand Long-finned Eel is a big fish and those we saw coming to be fed on big chunks of meat off-cuts were good examples. About 50 milled around next to a small beach on the river – some coming out of the water in their eagerness for food. The short walk to see them had produced much of interest: trees between 800 years old (a Remu) and one of 1,000+ (a Kahekatia), a dark-phase Fantail was quite spectacular, and a few Tomtits. The penguin excursion produced about 12 birds seen on a beach which offered better photo-opportunities and the main group came back at lunchtime well pleased with their morning.

Our first prolonged rain set in but it did not stop various expeditions on which Southern Great Crested Grebe, an interesting egret (there was some debate as to its identity) and white orchids were seen. Whatever the activity, it was a pleasant day to spend at leisure with no bus-ride.

Friday 30 November Knight's Point, Ship Creek, Haast's Pass and on to Twizel

Bright, sunny and clear all day, cool breeze 22°C

We awoke to a brilliantly sunny day. Some of us watched a Tui mobbing a New Zealand Falcon as we were loading the bus. We left the Wilderness Lodge with some sadness at 8.30 and stopped to look at a New Zealand Fur Seal colony at Knight's Point. A Southern Elephant Seal sometimes hauls up into the colony but it was not present today. There were a few Shy Albatrosses and Giant Petrels following a fishing boat far out on the flat-calm sea. A flowering Rata tree was attracting Bellbirds and Tuis.

Our next stop was at Ship Creek, where the beach was littered with old tree-trunks and twisted wood. Just off the beach Bar found the first of two or three pods of Hector's Dolphins. They were hard to count but we thought there may have been 15 or so. White-fronted terns were feeding over water dappled by terrified small fry, pushed up by marauding larger fish below. A Skua was seen briefly but it dropped onto the water before identification. A line of about 20 Fluttering Shearwaters flew past under the terns.

The beachhead was host to a golden grass called Tane's Eyebrow. This is woven into mats earning the name of Weaver's Gold. We had arranged to meet Mark at Haast's Pass and pressed on not to be late. However, we were held up by traffic and arrived at 10.50 – 20 minutes adrift. Twenty minutes happened to be the time elapsed since Mark had heard a Yellowhead, one of New Zealand's most endangered birds.

Brown Creepers and Riflemen were found in plenty as we looked for the Yellowhead with no success. It was finally decided to follow a narrow trail in the direction the bird had gone but that petered out and we were left scrambling over logs and fallen trees. Suddenly Mark announced that he could hear the bird (it sounded like an alarmed Canary). Eventually it was located and we all enjoyed super views. The scrabble back was equally difficult leaving us feeling we had worked hard for our experience.

Little more of the journey had been done when a hose burst and the bus engine overheated. Happily we were close to a café whose owners were most helpful. The group ate a picnic at the café while the hose was fixed and we were soon on our way. The scenery was wonderful as we passed Lakes Wanaka and Hawea with the Southern Alps' snow-capped peaks in the background. Driving down the Ahuriri River into the Mackenzie Basin we saw our first Black-fronted Terns behaving like our marsh terns do back home. Views were not brilliant but we were quite confident of meeting them again later in the trip.

A diversion near Twizel took us down onto the shore of Lake Benmore to search for Pied Stilt, one of New Zealand's rarest birds. A hybrid was found on a shingle bank but it was not the bird we wanted. As I was searching further, a small grey and white Wader hunkered down in the stones on a gravel-spit. I called it as a possible Wrybill and one or two more scopes zoomed in. A head could be seen moving but a Banded Plover was also on the spit. Mark saw the bird as it moved, showing a black pectoral band – it was Wrybill...

And as we looked at each other in amazement and delight a pure-black Stilt flew in and landed close to us. Was it? Yes, it was a Black Stilt – complete with satellite tracking antenna. In fact, it had a slightly grey base to the bill but its behaviour was quite unlike the Black-winged Stilts: more like an egret as it dashed around the shallows or dipped its beak into the water prior to striking at a small fish. This was cause for celebration – there are only 100 in the world.

Thoughts drifted back to the Wrybill and while some remained behind photographing the Black Stilt, most of us set across the marsh, wading through shallow water regardless of wet feet, to get better views of the plover. It was not there. A Banded Plover primped across the shingle-spit watched by a Black-winged Stilt. It looked like wet boots for no return. But again our luck was in and the bird walked up from behind some grass clumps to pose for us. It was stunning – pure white underparts, grey back and wings, black breast-band and a bill bent weirdly to the right. It ran around for a while giving us great views and then flew off out of sight. We were delighted and even more so on learning that those remaining had also seen one. We drove to Twizel and a two-night stay in a noisy tourist hotel..

Saturday 1 December Hooker Valley and Tasman River

Sunny and clear all day with great views of Aoraki – Mt Cook – increasing wind and hazy high cloud 22°C
Having seen so much yesterday – four highly endangered species – we decided to have a good walk up the Hooker Valley which is the approach to Aoraki, the legendary Mt Cook on which Sir Edmund Hilary prepared for his ascent of Everest. Most people never see Mt Cook. It is shrouded in mist and cloud for three days out of every four. But for us, good weather was becoming the norm and for the second day running the mountain was in bright sunshine. Our walk was split into three – the adventurous could power ahead up to a lake at the mountain's base, those who felt weary could drop out at any time while the rest of us went just beyond the second suspension bridge to gain wonderful views of Aoraki.

The going was quite easy but with some more difficult sections. And it was uphill too. No matter. We all did the amount of walking we wanted and met back at the start for a picnic at 1.30pm. I did a short pre-lunch add-on walk down the valley looking for New Zealand Pipits with some of the group but with the exception of a Yellowhammer and European Hare we saw little of note.

The main walk had produced distant views of a New Zealand Falcon and a photogenic Paradise Shelduck standing on a rock. Mt Cook Lilies (an alternative name for Giant Buttercup) were looking splendid as were many Wild Spaniards – spiky plants with long sword-like yellow blooms. Wild Irishmen were in flower as were a heather-like plant with flowers resembling Lily-of-the-Valley. Turpentine shrubs were also noted. Boulder Copper butterflies were numerous and a few almost black Mountain Ringlets were seen too. More pipit-peering was engaged on the drive down after lunch and a distant bird was finally 'scoped for the eager ones who had missed it earlier in the trip. We popped down to a section of the Tasman River where, among the pebbles they resemble, we were able to find three more Wrybills, one seen even better than yesterday's in perfect light. A juvenile Black Stilt was watched for some time (there may have been a second close by) until it was joined by another which flew past us before alighting close to the first. They both used sedge plants as shelter.

An adult New Zealand Pipit flew down close to us and was instantly joined by a juvenile which it fed. We had fabulous views. Courting Australian Swamp Harriers were seen exchanging food in flight and two Black-fronted Terns gave good views as they beat past us into an increasing wind. We decided to beat it too and returned to the hotel via a guided tour of Twizel – clearly a one-horse town, except someone had taken the horse.

Sunday 2 December Twizel Canals. Yellow eyed Penguins and Royal Albatross.

Overcast and cool at 6am clearing on the coast but with a cool wind 18°C

Sleepy-eyed, most of us met at 6am for an expedition to watch Rails and Bitterns on the Twizel Canals. We found the canals but the birds stayed in bed... nada. A few Black-fronted Terns and Grey Ducks were seen but it was a quiet morning.

We left the hotel at 9am for the journey down to Dunedin making a stop at Takiroa Maon rock art (not very good and no lavatories). Our coffee break was farcical. Even by New Zealand standards the service was slow and a 20-minute break stretched to 45. This worked in our favour as it left us short of time for lunch so Mark phoned ahead and we ate award-winning fish and chips in the bus. Driving through Dunedin (and past our hotel) we went out onto the Otago Peninsular where a visit to a Yellow-eyed Penguin colony had been organised. This was on private land, a commercial operation I approached with some trepidation, but it was terrific. We had an introductory talk on Yellow-eyed Penguins and were then taken out by bus to the colony. Access to viewing hides was via covered trenches in a sand-dune. We kept waiting for Black Adder to appear and order 'Okay boys, over the top, advance'.

Instead we were shown the beach where penguins come ashore (none was seen but a bird in the undergrowth headed out), and several birds in artificial nest-box/burrows covered with brushwood. We watched an adult with two chicks and another pair with one. This second nest had the other adult asleep nearby. An immature bird from last year was also visiting the colony. Some of the group were taken onto the headland and shown Little Blue Penguins in artificial burrows. The time flew by and we were soon taken back to the centre. We all agreed that it had been a great visit and thanked Mark for organising (and paying) for it.

Both the outward and return drives down the Otago Peninsular were terrific and we had high spirits when checking into the Dunedin Hotel at 4.30pm. We met again at 5.45 to go out on our albatross-seabird dinner cruise – and what a cracker apart from the cold. We motored down the Dunedin Channel, parallel with the road along the Otago Peninsular we had driven two hours earlier. Several Stewart Island Shags were seen on mud banks and flying past but things really got going as we entered the narrow mouth of the estuary.

Our first major sighting was of four Hooker's Sealions – they have rounded rather than pointed snouts of Fur Sealions. One was a large male, half covered in sand. The others were smaller browner females. All were to be badly disturbed as we returned later, by a youth riding a motor-scrumbling bike. The male reared up and the biker swerved which was remarkable as the sealion was clearly more intelligent.

We continued out towards the tip of the peninsular where several Northern Royal Albatrosses were cruising over their mates on nests below. We counted at least six in the air and 15 on the cliff top. Their approach path took the huge birds over a colony of nesting Stewart Island Shags. There were many Spotted Shags nesting on cliffs below. Fur Sealion pups were on rocks festooned with giant kelp while just around the corner was a colony of Royal Spoonbills. Motoring out to sea for a while we eventually attracted a pod of at least 12 Hector's Dolphins which rode our bows for 10 minutes or so, a wonderful encounter with these rare endemic animals.

Returning to the estuary, we noticed about 60 Bar-tailed Godwits at about the time fried fish smells were wafting up from the galley. We were soon called to a sumptuous dinner of cold crayfish salad and hot Blue Rock Cod. The whole was washed down by good red wine making a perfect end to a brilliant afternoon.

Monday 3 December To Stewart Island

Sunny and bright all day, strong westerly wind on the mainland, sheltered on Stewart Island 19°C.

For a travelling day this was good. With just 200km to Invercargill we took things gently. A slight delay while the bus hose was checked out, a stop for coffee and we were at another super picnic lunch. Our appetiser was seeing Fernbirds at Tautuku Bay, a reserve Mark had set up 20 years earlier. It had large stands of sedge about two feet high which were buffeted by the strong wind. We were not hopeful but the first Fernbird was spotted soon after we arrived. They just popped up, flew a short distance and dropped into another bit of sedge. Patience gave us all good flight views of a species which was both bigger and more strongly marked than I expected. They flew rather weakly with wings whirring and tail tipped downwards. We were unsure how many flew but enjoyed at least eight sightings of four or more birds.

The final leg to Invercargill airport took 90 minutes and within half an hour of our arrival we were on one of three aircraft which flew us across to Stewart Island. Two Cessnas with just five passengers in each were particularly exciting, especially after I realised that the wing-span of each was about the same as a Royal Albatross. (Well, perhaps it was a little more but not much.)

We checked in to the surprisingly comfortable and well appointed pub in the capital Oban and were instantly entertained by several Kakas which flew past and settled in a nearby fuchsia tree. They had the white crowns and more orange underparts of the Stewart Island race.

Yesterday's call-over was done before dinner at 6.30pm and we were ready for our Kiwi night excursion by 8.30. It was brilliant. We motored on 'Wildfire' skippered by Philip Green, across to a headland in diminishing winds, anchoring off a small cove. Transferring, six at a time, to an inflatable dinghy we motored to the beach and jumped out. There followed a 20-minute walk across the headland to a sandy beach. Just as the stars started to come out so did our stars. Philip had seen a Brown Kiwi run along the beach as we appeared – it could just be seen through binoculars. The bird was probing in the sand under old tangled seaweed. Its long straight beak indicated a male. Philip illuminated the Kiwi with a gentle torch-beam which allowed us to examine the bird through binoculars. Every so often it would walk off along the beach with us 'high-stepping' behind to avoid making squeaky sounds in the sand. Eventually we left it to its supper and walked the length of the beach looking for more Kiwis.

None was found but stars were showing well by then and we looked through binoculars at the Southern Cross, Orion and Plaeides (the Seven Sisters) Walking back we found a more timid young male Brown Kiwi which we watched for a short while before returning to our landing beach. As we waited for the shuttle dingy to Wildfire, and on the trip back to Oban, we were able to study the heavens, picking out the Jewelbox cluster to the right of the Southern Cross and the Coalsack just above it. The Large and Small Magellanic Clouds were visible with their associated nebulae (see Heavenly Bodies below). We arrived back at the hotel at 1am tired but delighted at seeing our first Kiwis.

Tuesday 4 December Wildfire boat trip and Ulva Island

Sunny and bright all day, light but cool NE wind, 22°C

Having enjoyed (and needed) a lay-in we met for breakfast around 8am and set off on Wildfire at 9.30. The sea was calm with only a swell from yesterday's blow. Shy (White-capped) Albatrosses were seen almost immediately and were our constant companions while on the sea. One Salvin's Albatross was seen but our total for White-capped was around 70. Philip headed out to a small island where we were able to get great views of Subantarctic (Brown) Skua which look so like our Bonxie. One flew for us and showed the pale collar which helps separate the two species. A few more were seen distantly. A Fiordland Crested Penguin was watched in the water for some time, and there were many Little Blue Penguins.

We then made a huge loop out to sea watching albatrosses and Sooty Shearwaters until a boat was spotted 'chumming' to attract seabirds. On investigation, they had 32 Shy Albatrosses behind but nothing different from what we were seeing. Cruising out at sea once again we watched lots of Diving Petrels and the occasional Northern Giant Petrel, huge rafts of Sooty Shearwaters but little else of note until a Broad-billed Prion dashed past. Both Northern and Southern (which has more white in the upper wing), forms of Pintado Petrel were also seen.

Heading back inshore a small group of Bar-tailed Godwits seen on a sand spit just before two Yellow-eyed Penguins were spotted – our third species of penguin in the day. They had great sport, swimming under the boat giving us a brilliant demonstration of how penguins 'fly' underwater. One was immature: it eventually swam off after calling plaintively a few times. The other went ashore on a boulder-strewn beach which it crossed before taking a rest and preening. It disappeared up a track into quite steep woods. We ate a picnic on board before motoring to a jetty close by to disembark.

A Weka, the first of more than 10, came down to see us before we left it and started a wildlife walk. New Zealand Robin was next on our Ulva list – the bird hunkered down into a hollow on the path and began to sunbathe. This is a well-known habit in the UK where it is believed that participants are 'cooking' parasites, but not so in New Zealand. Mark was perplexed by the activity. Bellbirds, Brown Creepers and more New Zealand Robins popped up but Mark was after rarer birds – we had heard a Yellowhead. The bird was eventually tracked down in a flock of about four or five.

Kakas and Red-fronted Parakeet were found and studied, Tomtits heard but not seen much or well. Green-hooded and Dancing Spider orchids were pointed out but the highlight was just walking the trails through this exotic forest. We left Ulva at 3.45pm. Most of the group were dropped at Golden Bay to walk back and do some souvenir shopping. It turned out to be a faster option than staying on board – the rest of us enjoyed another 30 minutes on Wildfire. A rather early dinner at a local restaurant turned out to be delicious but conformed to the New Zealand norm of very slow service.

Wednesday 5 December Return to Invercargill and on to Fiordland

Sunny and bright am with a cold SW wind, increasing cloud pm, 20°C down to 13°C in the mountains

Breakfast at 7am was a little slow but we managed to eat and be away by 8.05, taking off in two aircraft at 8.20. The pilot of my plane was off first and on arrival cycled to our bus and drove it to the terminal... what service. We had a stop at the museum in Invercargill while Michael and Mark did some shopping for picnic stuff.

A river stop to find Black-fronted Dotterel was unsuccessful despite Maureen's best efforts. Lunch was taken tentatively at the Sandfly Café (it was good for a bite) and soon after we checked into the Fiordland National Park Hotel. Our afternoon excursion was to the Homer Tunnel, an unlikely sounding spot for a touch of endemic bashing... the New Zealand Rockwren. By the time we got there our luck with the weather had broken. There was a light but penetrating drizzle and cold wind. This did not look promising.

'If I were a Rockwren I would not show a beak this weather,' one group member said on retiring to the bus for a cuppa. But show it did and about four of us missed out.

'I was soaking wet. When I turned around there was a Rockwren,' Jane said later. 'The blinking bird was too close for me to focus my binoculars.' It seems that Rockwrens love wet and windy weather because it is so much better than their winter conditions. Then, they live under the snow, most of the time in a torpor, waking only occasionally to feed on any invertebrates they can find. The elation of seeing New Zealand's last available species was tempered slightly by

the weather and knowing that some had missed out. This was typical of the camaraderie which had developed over our time in New Zealand.

Thursday 6 and Friday 7 December Lake Gunn, more Rockwrens, Milford Sound and back home
Sunny and warm both days 25°C

Our last full day in the field was another highlight (number 18 of 18, I think). We returned to the Homer Pass in wonderful weather for photographers and those who missed the Rockwren to have another go. As is always the case in these things, birds which were cooperative in miserable weather turned shy on us. After a long wait and much persistence we saw two – the first found by Julian disappeared almost immediately but another Michael discovered was seen well by most of us. Sadly, neither was close enough for photographs.

We drove through the Homer Tunnel after our last excellent picnic lunch and down to Milford Sound where a pleasant couple of hours was spent in warm sunshine on the top deck of a sightseeing boat. We saw the sights: snow-topped mountains, waterfalls, huge gouges where glaciers had ground past the hillsides, and vast scars where trees had fallen rolling up the thin topsoil as they dragged those growing below them into the fiord. It takes 120 years for the cycle to complete and new trees to grow on the rock-scars. Our last fur-sealions were basking on rocks and a few Fiordland crested penguins were seen heading out to sea, probably for the last time this year as their breeding season was over. We finally turned our backs to the Tasman Sea and headed up the sound. This was the moment when we started to go home... getting off at the Milford terminal, up the pass and through the Homer Tunnel, down for a night at our hotel before continuing across the island to Dunedin the following day. Here we caught a flight to Christchurch and onwards to Auckland where most had a wait for their flights back to London. Our wonderful holiday was drawing to a close.

ANNOTATED LIST OF SPECIES

End = endemic End B = breeding endemic Int = introduced (1) = the number of days each species was recorded

| KIWIS | | BIRDS | |
|-------------------------------------|--|--------------|--|
| 1 | Southern Brown Kiwi <i>Apteryx australis</i> | End (1) | Family Apterygidae Two on a Stewart Island beach: voted bird of the trip. |
| NEW WORLD QUAIL | | | |
| 2 | California Quail <i>Callipepla californica</i> | (1) | Family Odontophoridae One at Lake Taupo. |
| PHEASANTS, FOWL & ALLIES | | | |
| 3 | Wild Turkey <i>Meleagris gallopavo</i> | Int (6) | Family Phasianidae A flock of eight near the Waitakere Ranges park; a few in fields on most travelling days. |
| 4 | Brown Quail <i>Coturnix ypsilophora</i> | Int (1) | About eight on Tiritiri Matangi. |
| 5 | Common Pheasant <i>Phasianus colchicus</i> | Int (1) | Heard at Foxton Beach. |
| 6 | Indian Peafowl <i>Pavo cristatus</i> | Int (1) | Three feral birds between east coast and Arthur's Pass. |
| WILDFOWL | | | |
| 7 | Cape Barren Goose <i>Cereopsis novaehollandiae</i> | Int (1) | Family Anatidae Five at Anne's Lagoon. |
| 8 | Canada Goose <i>Branta canadensis</i> | Int (8) | A few seen almost daily on the east coast. |
| 9 | Black Swan <i>Cygnus atratus</i> | Int (11) | Common to abundant. |
| 10 | Mute Swan <i>Cygnus olor</i> | Int (2) | One near Rotorua and another further away. |
| 11 | Blue Duck <i>Hymenolaimus malacorhynchos</i> | End (1) | Single bird and a family group watched on the Wanganui River tributary. |
| 12 | Paradise Shelduck <i>Tadorna variegata</i> | End (16) | Common to abundant. |
| 13 | Mallard <i>Anas platyrhynchos</i> | Int (17) | Common daily. |

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| 14 | Pacific Black Duck <i>Anas superciliosa</i> | (6) | Our first pure 'Grey Ducks' were on Lake Moeraki; a few elsewhere in the parts Mallards cannot reach. |
| 15 | Australasian Shoveler <i>Anas rhynchos</i> | (3) | Eight on Lake Taupo, a couple of pairs elsewhere. |
| 16 | Grey Teal <i>Anas gracilis</i> | (4) | About 15 at Taramarie wildlife refuge, Miranda; eight on Lake Taupo; three elsewhere. |
| 17 | Auckland Islands (Brown) Teal End (1) <i>Anas aucklandica</i> | | Two on Tiritiri Matangi. |
| 18 | New Zealand Scaup End (11) <i>Aythya novaeseelandiae</i> | | Common on lakes and ponds. |
| PENGUINS | | | |
| 19 | Fiordland Penguin End B (4) <i>Eudyptes pachyrhynchus</i> | | Between five and eight, Munroe's Beach, Moeraki; 13 on a secret beach the following day; six in Milford Sound. |
| 20 | Yellow-eyed Penguin End (2) <i>Megadyptes antipodes</i> | | A colony on private land on the Otago Peninsular; four off Stewart Island two of which swam repeatedly under the anchored boat. |
| 21 | Fairy (Little Blue) Penguin (6) <i>Eudyptula minor</i> | | A few seen in the water on most boat trips; occupied nesting boxes on Tiritiri Matangi and the Otago Peninsular. |
| ALBATROSSES | | | |
| 22 | Royal Albatross (2) <i>Diomedea epomophora</i> | | One Northern and three Southern sub-species seen on our Kaikoura pelagic, total four; 21 in the air or on nests at the Otago Peninsular. |
| 23 | Wandering Albatross (1) <i>Diomedea exulans</i> | | Gibson's (27), Snowy (2) and Antipodean (1) races seen on the Kaikoura pelagic. |
| 24 | Black-browed Albatross (1) <i>Thalassarche melanophrys</i> | | Four individuals of the sub-Antarctic sub-species seen on the Kaikoura pelagic trips. |
| 25 | Shy Albatross (9) <i>Thalassarche cauta</i> | | One soon after entering the Cook Strait; Salvin's and White-capped races seen commonly on boat trips with a maximum of 70 White-capped on the Stewart Island pelagic. |
| PETRELS & SHEARWATERS | | | |
| 26 | Northern Giant Petrel (7) <i>Macronectes halli</i> | | Total of 32 seen on two Kaikoura pelagic trips. |
| 27 | Cape Petrel (3) <i>Daption capense</i> | | Fifteen Southern and 50 Northern sub-species seen on Kaikoura pelagics; three on the whale watching trip; 30 Northern and four Southern on the Stewart Island boat trip. |
| 28 | Broad-billed Prion (1) <i>Pachyptila vittata</i> | | One seen on the Stewart Island boat trip. |
| 29 | Fairy Prion (2) <i>Pachyptila turtur</i> | | Many in the Cook Straits; hundreds on the Kaikoura boat trips. |
| 30 | White-chinned Petrel (1) <i>Procellaria aequinoctialis</i> | | Eleven seen on Kaikoura pelagics. |
| 31 | Westland Petrel End B (2) <i>Procellaria westlandica</i> | | Total of 48 seen on the two Kaikoura pelagics; two on the whale watching pelagic the following day. |
| 32 | Buller's Shearwater End B (1) <i>Puffinus bulleri</i> | | Two or three in the Cook Strait. |
| 33 | Fluttering Shearwater End B (5) <i>Puffinus gavia</i> | | Forty in the Cook Strait; hundreds in Queen Charlotte Sound; a few on other boat trips. |
| 34 | Hutton's Shearwater End B (3) <i>Puffinus huttoni</i> | | Hundreds off the north Kaikoura coast. |
| 35 | Sooty Shearwater (6) <i>Puffinus griseus</i> | | Two in the Cook Strait; increasing in numbers on subsequent boat trips until we saw large rafts of hundreds off Stewart Island. |
| 36 | Flesh-footed Shearwater (1) <i>Puffinus carneipes</i> | | Three in the Cook Strait. |
| DIVING PETRELS | | | |
| 37 | Common Diving Petrel (3) <i>Pelecanoides urinatrix</i> | | One or two the Cook Strait; small numbers off Kaikoura; hundreds on the Stewart Island pelagic. |

Family Spheniscidae

Between five and eight, Munroe's Beach, Moeraki; 13 on a secret beach the following day; six in Milford Sound.

A colony on private land on the Otago Peninsular; four off Stewart Island two of which swam repeatedly under the anchored boat.

A few seen in the water on most boat trips; occupied nesting boxes on Tiritiri Matangi and the Otago Peninsular.

Family Diomedidae

One Northern and three Southern sub-species seen on our Kaikoura pelagic, total four; 21 in the air or on nests at the Otago Peninsular.

Gibson's (27), Snowy (2) and Antipodean (1) races seen on the Kaikoura pelagic.

Four individuals of the sub-Antarctic sub-species seen on the Kaikoura pelagic trips.

One soon after entering the Cook Strait; Salvin's and White-capped races seen commonly on boat trips with a maximum of 70 White-capped on the Stewart Island pelagic.

Family Procellariidae

Total of 32 seen on two Kaikoura pelagic trips.

Fifteen Southern and 50 Northern sub-species seen on Kaikoura pelagics; three on the whale watching trip; 30 Northern and four Southern on the Stewart Island boat trip.

One seen on the Stewart Island boat trip.

Many in the Cook Straits; hundreds on the Kaikoura boat trips.

Eleven seen on Kaikoura pelagics.

Total of 48 seen on the two Kaikoura pelagics; two on the whale watching pelagic the following day.

Two or three in the Cook Strait.

Forty in the Cook Strait; hundreds in Queen Charlotte Sound; a few on other boat trips.

Hundreds off the north Kaikoura coast.

Two in the Cook Strait; increasing in numbers on subsequent boat trips until we saw large rafts of hundreds off Stewart Island.

Three in the Cook Strait.

Family Pelecanoididae

One or two the Cook Strait; small numbers off Kaikoura; hundreds on the Stewart Island pelagic.

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| | | | GREBES |
| 38 | New Zealand Grebe | End (2) | <i>Poliiocephalus rufopectus</i> |
| 39 | Great Crested Grebe | (2) | <i>Podiceps cristatus</i> |
| | | | IBISES, SPOONBILLS |
| 40 | Royal Spoonbill | (3) | <i>Platalea regia</i> |
| | | | HERONS, BITTERNES |
| 41 | Great Egret | (5) | <i>Ardea alba</i> |
| 42 | White-faced Heron | (13) | <i>Egretta novaehollandiae</i> |
| 43 | Pacific Reef Heron | (2) | <i>Egretta sacra</i> |
| | | | GANNETS, BOOBIES |
| 44 | Australasian Gannet | (11) | <i>Morus serrator</i> |
| | | | CORMORANTS |
| 45 | Little Pied Cormorant | (11) | <i>Phalacrocorax melanoleucos</i> |
| 46 | Little Black Cormorant | (2) | <i>Phalacrocorax sulcirostris</i> |
| 47 | Australian Pied Cormorant | (8) | <i>Phalacrocorax varius</i> |
| 48 | Great Cormorant | (10) | <i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i> |
| 49 | Spotted Shag | End (4) | <i>Leucocarbo punctatus</i> |
| 50 | New Zealand King Shag | End (1) | <i>Leucocarbo carunculatus</i> |
| 51 | Bronze (Stewart Island) Shag | End (2) | <i>Leucocarbo chalconotus</i> |
| | | | FALCONS |
| 52 | New Zealand Falcon | End (5) | <i>Falco novaeseelandiae</i> |
| | | | KITES, HAWKS, EAGLES |
| 53 | Swamp Harrier | (13) | <i>Circus approximans</i> |
| | | | RAILS, CRAKES, COOTS |
| 54 | Weka | End (2) | <i>Gallirallus australis</i> |
| 55 | Spotless Crane | (1) | <i>Porzana tabuensis</i> |
| 56 | Purple Swamphen | (14) | <i>Porphyrio porphyrio</i> |
| 57 | Takahe | End (1) | <i>Porphyrio hochstetteri</i> |
| 58 | Eurasian Coot | (1) | <i>Fulica atra</i> |
| | | | OYSTERCATCHERS |
| 59 | Pied Oystercatcher | (13) | <i>Haematopus longirostris</i> |
| | | | Family Podicipedidae |
| | | | A couple of pairs with young on Lake Rotorua; four on Lake Taupo. |
| | | | Three on Lake Pearson in the Southern Alps; one on Lake Moeraki. |
| | | | Family Threskiornithidae |
| | | | At least 12 at Foxton Beach; a colony of 15 under the Royal Albatrosses on the Otago Peninsular; six the following day. |
| | | | Family Ardeidae |
| | | | Eight seen over five days. |
| | | | Common almost daily; maximum 50 at Taramarie wildlife refuge, Miranda. |
| | | | One seen on the second Kaikoura pelagic (at Barney's Rock); probably the same bird did a fly-past as we approached the rock by road the following day. |
| | | | Family Sulidae |
| | | | Three colonies at Muriwai with about 100 pairs in each, a wonderfully close encounter; lots as we left Wellington Harbour; common around Kaikoura. |
| | | | Family Phalacrocoracidae |
| | | | Common. |
| | | | Scores on Lake Rotorua but only one during the rest of the trip. |
| | | | Common, seen on eight days; maximum 20 near Auckland. |
| | | | Common. |
| | | | About 25 in Queen Charlotte's Sound and off the north Kaikoura coast; two colonies of about 100 birds each on the Otago Peninsular. |
| | | | Eight in Queen Charlotte's Sound only. |
| | | | Two colonies of about 250 pairs each on the Otago Peninsular; common around Stewart Island. |
| | | | Family Falconidae |
| | | | One carrying prey in the Pureora Forest, one from the bus a little while later; seen or hear on four other occasions. |
| | | | Family Accipitridae |
| | | | Common to abundant daily. |
| | | | Family Rallidae |
| | | | One at Ship Cove, Queen Charlotte's Sound; about 10 on Ulva Island. |
| | | | One seen well on Tiritiri Matangi. |
| | | | Common daily, often in roadside fields. |
| | | | Three on Tiritiri Matangi. |
| | | | Three at Anne's Lagoon. |
| | | | Family Haematopidae |
| | | | Common to abundant. |

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| 60 | Variable Oystercatcher <i>Haematopus unicolor</i> | End (16) | Common almost daily. |
| | STILTS, AVOCETS | | Family Recurvirostridae |
| 61 | Black-winged Stilt <i>Himantopus himantopus</i> | (12) | Common. |
| 62 | Black Stilt <i>Himantopus novaeseelandiae</i> | End (2) | One adult on the Twizel Canals, two juveniles along the Tasman River... almost bird of the trip. |
| | PLOVERS | | Family Charadriidae |
| 63 | Spur-winged Lapwing <i>Vanellus spinosus</i> | (15) | Common daily. |
| 64 | Pacific Golden Plover <i>Pluvialis fulva</i> | (1) | One at Foxton Beach. |
| 65 | New Zealand Plover <i>Charadrius obscurus</i> | End (1) | A pair at Taramarie wildlife refuge, Miranda. |
| 66 | Double-banded Plover <i>Charadrius bicinctus</i> | End (7) | Quite common, maximum 15 at Kaikoura. |
| 67 | Wrybill <i>Anarhynchus frontalis</i> | End (2) | One on the Twizel Canals, at least two along the Tamar River... deserved to do better than just my bird of the trip. |
| | SANDPIPERS, SNIPES | | Family Scolopacidae |
| 68 | Bar-tailed Godwit <i>Limosa lapponica</i> | (4) | Hundreds at Taramarie wildlife refuge, Miranda; tens at Foxton Beach; small flocks at Otago and Stewart Island. |
| 69 | Ruddy Turnstone <i>Arenaria interpres</i> | (3) | One at Taramarie wildlife refuge, Miranda; one at Foxton Beach; four at Grassmere saltworks. |
| 70 | Red Knot <i>Calidris canutus</i> | (2) | Scores at Taramarie wildlife refuge, Miranda; About 60 at Foxton Beach. |
| 71 | Red-necked Stint <i>Calidris ruficollis</i> | (3) | One distantly at Taramarie wildlife refuge, Miranda; two at Grassmere saltworks. |
| 72 | Sharp-tailed Sandpiper <i>Calidris acuminata</i> | (2) | Two distantly at Taramarie wildlife refuge, Miranda; one at Foxton Beach. |
| | GULLS, TERNS | | Family Laridae |
| 73 | Kelp Gull <i>Larus dominicanus</i> | (17) | Common daily. |
| 74 | Red-billed Gull <i>Larus scopulinus</i> | (16) | Common daily. |
| 75 | Black-billed Gull <i>Larus bulleri</i> | End (6) | Colony (100 pairs) at Taramarie wildlife refuge, Miranda; a few thereafter, largely inland. |
| 76 | Caspian Tern <i>Sterna caspia</i> | (7) | A pair breeding off Tiritiri Matangi; at least 10 at Foxton Beach; recorded on five more days. |
| 77 | White-fronted Tern <i>Sterna striata</i> | (13) | Common almost daily; several small colonies at Muriwai; a colony at Taramarie wildlife refuge, Miranda. |
| 78 | Black-fronted Tern <i>Sterna albobristata</i> | End (6) | First seen by the group on the brilliant day near Twizel when we also saw Black Stilt and Wrybill; a few inland thereafter. |
| | SKUAS | | Family Stercorariidae |
| 79 | Subantarctic Skua <i>Stercorarius antarcticus</i> | (1) | Eight on the Stewart Island boat trip. |
| 80 | Parasitic Jaeger <i>Stercorarius parasiticus</i> | (4) | Two on the way to Tiritiri Matangi; six on the Queen Charlotte Sound trip and a couple elsewhere. |
| | PIGEONS, DOVES | | Family Columbidae |
| 81 | Common Pigeon <i>Columba livia</i> | Int (14) | Lived up to its name, as ever, common daily. |
| 82 | New Zealand Pigeon <i>Hemiphaga novaeseelandiae</i> | End (15) | A few daily starting with three at Waitakere Ranges park; our last of note was doing a display flight repeatedly on the Milford Sound cruise... even the skipper pointed the bird out. |

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| COCKATOOS, PARROTS | | | |
| 83 | Kea <i>Nestor notabilis</i> | End (4) | Family Psittacidae One near Arthur's Pass; one in flight at Fox Glacier; a couple at the Homer tunnel looked like beggars but fell short of tearing windscreen wipers off cars. |
| 84 | New Zealand Kaka <i>Nestor meridionalis</i> | End (5) | Two or three in the Pureora Forest and heard elsewhere, but a magnificent 15 on Ulva Island. |
| 85 | Sulphur-crested Cockatoo <i>Cacatua galerita</i> | Int (1) | Two at Waitakere Ranges park. |
| 86 | Yellow-crowned Parakeet <i>Cyanoramphus auriceps</i> | End (2) | A total of about six in the Pureora Forest; four on our last day. |
| 87 | Red-fronted Parakeet <i>Cyanoramphus novaezelandiae</i> | (2) | A few on Tiritiri Matangi; 10 on Ulva Island. |
| 88 | Eastern Rosella <i>Platycercus eximius</i> | Int (3) | Eight at Waitakere Ranges park; |
| CUCKOOS | | | Family Cuculidae |
| 89 | Long-tailed Cuckoo <i>Urodynamis taitensis</i> | End B (3) | Three sightings (possibly of one bird) in the Pureora Forest, one heard in a valley above Lake Rotoaira; birds calling after dark at Lake Moeraki and the Te Anau hotel. |
| 90 | Shining Bronze Cuckoo <i>Chrysococcyx lucidus</i> | (4) | One heard at Waitakere Ranges park; one heard in a valley above Lake Rotoaira; two seen well at the Blue Duck river; one heard at Lake Moeraki. |
| OWLS | | | Family Strigidae |
| 91 | Little Owl <i>Athene noctua</i> | Int (1) | One on the Otago Peninsular. |
| 92 | Morepork <i>Ninox novaeseelandiae</i> | End (4) | Heard four times during the trip with at least six calling at Lake Moeraki, but no sightings. |
| KINGFISHERS | | | Family Alcedinidae |
| 93 | Sacred Kingfisher <i>Todiramphus sanctus</i> | (9) | Seen mostly on wires: one eating a Weta sp near Waitakere Ranges park; one eating skinks on Tiritiri Matangi Island; common along roadsides. |
| NEW ZEALAND WRENS | | | Family Acantisittidae |
| 94 | Rifleman <i>Acanthisitta chloris</i> | End (4) | One at Wilderness Lodge, near Arthur's Pass; 10 at Haast's Pass, a few on Stewart and Ulva islands. |
| 95 | New Zealand Rockwren <i>Xenicus gilviventris</i> | End (2) | One bird brilliantly, in driving drizzle at Homer's Tunnel. Attempts to repeat the show in fine weather the following day resulted in good but distant views of two. |
| HONEYEATERS | | | Family Meliphagidae |
| 96 | Stitchbird <i>Notiomystis cincta</i> | End (1) | About 20 on Tiritiri Matangi. |
| 97 | New Zealand Bellbird <i>Anthornis melanura</i> | End (11) | Recorded on eleven days singing or seen. |
| 98 | Tui <i>Prothemadera novaeseelandiae</i> | End (13) | Common. Reminded me of our rector, Rev. Maurice Strike. |
| AUSTRALASIAN WARBLERS | | | Family Acanthizidae |
| 99 | Grey Gerygone <i>Gerygone igata</i> | End (13) | Common. The song was first picked out by Alastair and became familiar to us all. |
| 100 | Yellowhead <i>Mohoua ochrocephala</i> | End (2) | A stunning male at Haast's Pass almost carried bird of the trip single-winged; four or five on Ulva Island. |
| 101 | Whitehead <i>Mohoua albicilla</i> | End (2) | Quite common on Tiritiri Matangi; eight in the Pureora Forest. |
| 102 | New Zealand Brown Creeper <i>Finschia novaeseelandiae</i> | End (2) | Six seen on only two days was rather disappointing as this is a great species. |
| WATTLED CROWS | | | Family Callaeatidae |
| 103 | Kokako <i>Callaeas cinerea</i> | End (2) | Three seen brilliantly on Tiritiri Matangi; one at Pureora over a picnic breakfast was far more satisfying. |

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| 104 | Saddleback <i>Philesturnus carunculatus</i> BUTCHERBIRDS & ALLIES | End (2) | Quite a few on Tiritiri Matangi; two of the southern race on Ulva Island. |
| 105 | Australasian Magpie <i>Gymnorhina tibicen</i> FANTAILS | Int (13) | Family Cracticidae Common daily, often in roadside fields or near picnic tables. |
| 106 | New Zealand Fantail <i>Rhipidura fuliginosa</i> CROWS, JAYS | End (9) | Family Rhipiduridae Common almost daily; dark forms seen at Lake Moeraki and Homer's Tunnel. |
| 107 | Rook <i>Corvus frugilegus</i> AUSTRALASIAN ROBINS | Int (2) | Family Corvidae Two seen near Lake Taupo; three between Picton and Kaikoura. |
| 108 | Tomtit <i>Petroica macrocephala</i> | End (8) | Family Petroicidae Superb male, possibly attending young in a nest, at Waitakere Ranges park; seen infrequently seven times in the South Island. |
| 109 | New Zealand Robin <i>Petroica australis</i> SWALLOWS, MARTINS | End (5) | One seen, one heard on Tiritiri Matangi; lots in Pureora Forest; but uncommon until the final three days. |
| 110 | Welcome Swallow <i>Hirundo neoxena</i> LARKS | (14) | Family Hirundinidae A common but still welcome addition to our daily lists. |
| 111 | Eurasian Skylark <i>Alauda arvensis</i> OLD WORLD WARBLERS | Int (14) | Family Alaudidae Abundant... oh to take some home. |
| 112 | New Zealand Fernbird <i>Megalurus punctatus</i> WHITE-EYES | End (3) | Family Sylviidae Heard at Lake Taupo, one seen by Maureen and Ted in Tongariro NP; at least four seen at the Tautuku Bay Reserve. |
| 113 | Silvereye <i>Zosterops lateralis</i> STARLINGS | End (9) | Family Zosteropidae Common. |
| 114 | Common Myna <i>Acridotheres tristis</i> | Int (4) | Family Sturnidae Abundant daily in the north. |
| 115 | Common Starling <i>Sturnus vulgaris</i> THRUSHES | Int (17) | Common daily. |
| 116 | Common Blackbird <i>Turdus merula</i> | Int (17) | Family Turdidae Common daily. |
| 117 | Song Thrush <i>Turdus philomelos</i> OLD WORLD SPARROWS | Int (17) | Common daily. |
| 118 | House Sparrow <i>Passer domesticus</i> ACCENTORS | Int (17) | Family Passeridae Common daily. |
| 119 | Dunnock <i>Prunella modularis</i> WAGTAILS, PIPITS | Int (13) | Family Prunellidae Common daily. |
| 120 | New Zealand Pipit <i>Anthus novaeseelandiae</i> FINCHES | End (5) | Family Motacillidae We struggled to get good views of this normally abundant bird but did succeed. |
| 121 | Common Chaffinch <i>Fringilla coelebs</i> | Int (17) | Family Fringillidae Common daily. |
| 122 | European Greenfinch <i>Carduelis chloris</i> | Int (15) | Common almost daily. |
| 123 | European Goldfinch <i>Carduelis carduelis</i> | Int (12) | A few at Taramarie wildlife refuge, Miranda; common thereafter. |
| 124 | Common Redpoll <i>Carduelis flammea</i> | Int (13) | Common, seen almost daily, abundant in places. |

BUNTINGS

- 125 **Yellowhammer** Int (10)
Emberiza citrinella

Family Emberizidae

Common almost daily.

CUSCUSES & BRUSHTAIL POSSUMS

- 1 **Common Brushtail Possum** Int (7)
Trichosurus vulpecula

Family Phalangeridae

Commonly recorded as road-kills.

RABBITS & HARES

- 2 **European Rabbit** Int (11)
Oryctolagus cuniculus

Family Leporidae

Six at Waitakere Ranges regional park; a few in fields and hotel gardens most days.

- 3 **European Hare** Int (3)
Lepus europaeus

Recorded on three days in central southern South Island.

EARED SEALS

- 4 **New Zealand Fur Sea-lion** End (9)
Arctocephalus forsteri

Family Otariidae

One 'rafting', Queen Charlotte Sound; large numbers along the coast north of and in Kaikoura and down as far as Dunedin. Our most common wild mammal.

- 5 **Hooker's Sea-lion** End (1)
Phocarcos hookeri

A male and three females on a sandy beach in Otago Harbour. We were alarmed later in the boat trip to see a motorcyclist disturb the big male by riding his machine at it.

OTTERS, WEASELS & BADGERS

- 6 **Stoat (Ermine)**
Mustela erminea

Family Mustelidae

One ran across the road on our way to Invercargill Airport.

MOONRATS & HEDGEHOGS

- 7 **Western Hedgehog** Int (6)
Erinaceus europaeus

Family Erinaceidae

Commonly recorded as road-kills.

SPERM WHALES

- 8 **Great Sperm Whale** (1)
Physeter catodon

Family Physeteridae

Two large males on the whale-watching trip from Kaikoura.

MARINE DOLPHINS

- 9 **Bottlenosed Dolphin** (2)
Tursiops truncatus

Family Delphinidae

A pod seen briefly as we pulled up at Ohao Point north of Kaikoura; one dead on the beach at Miranda.

- 10 **Dusky Dolphin** (2)
Lagenorhynchus obscurus

About 12 in two pods, sporting delightfully in Queen Charlotte's Sound; a few off Kaikoura.

- 11 **Hector's Dolphin** End (3)
Cephalorhynchus hectori

Pod of five, Kaikoura beach; 10 or more off Ship's Creek; 15 bow-riding the boat on our Otago Harbour trip. Mammal of the trip.

REPTILES & AMPHIBIANS

FROGS

- 1 **Green Bell Frog** (4)
Litoria aurea

Family Ranidae

Heard only a few times: our good weather did nothing to help amphibian sightings.

WHITES & YELLOWS

- 1 **Large white** (7)
Pieris brassicae

Family Pieridae

Common daily.

- 2 **Small White** (3)
Pieris rapae

A few here and there.

BRUSH-FOOTED BUTTERFLIES

- 3 **New Zealand Red Admiral** (2)
Bassaris gonerilla

Family Nymphalidae

Two seen on separate occasions.

BROWN BUTTERFLIES

- 4 **Black Mountain Ringlet** (1)
Percnodaimon merula

Family Satyridae

Lots up the Hooker Valley near Mt Cook.

BLUES, HAIRSTREAKS & COPPERS

- 5 **Common Copper** (6)
Lycaena salustius
- 6 **Boulder Copper** (3)
Bouldenaria bouldenarium

Family Lycaenidae

- Common.
- Seen only in the Southern Alps but there common.

FISH

- 1 **Brown Trout** (1)
Salmo trutta
- 2 **Long-finned Eel** (1)
Anguilla dieffenbachia
- Seen only once from a bridge on our last day.
- A wonderful encounter with these fish in the river near Lake Moeraki.

OTHER TAXA

Swarm of bees at Waitakere Ranges park

Wasp sp. at the Muriwai gannet colony

New Zealand Magpie Moth

New Zealand Glow-worm

Little Grass Cicada

New Zealand Blue Damselfly

New Zealand Red Damselfly

Mountain Giant

Bush Giant

Striped Click Beetle

Sand Fly

Three-lined Hoverfly

Nyctemera amica

Arachnocampa luminosa

Kikikia muta

Austrolestes colonsonis

Xanthocnemis zealandica

Uropetala chiltonii

Uropetala carovei

Metablax cruciger

Austrosimulium sp.

Helophilus trilineatus

HEAVENLY BODIES

MARS

Was the planet we saw rising while motoring back on the boat from our kiwi beach walk. Rust-coloured Mars was named after the Roman god of war. The fourth planet from the sun, Mars has a diameter that is roughly half that of Earth, its day is 30 minutes longer than an Earth day and has an approximately 25 degree inclination of its polar axis which gives the planet seasons. The seasonal change in the size of the polar ice caps can be readily observed by Earth-based telescopes. Depending on its position relative to the Earth, Mars can appear more than three times brighter than Sirius, the brightest star in the sky.

ORION'S BELT

Seen, with sword pointing upwards, from Wilderness Lodge, Moeraki, and Stewart Island on the Kiwi trip. **Rigel** was seen in the top left corner, **Betelgeuse** in the bottom right and the **Orion Nebula**, with its huge blue gas cloud, in the centre of the sword.

SOUTHERN CROSS

Perhaps the most sought after heavenly body, this was seen from Wilderness Lodge, Moeraki, and Stewart Island on the Kiwi trip. The left star of the cross was always indistinct.

COALSACK DARK NEBULA

Seen brilliantly from Stewart Island on the Kiwi trip, just above Crux, this is the body aboriginal Australians though was the head of an Emu.

JEWEL BOX

Seen superbly from Stewart Island on the Kiwi trip, the Jewel Box is a fine open cluster for small telescope users. It is visible to the naked eye as a faint glow. Binoculars will resolve about ten of the brightest members. A telescope revealed more than 50 colourful stars superimposed on the haze of fainter members. The Jewel Box is a very young cluster, only 7 million years old. Most of its members are hot, blue stars which shine with a very high luminosity.

LARGE MAGELLANIC CLOUD (LMC)

This was clearly seen as was the **Tarantula Nebula (30 Doradonis)** on its lower edge. This is a stellar nursery like the Orion Nebula but much larger – 5,000 light years wide. It is 1/10th the size of the Milky Way (our galaxy) and is close at only 180,000 light years away. A southern hemisphere body, it was unknown to Europeans until Ferdinand Magellan (he of the straits, penguin, oystercatcher et al fame) discovered it in 1519. A star in the LMC exploded in 1987 becoming the nearest supernova in 400 years.

SMALL MAGELLANIC CLOUD (SMC)

Also seen clearly from Wilderness Lodge, Moeraki, and Stewart Island on the Kiwi trip, this globular cluster containing an estimated two billion suns, was just to the right of the LMC. Its shape is distorted by the gravitational pull of the Milky Way and the LMC despite being 200,000 light years from them.

ETA CARINAE NEBULA

The Eta Carinae Nebula is the largest and most splendid diffuse nebula in the sky, surpassing even the famous Orion Nebula (M42) in size and splendour. Only its position far south of the celestial equator (and, therefore, its invisibility in much of the northern hemisphere) prevents this nebula from being a household name. We saw it from Stewart Island on the Kiwi trip.

The nebula is a colossal star-forming region of hot gas, heated by ultraviolet rays from the hot young stars. At the centre of the nebula is a star with a unique story in its own right. Eta Carinae is one of the most massive stars known, 100 times the mass of our sun. It emits four million times as much light as our sun, and is the brightest object in the sky when viewed through an infrared detector. Eta Carinae is highly unstable and fluctuates greatly in brightness. It will undoubtedly explode as a supernova, perhaps in our lifetime. Today the star is at the edge of naked eye visibility, but an outburst in the mid-18th century temporarily made Eta Carinae the second brightest star in the night sky, trailing only Sirius. This outburst ejected gas which now surrounds the central star and is known as the Homunculus Nebula.

SIRIUS

The brightest star in the sky seen from Wilderness Lodge, Moeraki, and Stewart Island on the Kiwi trip. We made a wish on it and I hope they all come true.