

ITINERARY  
**NEW ZEALAND**  
November 9-27, 2025  
**Hauraki Gulf Pelagic Extension**  
November 27-29, 2025



*The Weka is a large, flightless rail native to New Zealand. These birds can be very curious, and often approach people quite closely to investigate. They are listed as Vulnerable because of predation by introduced predators, and the population also fluctuates due to climate factors that may limit food supply. Photograph by participant Henry Feilan*

*We include here information for those interested in the 2025 Field Guides New Zealand tour:*

- a general introduction to the tour
- a description of the birding areas to be visited on the tour
- an abbreviated daily itinerary with some indication of the nature of each day's birding outings

*Those who register for the tour will be sent this additional material:*

- an annotated list of the birds recorded on a previous year's Field Guides trip to the area, with comments by guide(s) on notable species or sightings (may be downloaded from the website)
- a detailed information bulletin with important logistical information and answers to questions regarding accommodations, air arrangements, clothing, currency, customs and immigration, documents, health precautions, and personal items
- a Field Guides checklist for preparing and keeping track of the birds we see on the tour
- after the conclusion of the tour, a list of birds seen on the tour

**W**ith its picturesque landscape of mountains, meadows, and fjords, New Zealand, or Aotearoa—"the land of the long white cloud" in Maori—is an enchanting land. Like its nearest neighbor, Australia, New Zealand has remained isolated for millions of years since the split of the continental plates, a fact reflected in the lack of land mammals (there are no native land mammals except a couple of now very rare bats) and in the ancient derivation of its avifauna. This is the home of such primitive families of birds as the amazing kiwis, New Zealand wattlebirds like the Kokako, Saddleback, the extinct Huia, and the New Zealand wrens.

Although New Zealand supports relatively few species of land birds, it boasts three endemic families and some 45 endemic species on the main islands. Some of these, such as the Saddleback, the Kokako, and the Stitchbird, are among the most endangered birds on Earth. There have been massive habitat changes since Maori settlement began a thousand years ago, followed by the huge impact of European settlement in the nineteenth century. The menace of introduced mammals like cats, stoats, rats, and possums means that many of the New Zealand birds are now to be found only in island sanctuaries or in remnant native forests. The New Zealand Department of Conservation has done an outstanding job of conserving these precious fragments, with very successful reintroduction programs for some of the rarest species. We shall visit many of the prime sites to get an idea of what the place was like in the not-so-distant past.



*The Stitchbird is restricted now to several small patches of native forest. We'll look for them when we visit Kapiti Island near Wellington, where a population is protected. Photograph by guide Doug Gochfeld.*

New Zealand is situated in a subtropical ocean convergence zone, and as such is richly endowed with seabirds; indeed, it is one of the cradles of seabird evolution. Boat trips off North, South, and Stewart islands and visits to several coastal sites will allow us to experience close at hand the tremendous variety of marine birds and mammals of this region. Our travels will take us to many places of great scenic beauty on North and South islands, from the snow-bound Mount Cook massif, to the deep-water upwellings off the seaward Kaikouras, incredible glacier-ringed Milford Sound in Fiordland National Park, the wild and remote Stewart Island, and the rare Yellow-eyed Penguin colonies. Join us this year for a most pleasurable springtime birding tour of New Zealand.

*We want to be sure you are on the right tour! Below is a description of the physical requirements of the tour. If you are concerned about the difficulty, please contact us about this and be sure to fully explain your concerns. We want to make sure you have a wonderful time with us, so if you are uncomfortable with the requirements, just let us know and we can help you find a better fitting tour! Field Guides will not charge you a change or cancellation fee if you opt out within 10 days of depositing.*

### **Physical requirements of this tour**

- **TRAILS & WALKING:** Moderate amounts of walking (up to 2 miles per day), along roadsides and trails, most of which are on relatively flat ground with no significant obstacles. A few sites will involve hiking along shorter (<half mile) stretches in rockier areas or on inclines to reach viewing points; boardwalks are present at some points and are usually well-maintained. Birding at night for kiwis may involve using trails that are narrow and steep in sections and can be muddy (walking sticks can be useful).

- **POTENTIAL CHALLENGES:** We make some long drives on many days of this tour. Participants should be able to step up (and step down) 10-12 inches to get into and out of our vehicle. Pelagic trips figure rather heavily as well. We bird from boats on several occasions; seas can be choppy, and salt spray is likely. One site (Blumine Island in the Queen Charlotte Sound) may require a “wet landing” from a +25 foot boat on a gravel beach; a certain amount of balance and spryness necessary.
- **PACE:** This tour is moderately paced. After breakfast (usually 5:30-7:30 a.m.), we bird until lunch time. We have many picnics on this tour but also occasionally lunch at our lodgings or a roadside café. We often bird after lunch or else continue traveling to our next destination.
- **WEATHER:** Temperatures will range from the 40s F, at night, mornings, and at higher elevations, to the low 80s F at warmer sites. Rain showers are always a possibility, and wind can be moderate at some sites; snow is unlikely most places, but possible in the Mackenzie Country and a few other higher elevation sites.
- **ELEVATION:** We reach elevations of up to 6000 feet on this tour and spend a night at an elevation of about 4000 feet; these are rarely cause for altitude sickness in most clients. Most of our birding locations are below 2000 feet otherwise.
- **VEHICLE SEATING:** So that each participant has equal opportunity during our travel, we employ a seat rotation system on all tours. Participants will need to be flexible enough to maneuver to the back of the vehicle on occasion. Those who experience motion sickness will need to bring adequate medication for the duration of the tour, as we are not able to reserve forward seats for medical conditions.
- **BATHROOM BREAKS:** New Zealand generally has good availability of public toilets both in towns and in parks. Nevertheless, participants should be prepared to make comfort stops in nature on rare occasions.
- **OPTING OUT:** Where we are staying multiple days in the same lodging, participants can opt to sit out a day or sometimes a half-day. This will not be possible on days when we are changing locations, but clients can remain on board the bus in most instances. Boat rides to birding destination (Ulva and Tiritiri Matangi Islands, for example) can be opted out of, but the client will have to forego those birding experiences. On days that we take boats to travel (for example, the ferry rides between South, Stewart, and North Islands), there is no opting out.

We'll visit some of the loveliest and wildest parts of the main islands of New Zealand with an emphasis on the endemic landbirds, seabirds, and shorebirds. There are also various opportunities for shopping for local souvenirs and the beautiful New Zealand jade or greenstone.

If you are uncertain about whether this tour is a good match for your abilities, please don't hesitate to contact our office; if they cannot directly answer your queries, they will put you in touch with the guide.



*Westland Petrel soaring in front of the Kaikouras. Photograph by guide Dan Lane.*



*The South Island Saddleback is a wattlebird, a group restricted to New Zealand. This species occurs only on islands where it is protected from introduced rats and other predators. Photograph by participant Henry Feilen.*

## About the Birding Areas

**Stewart Island**—Wild, remote, and largely unspoiled, this spectacular island has an almost subantarctic feel about it and has fairly recently become New Zealand's largest national park (Rakiura). The island has little development save around the town of Oban on its northeast coast, so we will be walking while here! Weather on the island can be quite variable, as it can be quite chilly (in the 40s) if rainy, but comfortable if the sun is out. It is one of the best places to see New Zealand's iconic bird, the Brown Kiwi, which comes out to feed at night. We shall need good weather here, but with a bit of luck we should see this bizarre creature poking about for worms. The supporting cast includes the curious flightless rail, the Weka, as well as Red-crowned and Yellow-fronted parakeets and the South Island form of Kaka (which are not shy here!), Yellowhead, and the South Island Saddleback on another of the island refuge sites. We will also do a morning-long boat trip into the near-shore waters of the eastern side of the island, viewing a few nesting islands and then going farther out into open water to see what pelagic species we can see. Seabirds to be expected include White-capped and Salvin's Albatrosses, Sooty Shearwater, White-chinned Petrel, Common Diving-Petrel, and Fairy Prion, and there's also a chance of Mottled Petrel and just perhaps an early Buller's Albatross.

**Fiordland** is an area of magnificent mountain scenery and a truly spectacular deep fjord, where we hope to see the restricted-range winter-breeding Fiordland Crested Penguin, as well as Keas, and a chance for the rare New Zealand Falcon and Blue Duck. There will be an optional cruise on the sheltered waters of Milford Sound (a fjord in reality), and we'll have a further chance of Fiordland Crested Penguin in addition to New Zealand fur seals and Dusky and Bottlenose dolphins. Our only opportunity for the rare and declining South Island Wren (Rock Wren) is here, too, on the scree slopes above the tree line. We have been exceedingly fortunate over the last several trips, seeing the birds well without long walks, though we do need good weather!

**Dunedin area**—This seaside resort area has the world's only mainland colony of nesting Northern Royal Albatross and is also a good place to Little Penguins. Spotted Shags, Bronze (Stewart Island) Shag, and Little Pied Cormorant make up the supporting cast, while other seabirds are likely offshore.

**Mackenzie Country (Otago)** is a vast glacial outwash plain lying at the foot of Mount Cook, New Zealand's highest mountain. The strange braided river systems here harbor one of the world's rarest waders, the Black Stilt, which will be our chief target, along with such oddities as Wrybill, Double-banded Plover (Banded Dotterel), and the delightful river-dwelling Black-fronted Tern, one of the prettiest of all terns.



**Haast Pass and Franz Josef** —Temperate montane rain forest, suggesting what the west side of the South Island must once have been before the calamity of settlement. It is one of the last mainland sites for Yellowhead (which would likely be extinct within the next few years save for relocation efforts that have established populations on a few offshore islands), whereas Rifleman, NZ Robin, and Yellow-fronted Parakeet are also present. The forest itself has huge *Nothofagus* beeches and vast amounts of moss. Near the tourist community of Franz Josef is the local Okarito Brown Kiwi, and we will make an effort to see this very rare species our evening here.

**Arthur's Pass**— The highest pass we'll cross in the Southern Alps, and our last opportunity to enjoy the mischievous Kea. One mouth-watering possibility here would be Great Spotted Kiwi this evening. Weather, and luck will have to be on our side, but even hearing one will be exciting! Our lodge here has wonderful views of the Southern Alps!

**Kaikoura**—This rocky coastal area is set against a gorgeous mountain backdrop and lies adjacent to submarine canyons where upwellings of deep nutrient-rich cold waters occur. Seabird watching has become a local industry, and with the continental shelf only two miles offshore, pelagic trips are quick and efficient. They are some of the most outstanding pelagic trips in the world, and the afternoon out here is a trip highlight—we are out among the birds within 20 minutes, just how pelagic birding should be! Marvelous close views of albatrosses can be obtained, with several forms of Wandering (now split by Clements' checklist, the most likely species here is Antipodean), Southern and Northern Royal, Black-browed, White-capped and Salvin's albatrosses being likely. The Campbell Island form of Black-browed Albatross has a honey-colored eye and may well be a distinct species; it is rare but not impossible. Kaikoura is also an excellent place to see the rare Westland Petrel, which breeds in a small mountain area on the west coast of South Island. Hutton's Shearwater breeds in the mountains inland from Kaikoura, and this is THE place to see it. The submarine canyon waters are also good for sea mammals including sperm whale, NZ fur seal, and Dusky and the diminutive endangered Hector's dolphins.

**Picton**—The northeast end of the South Island is a series of sunken riverbeds (sounds), and we will take a boat ride out onto Queen Charlotte Sound to look at seabirds such as the local New Zealand King Shag, Little Penguin, Fluttering Shearwater, and land on a few islands to try for the very local Malherbe's (Orange-fronted) Parakeet, South Island Saddleback, and South Island Robin, among others. Picton is also where we will board the ferry between the South and North Islands, and seabirds will be on the menu as we cross the Cook Strait.

**Kapiti Island**—Another of the "island arks" of New Zealand, this is one that lies off the coast of the southern North Island near Wellington. It is operated by both state and Maori initiatives. We will spend one night on the island in rustic accommodations, but this will allow us to try for Little Spotted Kiwi, one of the most difficult of the 5 species of kiwi! In addition, there are several of the North Island native forest species here, which will give us a few more chances at such things as Kaka, Red-crowned Parakeet, North Island Saddleback, Whitehead, North Island Kokako, Stitchbird, and others.

**Whakapapa**—At the base of one of the volcanoes of the central North Island, this skiing resort town is also nested among several rivers that are home to the unique Blue Duck, a rare and local species that requires montane, rushing streams.

**Taupo and Rotorua**—These lakes are famous for being geothermal. Taupo is the largest lake in New Zealand, and both lakes are home to the NZ Grebe or Dabchick, and we may luck upon other specialties such as Fernbird and Australasian

Bittern here. Nearby are patches of forest that still house some native forest birds such as Whitehead, Long-tailed Koel (Cuckoo), Tomtit, North Island Robin, and even small populations of North Island Kokako.

**Miranda**—a special reserve for shorebirds on the Firth of Thames, managed by a local naturalist group and with a very informative visitor center. A variety of eastern Palearctic waders should be here, as well as the extraordinary endemic Wrybill and the very scarce and declining Red-breasted (New Zealand) Dotterel.

**Tiri-tiri Matangi Island**—This small island in Auckland Harbor has been designated as a sort of ark for many of the endangered species that are unable to survive in the changed habitats on the main islands. Feral animals, including the long-established Polynesian rat or kiore, have been eliminated, and the island is becoming pristine habitat once again. The Department of Conservation has successfully introduced the North Island Saddleback here, a species that was once found on just a couple of predator-free islands. Recent and very promising introductions include Whitehead, Stitchbird (a small honeyeater-type which is now classified as an entirely new family, once restricted only to Little Barrier Island, which was its final refuge), the loud North Island Saddleback, the large and very rare North Island Kokako, the incredible flightless swamphen, the Takahe, and the nocturnal Little Spotted Kiwi (not likely during a day visit). Apart from introduction sites such as this, the Takahe only occurs in a few remote valleys in Fiordland, while the diminutive kiwi is now only introduced here and on a few other tiny islands. Many of New Zealand's birds can only survive in managed habitats, due to the huge changes in the environment following Maori and then European settlement. It will be fascinating to view this experiment in applied conservation at first hand during our visit here.



*The tiny South Island Wren is one of two primitive songbird species found in New Zealand. These birds are restricted to rocky areas on the South Island, and are threatened by introduced predators such as mice and rats, and climate change.  
Photograph by guide Dan Lane.*

## Itinerary for New Zealand

### **Days 1-3, Sun-Tue, 9-11 Nov. Los Angeles to Auckland to Queenstown to Oban, Stewart Island, New Zealand.**

We recommend the Air New Zealand flight #5 departing Los Angeles at 8:00 p.m. on November 9<sup>th</sup>; crossing the International Date Line en route, we effectively “lose” a day. Scheduled arrival in Auckland is 6:00 a.m. on November 11<sup>th</sup>. If you are not coming in early, you will continue on Air New Zealand flight 635 departing Auckland at 9:30a.m. and arriving in Queenstown at 11:25 a.m. You may choose to arrive a day early and spend the night in Auckland to try to reset your internal clock. Upon arrival in the southern city of Queenstown, the group will be met at the airport. NOW WOULD BE THE OPPORTUNE TIME TO REPACK A SMALL BAG FOR TWO NIGHTS ON STEWART ISLAND, as transferring

large luggage to and from the island and transporting it on the island is difficult due to space on the ferry and mostly walking once on the island. From the Queenstown airport, we will have lunch and load onto our bus for transfer to Bluff Harbour for the ferry to Stewart Island. Evening Brown Kiwi excursion either tonight or tomorrow night (bring a flashlight!). Night at Oban, Stewart Island.

**Day 4, Wed, 12 Nov. Stewart Island; Ulva Island.** Today we'll have a day charter boat in Paterson Inlet and some of its islands. Our charter vessel will take us a short way out into Fouveaux Strait. We may spy White-capped Albatross, Sooty Shearwater, Brown Skua, and the rare Yellow-eyed Penguin, before we return to the more sheltered waters of Paterson Inlet, home to the more common Little Blue and Fiordland penguins. We'll land on Ulva Island for excellent viewing of most of the South Island forest birds such as Weka, Kaka, Yellow- and Red-crowned parakeets, the South Island Saddleback, Yellowhead, and Pipipi (NZ Brown Creeper). After this fine opportunity, we'll depart mid-afternoon to return to Oban. If we didn't get the South Island Brown Kiwi last night, we'll try tonight. Night at Oban.

**Day 5, Thu, 13 Nov. Ferry to South Island and on to Te Anau.** This morning, we'll take the ferry back to Bluff, where we'll get aboard our bus and head northwest to Te Anau, Fiordland. Along the way, we may stop at a few estuaries and coastal viewing points to see if we can pick out any shorebirds, gulls, terns, perhaps our first views of the fabled Bar-tailed Godwits, or Kuaka in Maori, a species that is mythical here thanks to their migratory habits. We will arrive in Te Anau and settle in to our hotel. If time allows, we may visit the conservation station where several endangered endemic species are kept for breeding and rearing programs, allowing us views of Takahe, for example.. Night at Te Anau.

**Day 6, Fri, 14 Nov. Fiordland National Park.** We will have morning breakfast, then drive north again into the awe-inspiring and scenic Fiordland National Park. The landscapes are unrivalled in New Zealand, such as the *Nothofagus* beech forest, such things as Rifleman, Tomtit, NZ Robin, Long-tailed Koel (or Cuckoo), Yellow-fronted Parakeet, Tui, bellbird, Pipipi (or NZ Brown Creeper), and Grey Gerygone, and the sub-alpine regions we will search for South Island (Rock) Wren, the New Zealand mountain parrot or Kea, and the Blue Duck or Whio. We'll also have the opportunity to take a ferry ride around the impressive Milford Sound (actually a fjord), a great locality to see the Fiordland Crested Penguin as well as some impressive sights. Night in Te Anau.



*Fiordland Crested Penguins are one of three penguin species we'll seek. Photograph by participant Paul Koker.*

**Day 7, Sat, 15 Nov. Te Anau to Dunedin.** We'll have breakfast at our hotel in Te Anau, and then load up the bags and start driving east towards the southeast coast of the South Island and Otago Harbor (at the head of which sits the city of Dunedin), with stops for several sights along the way. This afternoon we'll enjoy a cruise down Otago Harbour to Taiaroa

Head. Here at Taiaroa is the only mainland colony of the Northern Royal Albatross (considered a separate species from the southern Royal now by Clements' checklist and eBird), one of the world's largest flying birds. Just below them is a colony of several thousand Stewart Island Shags and near them smaller colonies of Spotted Shags, Little Pied Cormorants, and Royal Spoonbills. Time allowing, we may head out onto the Pacific for a quick "pelagic" with petrels, albatross, and shearwaters as targets. No doubt shagged out by nightfall, we'll spend the night in Dunedin.

**Day 8, Sun, 16 Nov. Dunedin to Mackenzie Basin; Twizel.** After breakfast in Dunedin, we will head up the east coast to have lunch at Oamaru, which often hosts a Victorian dress-up fair, as well as one of the northernmost breeding colonies of Stewart Island Shag (this, the form sometimes separated off as Otago Shag). From here, we will depart the coast for the open country of the Mackenzie Basin, a region characterized by open dry grassy plains and the "braided rivers" that cut across the eastern, side if the South Island. Here, we will stay in a comfortable hotel at the edge of the little hamlet of Twizel. Night at Mackenzie Country Hotel.



*The Wrybill is a small plover with a bill that curves to the right, used for probing under rocks in the streambeds where it lives. We'll look for this interesting bird when we visit the Mackenzie Basin. Photograph by participant Paul Bengtson.*

**Day 9, Mon, 17 Nov. Mackenzie Basin.** The braided rivers and glacial lakes in this region are the habitat of the critically endangered Black Stilt, and we will look also for the unique Wrybill and Double-banded Plover (Banded Dotterel) and a range of inland waterfowl. Later today we'll travel up to Aoraki (Mount Cook) National Park. We'll be walking amidst the alpine splendor, searching for the rare NZ Falcon and taking further opportunities to look for Black Stilt and Wrybill on their breeding grounds. Night at Mackenzie Country Hotel.

**Day 10, Tue, 18 Nov. Mackenzie Basin to Arthur's Pass.** Leaving the dry Mackenzie country, we will head back towards the east coast of the South Island, passing its largest city, Christchurch. Time permitting, we may pay a visit to the shores of Lake Ellesmere, which often hosts interesting shorebirds. Our destination this afternoon is getting to Arthur's Pass, the highest of the road passes across the Southern Alps. Here, we will be lodging at a mountain lodge with spectacular scenery, nestled in the beech forests of the region. If circumstances permit, we may opt to do an evening outing up into the National Park near the pass to see if we can hear (or maybe see if we have incredible luck!) Great Spotted Kiwi. Night at Arthur's Pass.

**Day 11, Wed, 19 Nov. Arthur's Pass through the Canterbury Plains and Kaikoura.** From Arthur's Pass, we will descend back into the drier eastern side of the South Island at the north end of the flat Canterbury Plains, which may remind you of some scenes from the Lord of the Rings movies (for good reason!). Black-fronted Terns and South Island Oystercatchers will probably flit past as we move along. A stop at the Ashley River mouth will give us an opportunity to



see some loafing shorebirds, gulls, and terns, and perhaps something unusual may be mixed in. By afternoon we'll be in the lovely seaside resort town of Kaikoura, which has put itself on the map as home to some of the easiest pelagic trips in the world! Night in Kaikoura



*A pelagic cruise near Kaikoura will get us close to some amazing seabirds. Here, a group of albatrosses and others battle for scraps of fish. Photograph by guide Dan Lane.*

**Day 12, Thu, 20 Nov. Kaikoura.** Kaikoura is a breathtaking place where snow-iced mountains reach down to a turquoise sea. The continental shelf drops abruptly very close to shore, resulting in upwellings of nutrients from the sea's depths, attracting a rich and abundant marine life. We will take an Albatross Encounters pelagic birding trip close inshore, which gives us an outstanding chance for great views of many seabirds and cetaceans including the rare endemic Westland Petrel which we'll have likely seen under very different circumstances just two days ago. This is the pelagic for people who don't like pelagics—just 20 minutes out to the birds, a couple of hours with them, and then back inshore—a great way to do it! We should get good views of many albatrosses including perhaps both Southern and Northern Royal albatrosses, Antipodean (formerly Wandering) Albatross, Salvin's and White-capped albatrosses, perhaps some form of Black-browed Albatross, Hutton's, Buller's, Sooty, and possibly Short-tailed shearwaters, plus up close and personal Westland and White-chinned petrels, and Northern, and maybe Southern, Giant-Petrels, plus Dusky and Hector's dolphins and New Zealand Fur Seals. This afternoon we can take an optional second excursion on the water, either birding or whale watching (both at your own expense, < <https://www.albatrossencounter.co.nz/> or <https://whalewatch.co.nz/book-now-customlink/> >), or you can walk the track around the headland here... or you can do nothing at all, perhaps enjoying an easy afternoon, doing laundry or enjoying the view from our hotel. Night in Kaikoura.

**Day 13, Fri, 21 Nov. Kaikoura to Picton.** We will load up and head north along the coast, with a few birding stops along the way, to the town of Picton, which rests at the head of a sunken river valley, or sound. The waters and inlets of the Marlborough Sounds will be our playground this afternoon. A charter vessel will carry us through Queen Charlotte Sound to a small rocky islet where a small colony of the rare New Zealand King Shag breeds and roosts. The sound is also home to nesting Fluttering Shearwaters, feeding Australasian Gannets, and some other seabirds, as well as dolphins and fur seals. An island here has had a small population of Malherbe's (Orange-fronted) Parakeet and South Island Saddleback introduced, and we will try for these if time allows. Night in Picton.

**Day 14, Sat, 22 Nov. Ferry to North Island; drive to Whakapapa.** From Picton we'll embark on a ferry crossing to the North Island getting breakfast on the boat. Salvin's and White-capped albatrosses often pass by, as do Northern Giant-Petrels, Parasitic Jaegers, Fairy Prions, and many shearwaters and other seabirds, and perhaps dolphins. Upon arriving in New Zealand's capital city, Wellington. By afternoon, we'll arrive at Paraparaumu beach and take short boat trip across

to the island sanctuary of Kapiti Island. This “island ark” should provide opportunities to view Takahe, North Island Saddleback, and Kaka. By night we will seek out the endangered Little Spotted Kiwi, and New Zealand’s only native owl, the Morepork. This is another side trip that will benefit from repacking into a smaller bag for easier handling of luggage on the ferry and on the island. Accommodation is in basic lodge accommodation with some private rooms but shared bathroom facilities.

**Day 15, Sun, 23 Nov. Kapiti Island; drive to Whakapapa.** After some morning birding on Kapiti Island, we will return to North Island, get back aboard our bus, and continue on into the island’s interior. Unlike the South Island, the North Island’s mountains were created by volcanic activity, and we’ll be heading up into the volcanic plateau that hosts the impressive Tongariro National Park, a popular skiing resort in the winter. By day’s end, we will have reached our ski resort hotel at the foot of Ruapehu, one of the volcanoes. Night in Whakapapa Village.



*The Blue Duck is found in mountain torrents of both islands, but we’ll look for them near Whakapapa.  
Photograph by participant Henry Feilen.*

**Day 16, Mon, 24 Nov. Blue Ducks; drive to Lake Rotorua.** This morning, we will make a concerted effort to see New Zealand’s “torrent duck,” the attractive Blue Duck. This species occupies long, linear territories along the fast-flowing streams and rivers of New Zealand’s mountains, but it is easier to see here than in the Southern Alps, as here it has higher densities and smaller territories. With luck, we should have nice views here. Then, we will head north to New Zealand’s largest lake, Lake Taupo, with a stop to check some marsh habitat beside the lake for Fernbird, New Zealand Grebe (Dabchick), and perhaps Australasian Bittern. From there, we drive on to Rotorua, which sits on another lake known for its thermal activity. The sulphurous smell here may be memorable. Night at Rotorua.

**Day 17, Tue, 25 Nov. Pureora Forest Reserve; Miranda; the Auckland area.** This morning we’ll visit the Pureora Forest Reserve near Te Kuiti to try for Long-tailed Koel, Yellow-fronted Parakeet, and the North Island forms of Kaka, and Tomtit, and the endemic Whitehead and New Zealand Robin. Formerly a stronghold of Kokako, this species is rarely seen here these days, but we may luck out and hear one of the last remaining birds from deeper in the forest. Then we’ll head to the Firth of Thames at Miranda, one of New Zealand’s best tidal mudflats for resident and migrant shorebirds. Among the species to expect are Double-banded Plover, overwintering Wrybill, the endangered and beautiful Red-breasted (New Zealand) Dotterel, Bar-tailed Godwit, Ruddy Turnstone, Red Knot, and perhaps Pacific Golden-Plover, Sharp-tailed and Curlew sandpipers, and Red-necked Stint; rarities might include Gray-tailed Tattler, Marsh Sandpiper, or Terek Sandpiper. From here, we will try to pass through New Zealand’s largest city, Auckland, perhaps wrangling some traffic on the way, and arrive at the decidedly less-congested town of Whangaparaoa to the north. Night in Whangaparaoa.

**Day 18, Wed, 26 Nov. Tiri-tiri Matangi Island.** The tiny island of Tiri-tiri Matangi is situated in the inshore waters of the Hauraki Gulf off the southeastern coast of the northern peninsula of North Island. The island has become an important refuge for several birds whose mainland populations have been drastically reduced or eradicated by introduced predators such as rats, stoats, and domestic cats. The New Zealand Department of Conservation is developing Tiri-tiri Matangi as an open sanctuary for various endangered species including the extremely rare (and strange) North Island Kokako, one of the three extant members of the endemic family Callaeidae (Wattlebirds), which has lost two others to extinction (the South Island Kokako and the bizarre Huia). The other wattlebird, the North Island Saddleback, is quite common on the island, kicking up a ruckus from the understory. Another species recently introduced and now breeding, but far harder to see, is the stout and distinctive Takahe. There is also a population of Stitchbird, which is now classified as being in its own endemic family. There is a good chance too of the rare Brown Teal and maybe Spotless Crake on ponds around the island. After an early 'final' dinner, we will head out to look for our third (or perhaps fourth?) kiwi species, the North Island Brown Kiwi on a peninsula near Warkworth that is managed to be predator-free: Tawharanui. This lovely day will be a fitting "finale" to our tour, and we will be happy to get a good night's sleep tonight! Night in Whangaparaoa.

**Day 19, Thu, 27 Nov.** Those who are headed home today will go to the Auckland airport to catch your flights to North America, with time to make connections home. Air New Zealand flight 4 departs Auckland at 6:00 p.m. arriving in LAX at 9:05 a.m. We'll gain back the day we lost crossing the International Date Line.



*This pelagic extension is our best chance to find the endangered New Zealand Storm-Petrel.  
Photograph by participant Gregg Recer.*

## Itinerary for Hauraki Gulf Pelagic Extension

**Day 1, Thu, 27 Nov. Auckland to Bream Head.** This morning, those continuing on the extension will take a bus to the One Tree Point area with some limited birding along the way. Night in One Tree Point.

**Day 2, Fri, 28 Nov. North Hauraki Gulf Pelagic Trip.** While New Zealand is notable for its endemic families and species, it stands out as having some of the greatest diversity of seabirds and marine mammals in the entire world. Our extension has been designed with this in mind. In addition to the short pelagics out of Kaikoura and Stewart Island on the main tour, this full day pelagic out into the waters of the Hauraki Gulf will greatly enrich the tour's pelagic experience. There are a number of species we may encounter that are less likely or unlikely elsewhere on the tour. These include: Little and Buller's shearwaters, Parkinson's (Black), and Cook's (and more rarely Gray-faced, Pycroft's, and Black-

winged) petrels, and White-faced Storm-Petrel. But what makes this trip of particular interest is the possibility of encountering New Zealand Storm-Petrel. Previously known from three specimens collected in the mid to late 1800's, this enigmatic species was lost to science until it was rediscovered in the Hauraki Gulf in 2003. Its breeding sites have only just been discovered on nearby Little Barrier Island, and now management is in place to try to preserve this exciting endemic species. Its closest relatives have only recently been determined, with genetic analysis revealing it to be a member of the genus *Fregetta* (along with Black-bellied and White-bellied storm-petrels). Sightings often include interesting cetaceans as well, with several dolphin species and Bryde's Whales being highlights. Please join us for what promises to be a fantastic trip. Night just north of Auckland.

**Day 3, Sat, 29 Nov. Flights home.** Today we will have plenty of time to prepare for Air New Zealand flight 4 that departs Auckland at 6:00 p.m. arriving in LAX at 9:05 a.m. We'll gain back the day we lost crossing the International Date Line.

## About Your Guides

**Dan Lane** was an active birder in his home state of New Jersey until he moved to Louisiana to pursue a master's studying Neotropical birds at Louisiana State University. By 1999, he'd received his degree and participated in three LSU expeditions to Peru and Ecuador, discovering a new species of bird (Scarlet-banded Barbet) along the way. His increasing experience with Peruvian avifauna landed Dan coauthorship on the Birds of Peru--alongside his childhood heroes Ted Parker and John O'Neill. Meanwhile, his continuing fieldwork has resulted in uncovering additional new species to science. His favorite areas are in tropical Latin America (Peru, Ecuador, and Bolivia), but on occasion he leads tours to other corners of the globe and of course near his home in Louisiana.

*"Dan Lane is superior in all aspects as a guide—excellent recognition of bird sounds, patient in drawing birds in for views, able to relate to group members with relaxed courtesy and helpfulness. We rate Field Guides the highest." J.N. & E.H., Amazonian Ecuador: Sacha Lodge*

**Sam Wilson** grew up in New Jersey and had his spark moment as a young adult visiting Hawk Mountain Sanctuary. On his first visit he witnessed an epic migration of 10,000 Broad-winged Hawks as they took to the skies over the Appalachian ridges. He was hooked, and his fascination with bird migration has only grown.

Sam spent four years working in Cape May, New Jersey, for New Jersey Audubon developing bird migration programs for school groups and families and leading group trips for Cape May Bird Observatory and New Jersey Young Birders Club. He enjoyed a stint in the Hawaiian Islands doing breeding bird surveys in the remote Alakai Swamp for the Kauai Forest Birds Recovery project (though his gear didn't recover!).

Eventually, wanderlust led him to Alaska, where he led backcountry trips focused on birds and wildlife in Denali National Park, as well as guided trips for birding festivals along the Kenai Peninsula and Copper River. He has since led group trips as a naturalist-guide in most regions of the country with a special focus on National Parks and Wilderness areas. Sam is an eBird reviewer in Alaska and contributor to both *Cape May Magazine* and ABA's *Birding* magazine.

When not experimenting with flight photography, investigating nocturnal migration, or researching biodiversity hot spots, Sam enjoys backpacking, growing super-hot peppers, discovering new music, and creating experimental dishes (usually Asian cuisine). Sam and his wife, Margeaux, have spent months traveling around the world seeking out rare birds and wildlife. They currently reside in Anchorage, Alaska.

*"Sam is an expert guide and one of the best spotters we've ever experienced. He was great to get us on hard-to-see birds. He worked well with all the participants and was knowledgeable about the birds and plants." A.D., Texas Coast Migration Spectacle*

Visit <https://fieldguides.com/our-staff/> for the guides' complete tour schedules; just click on a photo.

Dan and Sam will be accompanied by a **local guide** throughout the tour.

## Financial Information

**FEE: \$8725 from Queenstown**

**\$1375 for Pelagic Extension**

**DEPOSIT: \$875 per person**

**FINAL PAYMENT DUE: May 13, 2025**

**SINGLE SUPPLEMENT (Optional): \$1275 (main tour); \$175 for Pelagic Extension**

**LIMIT: 12**

## Other Things You Need to Know

**TOUR MANAGER:** The manager for this tour is Karen Turner. Karen will be happy to assist you in preparing for the tour. If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to call her!

**DOCUMENTS:** A current passport valid beyond the date of your return is necessary for US citizens to enter New Zealand. An electronic travel authority (visa) is required to enter New Zealand. This is done online at the following link: <https://nzeta.immigration.govt.nz/>. Starting in 2024, New Zealand has required digital travel documents to be submitted before checking in to your flight. These documents should be submitted over a day before travel to be sure they clear in time for check-in.

If you are not a US citizen, please check with the New Zealand consulate nearest you for entry requirements. Information about consulates and entry requirements is generally available online or you can contact us and we will be happy to look this up for you. Passports should have an adequate number of blank pages for the entire journey. Some countries require a blank page for their stamp and as a precaution it is best to have one blank page per country you will visit or transit.

**AIR ARRANGEMENTS:** Field Guides is a full service travel agency and your tour manager will be happy to assist you with flights to join this tour. Field Guides does not charge a service fee for these services to clients booking a tour. However, we understand that tech-savvy clients often prefer to shop online or that you may wish to use mileage to purchase tickets. Regardless of which method you choose, your tour manager will be happy to provide assistance regarding ticket prices and schedules, along with rental cars and extra hotel nights as needed. For domestic flights on Air New Zealand, ticket prices are without any checked bags included, and paying for checked bags at check-in can be very expensive, whereas paying for them when buying the ticket is considerably cheaper. If you plan to bring checked bags, please let us know when we arrange your ticket so we can get you the cheaper fare.

Also, beware that carry-on restrictions for domestic flights on Air New Zealand are quite strict—you are allowed only one carry-on (not the unofficial two, one and a “personal item,” as on US flights) under 7kg (= about 15 lbs)—so you will have to check any additional pieces, even if they'd usually be carry-ons in the US or on international flights.

Please be sure to check with your tour manager prior to purchasing your ticket to make sure the flights you have chosen will work well with the tour itinerary and that the tour is sufficiently subscribed to operate. Once purchased, most airline tickets are non-refundable and carry a penalty to change. Field Guides cannot be responsible for these fees.

**Also, it is imperative that we receive a copy of your comprehensive flight itinerary—including any and all flights not covered in the tour fee—so that we may track you in the event of missed connections, delays, or other mishaps.**

**LUGGAGE:** Please be aware that many airlines have recently modified their luggage policies and are charging additional fees for checked bags. Updates could easily occur before your departure, so you may wish to contact your airline to verify the policy. Additional charges for bags on any flights, whether these are covered by the tour fee or not, will be the client's responsibility. Also, please see “Air Arrangements” above regarding carry-on restrictions.

**SMOKING:** Almost all of our clients prefer a smoke-free environment. If you smoke, please be sensitive to the group and refrain from smoking at meals, in vehicles, and in proximity to the group on trails and elsewhere.

**TOUR INCLUSIONS/EXCLUSIONS:** The **tour fee** is \$8725 for one person in double occupancy from Queenstown, and ending in Auckland, New Zealand. It includes all lodging from Day 3 through Day 18, all meals from dinner on Day 3 through breakfast on Day 19, all ground transportation, boat trips, entrance fees, and the guide services of the tour leader(s). Tipping at group meals and for drivers, porters, and local guides is included in your tour fee and will be handled

for the group by your Field Guides leader(s). However, if you would like to recognize your Field Guides leader(s) or any local guide(s) for exceptional service, it is entirely appropriate to tip. We emphasize that such tips are optional and not expected.

The **tour fee for the extension** is \$1375 per person in double occupancy from Auckland. It includes all lodging for Days 1 and 2 of the extension, all meals from lunch on Day 1 (November 27) to lunch on Day 3 (November 29), all ground transportation, boat trips, entrance fees, tips for baggage handling and meal service, and the guide services of the tour leader(s).

The above fees do not include your airfare to Queenstown and from Auckland to LAX, airport taxes, visa fees, any checked or carry-on baggage charges imposed by the airlines, any alcoholic beverages, optional tips to local drivers, phone calls, laundry, or other items of a personal nature.

The **single supplement** for the main tour is \$1275, and \$175 for the extension. If you do not have a roommate but wish to share, we will try to pair you with a roommate from the tour; but if none is available, you will be billed for the single supplement. Our tour fees are based on double occupancy; one-half the cost of a double room is priced into the tour fee. The single supplement is calculated by taking the actual cost of a single room and subtracting one-half the cost of a double room (plus any applicable taxes).

**TOUR REGISTRATION:** To register for this tour, please contact us at [fieldguides.com/contact-us/](https://fieldguides.com/contact-us/). Our office will be in touch with you by email by the next business day (Mon-Fri) with instructions on how to complete our new electronic registration form and medical questionnaire. (We are no longer accepting the paper version.)

Please mail your **deposit of \$875** per person, or see <https://fieldguides.com/payment-options/> for our Payment Options. **Full payment** of the tour fee is due 180 days prior to departure, or **by May 13, 2025**. **We will bill you for the final payment at either 180 days or when the tour has reached sufficient subscription to operate, whichever date comes later.** Since the cost of your trip insurance and airline tickets is generally non-refundable, please do not finalize these purchases until you have received final billing for the tour or have been advised that the tour is sufficiently subscribed to operate by your tour manager.

**TOUR LIMITS:** Our limits are firm and we don't exceed the limit by one to accommodate a couple when only one space remains open.

**CANCELLATION POLICY:** Refund of deposit and full payment, less \$100 handling fee, will be made if cancellation is received up to 180 days before departure. If cancellation occurs between 179 and 90 days before the departure date, 50% of the full tour fee is non-refundable, which would include the full deposit if the final payment has not yet been paid. Thereafter, all deposits and payments are not refundable and non-transferable.

Our cancellation policy only applies to payments made to Field Guides for tour (and any services included in those fees). Airline tickets not included in the tour fee and purchased separately often carry penalties for cancellation or change, or are sometimes totally non-refundable. Additionally, if you take out trip insurance the cost of that insurance is not refundable, so it is best to purchase the policy just prior to making full payment for the tour or at the time you purchase airline tickets, depending upon the airline's restrictions.

The right is reserved to cancel any tour prior to departure. In most such cases, full refund will constitute full settlement to the passenger. Note this exception, however: If you have been advised pre-tour that there is a non-refundable portion of your tour fee no matter the reason for Field Guides cancellation of the tour, that portion will not be refunded. The right is reserved to substitute in case of emergency another guide for the original one.

**TRIP CANCELLATION & MEDICAL EMERGENCY INSURANCE:** We strongly recommend you consider purchasing trip cancellation (including medical emergency) insurance to cover your investment in case of injury or illness to you or your family prior to or during a trip. Because we must remit early (and substantial) tour deposits to our suppliers, you acknowledge and agree that we will not issue a refund when cancellation occurs outside of our cancellation policy as published in the itinerary (see CANCELLATION POLICY). In addition, the Department of State strongly urges Americans to consult with their medical insurance company prior to traveling abroad to confirm whether their policy applies overseas and if it will cover emergency expenses such as a medical evacuation. US medical insurance plans seldom cover health costs incurred outside the United States unless supplemental coverage is purchased. Furthermore, US Medicare and Medicaid programs do not provide payment for medical services outside the United States.

When making a decision regarding health insurance, Americans should consider that many foreign doctors and hospitals require payment in cash prior to providing service and that a medical evacuation to the United States may cost well in excess of \$50,000. Uninsured travelers who require medical care overseas often face extreme difficulties. When

consulting with your insurer prior to your trip, please ascertain whether payment will be made to the overseas healthcare provider or whether you will be reimbursed later for expenses that you incur.

US citizens will receive information from us regarding optional tour cancellation/emergency medical insurance. Our agent, CSA, will insure for trip cancellation and interruption, medical coverage, travel delay, baggage loss and delay, and emergency medical transportation. If you purchase the insurance prior to, or within 24 hours of making final payment for the tour, and cover all non-refundable parts of the trip (including any non-refundable flights and in some cases, other arrangements), pre-existing conditions are covered. You may purchase your CSA policy on-line by visiting our website at <https://fieldguides.com/trip-cancellation-insurance/> and clicking the link to CSA. The CSA webpage also includes a contact number.

**Currently we are unable to offer CSA insurance policies to residents of New York and Hawaii.** We have had clients provide positive feedback after acquiring insurance thru InsureMyTrip (<https://www.insuremytrip.com/>) in the past, and would suggest that company as an alternative. When purchasing insurance with a company other than CSA, you will want to understand whether the timing of your purchase will affect coverage before paying your first deposit. Insurance purchase requirements can vary from company to company, and such requirements could limit your options if you do not look into this until making your final payment for your tour. Please let us know if you have any questions about this.

Please note, once the insurance is purchased it is non-refundable, so please check with your tour manager prior to making the purchase to assure the tour will operate as scheduled. Citizens of other countries are urged to consult their insurance broker.

**RESPONSIBILITY:** For and in consideration of the opportunity to participate in the tour, each tour participant and each parent or legal guardian of a tour participant who is under 18 agrees to release, indemnify, and hold harmless Field Guides Incorporated, its agents, servants, employees, shareholders, officers, directors, attorneys, and contractors as more fully set forth in the Release and Indemnity Agreement on the registration form. Field Guides Incorporated acts only as an agent for the passenger in regard to travel, whether by railroad, motorcar, motorcoach, boat, airplane, or other means, and assumes no liability for injury, damage, loss, accident, delay, or irregularity caused by defect in such vehicles or for any reason whatsoever, including the acts, defaults, or bankruptcies of any company or person engaged in conveying the passenger or in carrying out the arrangements of the tour. You acknowledge and agree that Field Guides Incorporated is not responsible for losses or additional expenses due to delay or changes in air or other services, sickness, weather, strike, war, quarantine, or other causes. The tour participant shall bear all such losses and expenses. Field Guides Incorporated reserves the right to substitute hotels of similar category for those indicated and to make any changes in the itinerary where deemed necessary or caused by changes in air schedules. Field Guides Incorporated reserves the right to decline to accept or to retain any person as a member of any tour. Baggage is at owner's risk entirely.

Participants should be in good health and should consult a physician before undertaking a tour. If you have questions about the physical requirements of a tour, please contact our office for further information. Participants should prepare for the tour by reading the detailed itinerary, the information bulletin, and other pertinent matter provided by Field Guides. Each participant is responsible for bringing appropriate clothing and equipment as recommended in our bulletins.

**THE RECEIPT OF YOUR TOUR DEPOSIT SHALL BE DEEMED TO BE CONSENT TO THE ABOVE CONDITIONS. EACH TOUR PARTICIPANT AND EACH PARENT OR LEGAL GUARDIAN OF A TOUR PARTICIPANT WHO IS UNDER 18 SHALL SIGN AND DELIVER THE RELEASE AND INDEMNITY AGREEMENT AT THE TIME OF REGISTRATION.**

03/25 DFL, peg