

ITINERARY
NEW ZEALAND
November 8-26, 2026
Hauraki Gulf Pelagic Extension
November 26-28, 2026



*The South Island Saddleback is one of the New Zealand wattlebirds, a family endemic to New Zealand. These species are now confined to a few predator-free islands. We'll visit Ulva Island to see this one.
Photograph by guide Doug Gochfeld.*

We include here information for those interested in the 2026 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

With 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 endangered 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 six endemic families (kiwis, NZ parrots, NZ wrens, wattled crows, mohouas, and stitchbird) 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 temperate/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, where the rare Yellow-eyed Penguin nests. 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, although none are longer than 5 hrs on the main tour. 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. The South Island can be cool to cold, and rainy, so raingear is necessary to prevent chilling! Finally, we have two overnight visits to islands where paring down your baggage (repacking for the 1-2 nights into a smaller bag) can help you logistically, so having a smaller bag (like a collapsing duffel or a daypack with sufficient room) available is advised.
- **PACE:** This tour is moderately paced. After breakfast (usually 6:30-7:30 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. There will be multiple optional nocturnal outings for Kiwi and other nightbirds, and nightfall is late (9-10pm) so far south, meaning we may be out until 11 or midnight, depending on success.
- **WEATHER:** Temperatures will range from the 40s F, even occasionally to near freezing, at night, mornings, and at higher elevations, to the low 80s F at warmer sites (North Island). Rain showers are always a possibility, and wind can be moderate to quite blustery 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, and even a visit to Kapiti Island, where we will stay in a lodge operated by a Maori family.

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.

About the Birding Areas

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

Stewart Island/Rakiura—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 (South Island 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-crowned parakeets (locally called

Kakariki) 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, Brown Skua, Stewart Island (Foveau) Shag, three penguin species (Little, Fiordland, and Yellow-eyed) and there's also a chance of Mottled Petrel and just perhaps an early Buller's Albatross.



Fiordland National Park is an area of magnificent mountain scenery and a truly spectacular deep fjord, where we hope to see 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 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 had mostly good luck over the last several trips, seeing the birds well without long walks, though we do need good weather and access to the trails (which can be snow-covered or threatened by avalanche!).

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. The area is reminiscent of the foothills of the Rockies, and can be chilly and windy!

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 just offshore. Seabird watching has become a local industry, and with the continental shelf only two miles from land, pelagic trips are quick and efficient. These are some of the most outstanding pelagic trips in the world, and the morning 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 (rare this time of year), White-capped and Salvin's albatrosses being likely, but rarer species are possible. 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 above 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. You may opt to book a second pelagic or whale watch trip for this afternoon, or to enjoy the area and stay ashore.

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 NZ Kaka, Red-crowned Parakeet, North Island Saddleback, Whitehead, NZ Falcon, Brown Teal, and others. Previous clients have considered our visit here to be a highlight!

Whakapapa—At the base of Ruapehu, one of the larger of the volcanoes of the central North Island, this skiing resort town is also nestled among several rivers that are home to the unique Blue Duck, a rare and local species that requires montane, rushing streams. The site is also famous now for being the backdrop for the Mordor scenes in Lord of the Rings!

Taupo and Rotorua—These lakes are famous for being geothermal. Taupo is the largest lake in New Zealand—created by a supervolcanic eruption tens of thousands of years ago—and both lakes are home to the NZ Grebe or Dabchick, and we may luck upon other specialties such as NZ Fernbird and Australasian Bittern here. Nearby are patches of forest that still house some native forest birds such as Whitehead, Long-tailed Koel (Cuckoo), NZ Tomtit, North Island Robin, and even small populations of North Island Kokako (although they are found in portions of the forest that have restricted access now).

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 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 and North Island Kokako here, species that were once found on just a couple of predator-free islands. Recent and very promising introductions include Whitehead, Stitchbird (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, whereas 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 Spotted Shag is an endemic found along much of the New Zealand coastline.
Photograph by participants David and Judy Smith.*



*The islands south of New Zealand are important breeding grounds for many seabirds, including the rare Southern Royal Albatross. We'll make several boat trips, where we'll be able to see these regal birds and many others.
Photograph by participants David and Judy Smith.*

Itinerary for New Zealand

Days 1-3, Sun-Tue, 8-10 Nov. Arrival in Auckland to Dunedin, New Zealand. You may choose to arrive a day early and spend the night in Auckland or Dunedin to try to reset your internal clock. (See Air Arrangements below for suggested flights to arrive on November 10.) Upon arrival in the southern city of Dunedin on November 10, we will do some low-impact birding in a nearby wetland just to get the mouth watering. Then, the group will be brought to our hotel for check-in and a meet-and-greet before dinner. Night in Dunedin.

Day 4, Wed, 11 Nov. Otago Harbor and on to ferry to Stewart Island. This morning we'll have breakfast and check out of our hotel, heading to the wharf where (weather permitting!) a boat will take us on a morning trip out the harbor 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), and a majestic species! Just below them is a colony of several thousand Stewart Island Shags (this population separated by some authorities as "Otago Shag") 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, smaller albatrosses, and shearwaters as targets. We'll head south from here to Bluff Harbour for the ferry to Stewart Island. We will cross the ferry as foot passengers, and may have to walk our bags to our lodging. **Thus, we highly recommend that you have a small bag you can pack what you need for a two night stay on the island.** Our larger bags will be safely locked in the trailer of our van and remain in Bluff while we are on the island. We will do an evening Brown Kiwi excursion either tonight or tomorrow night (bring a flashlight!). Night at Oban, Stewart Island.

Day 5, Thu, 12 Nov, Stewart Island pelagic. 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 Foulweather Strait and perhaps along the east coast of Stewart Island into more open waters. 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. After this fine opportunity, we'll return mid-afternoon to Oban. If we didn't get the South Island Brown Kiwi last night, we'll try tonight. Night at Oban.

Day 6, Fri, 13 Nov. Ulva Island, ferry to Bluff, and on to Te Anau This morning, we'll land on the predator-free Ulva Island for excellent viewing of most of the South Island forest birds such as Weka, New Zealand Kaka, Yellow- and Red-

crowned parakeets, the South Island Saddleback, Yellowhead, and Pipipi (NZ Brown Creeper). Shortly after returning to Oban, we'll check out and 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 an estuary for 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. Night at Te Anau.

Day 7, Sat, 14 Nov. Fiordland National Park. We will have morning breakfast, then drive north into the awe-inspiring and scenic Fiordland National Park. The landscapes are unrivalled in New Zealand, such as the *Nothofagus* beech forest, where we'll find such things as Rifleman, NZ Tomtit, South Island Robin, Long-tailed Koel (or Cuckoo), Yellow-fronted Parakeet, Tui, bellbird, Pipipi (or NZ Brown Creeper), and Grey Gerygone, and the sub-alpine regions, where we will search for South Island (Rock) Wren (getting harder!), the mischievous 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 scenery. Night in Te Anau.

Day 8, Sun, 15 Nov. Te Anau to Mackenzie Basin; Twizel. After breakfast in Te Anau, we will say good bye to the forested mountains of Fiordland and head 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 of the central South Island. Along the way, we will check ponds for waterfowl, including the Great Crested Grebe or Puteketeke (made famous recently by John Oliver!) and may see some of the breeding shorebirds (for example: Double-banded Plover). Here, we will stay in a comfortable hotel at the edge of the little hamlet of Twizel. Night at in Twizel.



*The Double-banded Plover is a small shorebird that breeds along the braided streams in the Mackenzie Basin.
Photograph by guide Doug Gochfeld*

Day 9, Mon, 16 Nov. Mackenzie Basin. This region is New Zealand's driest, and the interface of the pastoral grasslands and the impressive Southern Alps range may bring to mind the Front Range of the Rockies in Montana for some. 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. There is an optional walk on the Hooker Track, where we should see some alpine splendor, enjoying some native plants and searching for the rare NZ Falcon. Night in Twizel.

Day 10, Tue, 17 Nov. Mackenzie Basin to Arthur's Pass. Leaving the dry Mackenzie country, we will northeast, descending into the Canterbury Plains west of Christchurch. Then we'll turn west once more, destined for another portion of the Southern Alps at Arthur's Pass, the highest of the road passes across the range. Here, we will enjoy more

spectacular scenery, nestled in the beech forests of the region. If circumstances permit, we may opt to do an evening to try to encounter a Great Spotted Kiwi. Chances are we'll only hear it, but if we're extremely lucky....! Night at Arthur's Pass.

Day 11, Wed, 18 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

Day 12, Thu, 19 Nov. Kaikoura Pelagic. Kaikoura is a breathtaking place where some impressive mountains (the Seaward Kaikouras) 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. This morning, after breakfast, 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. 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, 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 you may opt to take a 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-customlinc/> >), or you can walk the track around the headland here... or you can do nothing at all, perhaps enjoying an easy afternoon, doing laundry, visiting the shops in town, or enjoying the view from our hotel. Night in Kaikoura.



Hutton's Shearwater is an endangered species that nests only in the mountains just inland of Kaikoura. Their nesting burrows are vulnerable to predation by introduced Stoats as well as native predators, thus their breeding success is low. Even so, we should see numbers of them on our pelagic trip out of Kaikoura. Photograph by guide Dan Lane.

Day 13, Fri, 20 Nov. Kaikoura to Picton; boat trip on Queen Charlotte Sound. We will load up and head north along the coast, with a few birding stops along the way, including Lake Elterwater, the only spot in New Zealand where the otherwise Australian Hoary-headed Grebe has managed to set up a colony! After checking for these little dabchicks, we'll continue to the town of Picton, which rests at the head of a sunken river valley, or "sound." The waters and inlets of the Queen Charlotte 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 make a landing to try for these for about an hour. Night in Picton.

Day 14, Sat, 21 Nov. Ferry to North Island and on to Kapiti Island. From Picton we'll embark on a ferry crossing over the Cook Strait 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, many Fairy Prions, and shearwaters, petrels, and other seabirds, and perhaps dolphins or whales, to boot! Upon arriving in New Zealand's capital city, Wellington, we'll have lunch and drive on to Paraparaumu beach and take short water taxi ride across to the island sanctuary of Kapiti Island. **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. We will be hosted by a Maori family and will have a little window into the language and culture of this people! This "island ark" should provide opportunities to view Takahe, North Island Saddleback, and NZ Kaka. By night we will seek out the endangered Little Spotted Kiwi, and New Zealand's only native owl, the Morepork, as well as listening to the wails of Wekas all around us. Brown Teal may wander through the edges of the bush as they forage away from their daytime wetland roosting areas. Night on Kapiti Island.

Day 15, Sun, 22 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. If we haven't yet had looks at Blue Duck, this is our other opportunity to see this large "torrent duck" in the rivers that drain this impressive landscape. Another bird that we've had some success with here is the New Zealand Pipit, a widespread, but decidedly rare, native species; they often perch on the roof of our hotel! Night in Whakapapa Village.



*The Blue Duck is a species we'll have a couple of chances to find; one of these is near Whakapapa.
Photograph by participant Don Taves.*

Day 16, Mon, 23 Nov. Lake Taupo, Pureora Forest, and Rotorua. We'll load up early and head to the shore of New Zealand's largest lake, Lake Taupo to have a picnic breakfast and check some marsh habitat beside the lake for Fernbird, New Zealand Grebe (Dabchick), and the skulky Australasian Bittern. From there, we continue on to a beautiful patch of old growth Podocarp-dominated forest in a reserve called Pureora. Here, the treetops ring with the chatters of Whiteheads, often accompanied by Yellow-crowned Parakeets, maybe the occasional Rifleman, and the surprisingly large NZ Kaka screech as they swing past or perch overhead and graze on the seeds and fruits of the forest. A walk on a loop trail in this forest will give us a taste of what pre-colonial NZ must have looked like! Finally, we will continue 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, 24 Nov. Miranda Wader Reserve, Auckland at rush hour, and on to Whangaparaoa. After breakfast, 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, hordes of Bar-tailed Godwit, and lesser numbers of Ruddy Turnstone, Red Knot, and perhaps Pacific Golden-Plover, Sharp-tailed or 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, comparatively more serene and pleasant. Our lodging is managed by a lovely couple and is very comfortable with the beach just across the road if you'd like a dip! Night in Whangaparaoa.



We'll have a chance to see the amazing Takahe on Tiri-Tiri Matangi Island, along with other native birds that are protected from predators there. Photograph by participant Henry Feilan.

Day 18, Wed, 25 Nov. Tiri-tiri Matangi Island. The predator-free island of Tiri-tiri Matangi is situated in the inshore waters of the Hauraki Gulf off the coast of the North Island and within easy reach of Auckland. 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 has made Tiri-tiri Matangi 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 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, and the introduced Brown Quail from Australia is often easy to see here. We will catch the ferry back to the North Island in the early afternoon, and may stop at a nearby peninsular sanctuary that has some mangrove marsh for

Buff-banded Rail, Brown Teal, and some other birds of interest before returning to our hotel. This lovely day will be a fitting “finale” to our tour, and we will be happy to get a good night’s sleep tonight after our final group dinner of the main tour! Night in Whangaparaoa.

Day 19, Thu, 26 Nov. Those who are headed home today will have a shuttle arranged to take you 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 7:35 p.m. arriving in LAX at 10:40 a.m. We’ll gain back the day we lost crossing the International Date Line.

Itinerary for Hauraki Gulf Pelagic Extension

Day 1, Thu, 26 Nov. Auckland to Bream Head. This morning, those of us continuing on the extension will continue north to Northland, the northernmost region of New Zealand, which features subtropical weather (bananas grow here!). Along the way, we will check a few beaches for the critically endangered New Zealand population of Australian Fairy Tern, a distinct subspecies that numbers less than 100 individuals! Another bird from Oz that is possible here, but scarce, is the Laughing Kookaburra—brought in nearly a century ago by a former Prime Minister who thought it would be a good addition to the NZ avifauna! We’ll continue to our lodging at the One Tree Point area. Night in One Tree Point.

Day 2, Fri, 27 Nov. North Hauraki Gulf Pelagic Trip, to Auckland Airport area. 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 Otago Harbor, Stewart Island, and Kaikoura 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 unlikely elsewhere on the tour. These include: Little Shearwater, 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, and we often see other sealife such as sharks, mantas, mola-molas, and more. We never know what gem we may find, and the outing promises to be a fantastic trip! Once back on land, we’ll have dinner earlyish to let the traffic around Auckland die down a bit, then drive into the Mangere neighborhood by the Auckland airport and get everyone checked in, bidding one another good-bye after an exciting final day! Night at Auckland airport hotel.

Day 3, Sat, 28 Nov. Flights home. Today we will have plenty of time to prepare for Air New Zealand flight 4 that departs Auckland at 7:35 p.m. arriving in LAX at 10:40 a.m. We’ll gain back the day we lost crossing the International Date Line.

About Your Guide

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

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

Financial Information

FEE: \$8975 (Main tour) from Dunedin, \$1400 (Extension)

SINGLE SUPPLEMENT (Optional): \$1325 (Main tour); \$200 (Extension)

DEPOSIT: \$900 per person

FINAL PAYMENT DUE: May 12, 2026

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: Be sure to verify the latest entry requirements for each country you will visit or transit.

Passport: A current passport is required for international travel. It should be in good condition, valid for at least 6 months beyond your return date, and have at least one blank page for each country on your itinerary.

Visa: An electronic travel authority (visa) is required to enter New Zealand and must be obtained online at the following link: <https://nzeta.immigration.govt.nz/>. As of 2024, New Zealand requires digital travel documents to be submitted before flight check-in. Please submit them at least 24 hours before departure to avoid delays.

If you are not a US citizen, please check with the New Zealand consulate nearest you for entry requirements.

AIR ARRANGEMENTS: This tour begins in Dunedin, and ends in Auckland.

Arrival: Dunedin, November 10. We recommend the Air New Zealand flight #5, departing Los Angeles at 8:10 p.m. on November 8; crossing the International Date Line en route, we effectively “lose” a day. Scheduled arrival in Auckland is 6:05 a.m. on November 10. You will continue on Air New Zealand flight 675, departing Auckland at 12:35 p.m. and arriving in Dunedin at 2:20 p.m.

Departure: Auckland, evening of November 26. We recommend Air New Zealand flight 4, departs Auckland at 7:35 p.m., arriving in LAX at 10:40 a.m.

Please wait to purchase airline tickets until we notify you that the tour is confirmed to operate. At that time, we'll be glad to assist with your flight arrangements at no service fee.

Note: For domestic flights on Air New Zealand, fares **do not include** checked bags. Paying for checked bags at check-in can be very expensive, while adding them when buying the ticket is considerably cheaper. If you plan to check bags, please let us know when we arrange your ticket so we can secure the lower fare. Also note that carry-on rules are strict: **only one carry-on bag** under 7kg (about 15 lbs) is allowed - no additional “personal item” as on US flights. Any extra items, even if they'd usually be carry-ons in the US or on international flights, will need to be checked.

LUGGAGE: Please see “Air Arrangements” above regarding carry-on restrictions. As mentioned above in the day-by-day of the itinerary, there will be two visits to islands where it might be advantageous to have a small bag or backpack available to pack for only one (Kapiti Is) or two (Stewart Is) nights' stay and leave your larger bag safely locked in the trailer of our bus.

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 \$8975 for one person in double occupancy from Dunedin to 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 \$1400 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 Dunedin 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 is \$1325 (Main tour), and \$200 (Extension) for those requesting a single room. 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/. Our office will be in touch with you by email by the next business day (Mon-Fri) with instructions on how to complete our electronic registration form and medical questionnaire. (We are no longer accepting the paper version.)

Please send your deposit of \$900 per person; 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 12, 2026.** 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 purchasing trip cancellation (including medical emergency) insurance to protect your investment in case of injury or illness to you or an immediate family member before or during a trip. Because we must remit early and substantial deposits to our suppliers, we cannot offer refunds for cancellations outside of our Cancellation Policy. If a participant is unable to join or continue a tour due to illness, all related expenses will be their responsibility, and no refunds can be issued for missed days. Please wait to purchase insurance until we notify you that the tour is confirmed to operate, as most policies are non-refundable.

For full details, visit our Trip Cancellation Insurance page at <https://fieldguides.com/trip-cancellation-insurance/>.

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.

11/25 DFL; 2/26 upd peg