New Zealand

Comprehensive II

23rd October to 8th November 2023 (17 days)



Little Spotted Kiwi by Adam Riley

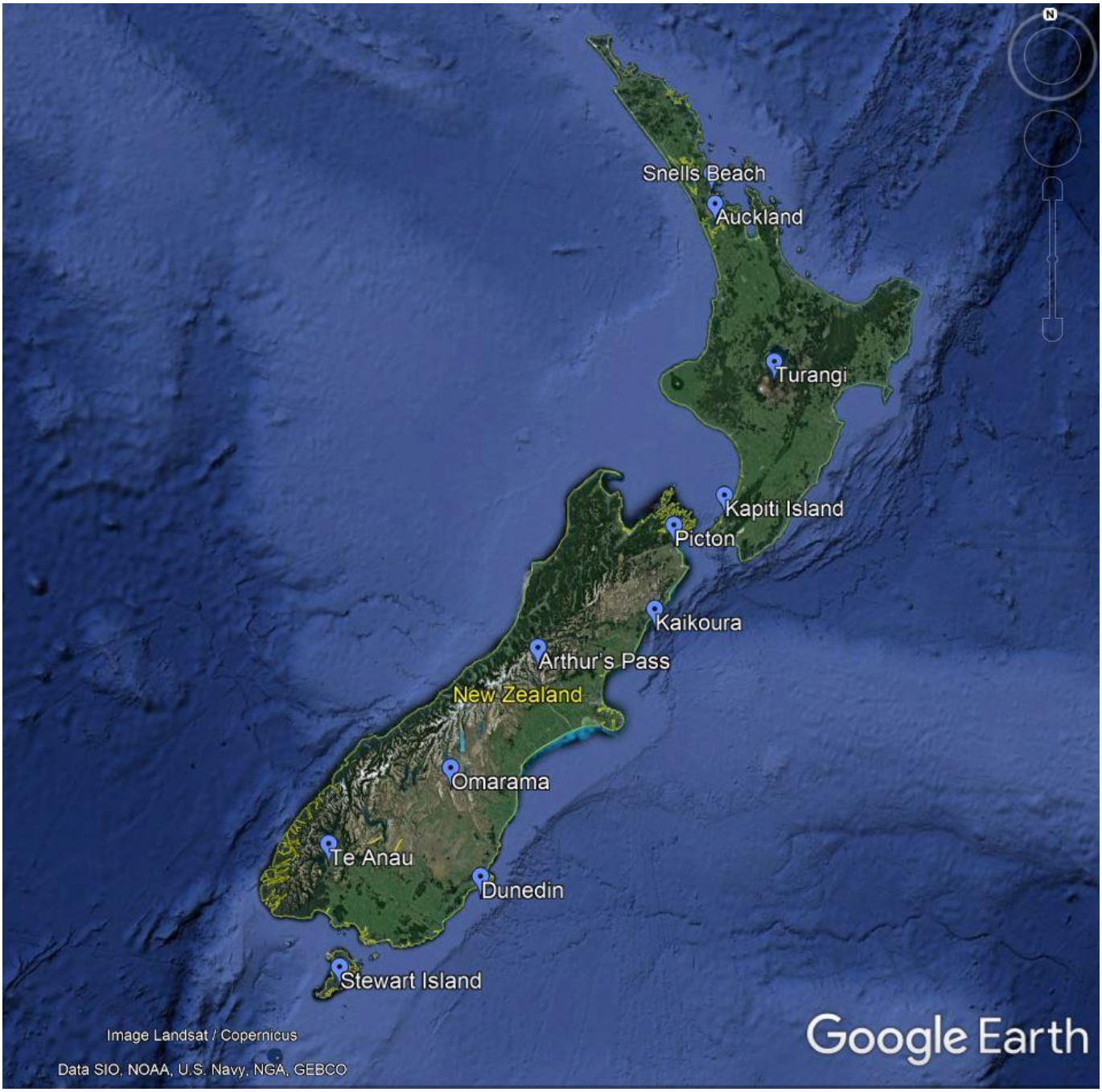
New Zealand supports a host of unusual endemic land birds and a rich assemblage of marine birds and mammals. Our comprehensive tour is designed to seek almost every possible endemic and take full advantage of New Zealand's oceanic diversity. Beginning in Auckland, we target North Island Brown Kiwi, amongst a multitude of other species that will no doubt be lifers. The first of our several pelagic excursions then takes place in the Hauraki Gulf in search of the recently rediscovered New Zealand Storm Petrel and a myriad of other species. Continuing to the fabled Tiritiri Matangi Island, we will bird this predator-free reserve for the prehistoric South Island Takahe, strange North Island Kokako and Stitchbird, before combing the Miranda shoreline for the bizarre Wrybill and numerous migrant waders. We finish our time on North Island visiting Kapiti Island searching for the endangered Little Spotted Kiwi, migrant Long-tailed Cuckoo and Tomtit.

Crossing onto South Island, our first stop is Blumine Island Bird Sanctuary, where the dazzling South Island Saddleback and New Zealand Robin will no doubt entertain us, before we embark on another pelagic adventure into the fantastic upwelling off Kaikoura, searching for an abundance of albatrosses, shearwaters and petrels. Travelling across South Island, we will seek the endemic flightless rail known as the Weka, as well as the critically endangered Black Stilt, before hiking through pristine Red Beech forest surrounded by breathtaking glacier-lined

mountains, where Pipipi (Brown Creeper) and the massive Kea can be found. In Fiordland National Park our targets will include Blue Duck, the cute New Zealand Rockwren and New Zealand Falcon, before catching our ferry to the rugged Stewart Island in search of Southern Brown Kiwi and a variety of other specialities prior to another pelagic outing visiting several nearby islands. Our final destination will be Dunedin, where a visit to a Northern Royal Albatross colony and a Yellow-eyed Penguin breeding site will certainly be amongst the many highlights of this rewarding tour. With excellent lodging and meals, awe-inspiring scenery and fantastically friendly "Kiwis", this is sure to be a tour of a lifetime!

Itinerary & Map

Day 1	**Auckland to Snells Beach**
Day 2	**Snells Beach and surrounds**
Day 3	**Pelagic off Hauraki Gulf**
Day 4	**Tiritiri Matangi Island**
Day 5	**Warkworth to Turangi via Miranda**
Day 6	**Turangi to Kapiti Island**
Day 7	**Kapiti Island to Picton**
Day 8	**Picton to Kaikoura via Marlborough Sounds**
Day 9	**Kaikoura Pelagic and drive to Arthur's Pass**
Day 10	**Arthur's Pass to Omarama**
Day 11	**Omarama and Mount Cook area**
Day 12	**Omarama to Te Anau**
Day 13	**Fiordland National Park**
Day 14	**Te Anau to Stewart Island**
Day 15	**Stewart Island Pelagic**
Day 16	**Stewart Island to Dunedin**
Day 17	**Final departures**


Snells Beach
Auckland
Turangi
Kapiti Island
Picton
Kaikoura
Arthur's Pass
New Zealand
Omarama
Te Anau
Dunedin
Stewart Island
Image Landsat / Copernicus
Data SIO, NOAA, U.S. Navy, NGA, GEBCO
Google Earth

Birding sites in detail



New Zealand Storm Petrel by Andrew Sutherland

Muriwai Beach. This site hosts a spectacular Australasian Gannet colony surrounded by craggy rocks and pounding surf. We'll marvel at this impressive natural display from a scenic viewpoint atop an overlooking cliff, where Silver Gulls and elegant White-fronted Terns attend their nests. Often present and feeding on the flowering Flax bushes are the outrageous Tui (an endemic honeyeater), New Zealand Fantail and gorgeous New Zealand Pigeon.

Waipu Estuary. Here we will search for the elegant Fairy Tern and endemic New Zealand Plover.

Snell's Beach. We will make several birding stops at a series of wetlands in the Snell's Beach area. Possible species to keep our eyes open for include Little Black and Pied Cormorants, White-faced Heron, Masked Lapwing, Paradise Shelduck, Australasian Shoveler, Grey Teal, endemic New Zealand Scaup and New Zealand Grebe, Buff-banded Rail, Swamp Harrier, Pacific Reef Heron, Royal Spoonbill and Caspian Tern. Later, we will explore a nearby Regional Park for some of New Zealand's most endangered wildlife, including the endangered North Island Saddleback, New Zealand Bellbird, and the prehistoric looking and critically endangered Takahe. We will also look for New Zealand Pigeon, Red-crowned Parakeet, Tui, Whitehead flitting through the undergrowth, the north island forms of New Zealand Robin, Brown Quail, Silvereye and New Zealand Fantail.

A night walk in the area gives us our first opportunity to look for the amazing North Island Brown Kiwi, one of five representatives of this terrestrial bird family that is endemic to New Zealand.

Pelagic – Hauraki Gulf. We depart for a pelagic seabird tour of the Hauraki Gulf. In the gulf, there are a wealth of breeding seabirds, including the endemic Buller's and Fluttering as well as Flesh-footed Shearwaters. Endemic Cook's and the localised Black Petrels are present and may be seen alongside the boat, along with the active White-faced Storm Petrel and Fairy Prions. Little Blue Penguin, Australasian Gannet and White-fronted Tern are often seen at some point throughout the day and if we are very lucky, we might even obtain views of the New Zealand Storm Petrel! This species was only rediscovered in 2004 after a fifty-year absence and the first chicks and nesting burrows were found on Little Barrier Island in January 2013. It is now hoped that a conservation effort can help save this critically endangered species.



The impressive Tui by Erik Forsyth

Tiritiri Matangi Island. We depart today by water taxi for the fabled Tiritiri Matangi Island. Several highly endangered endemic species can be seen here, including rare species sadly extirpated from the mainland. One of the Jewels of the Hauraki Gulf, Tiri is an amazing example of habitat restoration with over 200,000 native trees meticulously replanted. We will explore this predator-free haven for some of New Zealand's most endangered wildlife, including the outrageous North Island Saddleback, localised



Wrybill by John Graham

Stitchbird, New Zealand Bellbird, the spectacular North Island Kokako, and the prehistoric looking Takahe. Throughout our time on the island, we will also see New Zealand Pigeon, Red-crowned Parakeet, Tui, Whitehead flitting through the undergrowth, the north island forms of New Zealand Robin and Fernbird, Brown Quail and New Zealand Fantail. In addition, we'll be on the lookout for Brown Teal and Spotless Crake, which are sometimes seen at a small pond near the jetty.

Miranda. The mud flats and shell banks near the Miranda Trust Wildlife Centre are a fantastic place to find large flocks of shorebirds, and here we will diligently scan while searching especially for Wrybill. This small, bizarre plover is confined to New Zealand and is the only bird species with a laterally asymmetrical bill uniquely curving to the right. Its total population has been estimated at a mere 5,000 individuals. It nests on stony riverbeds in South Island and winters in flocks on wetlands with marsh and expansive tidal flats, Miranda being its favoured area. Other potential species here include Variable and South Island Oystercatchers, Eastern Curlew, Bar-tailed Godwit, Red Knot, Pacific Golden Plover, Sharp-tailed and Curlew Sandpipers, Red-necked Stint, Whimbrel and Ruddy Turnstone.

Tongariro River. We will stop at this fast-flowing river to search for the endemic Blue Duck.

Turangi. We will scan a nearby reedbed for a resident pair of Australasian Bittern, which can often be heard calling and with luck, seen in flight over this reedbed. Spotless Crake and Fernbird also occur, and we hope for sightings of either of these species.

Kapiti Island. Kapiti Island is a predator-free conservation area and has a good population of Little Spotted Kiwi, and we will undertake a guided walk to look for this endangered species. Other great birds that we may find during our stay here include Morepork, the huge New Zealand Kaka, New Zealand Robin, Whitehead, Red-crowned Parakeet, Shining Bronze and Long-tailed Cuckoos, and further opportunities to look for Takahe, if previously missed.

Cook Strait. After boarding the Cook Strait ferry, we'll head to the South Island. The ferry crossing takes about three hours, during which time we'll have a chance to look out over the sea for pelagics, which might include any of several possible albatross species plus a variety of shearwaters and prions.



Blue Duck with chick by Erik Forsyth

Blumine Island Bird Sanctuary. We will undertake an exciting boat trip from Picton to Blumine Island Bird Sanctuary. Here we hope to find the dazzling South Island Saddleback, flighty New Zealand Bellbird, South Island form of New Zealand Robin, plus other more widespread bush species. We will also make a concerted effort to locate the difficult



New Zealand Kaka by Erik Forsyth

Rough-faced (or King) Shag, a localised species found only in the Marlborough Sounds. Along the way, there are opportunities to view marine mammals such as Dusky Dolphins and playful New Zealand Fur Seals.

Lake Eltewater. A short stop here should give us good looks at Great Crested Grebe and possibly Hoary-headed Grebe which have taken up residence recently.

Pelagic - Kaikoura. Kaikoura is located on a most extraordinary peninsula with offshore canyon systems creating an upwelling of nutrients, thereby attracting a wide variety of marine life.

This morning we enjoy the spectacular mix of marine life, seascape and mountains that make Kaikoura so unique. Weather permitting, we will set out on a morning boat trip in search of pelagic species. About forty species of pelagic birds have been recorded in this area over the past two decades and we hope to encounter a wide variety of these ocean denizens during our time at sea.

The continental shelf swings close to the shoreline here, allowing for an upwelling of nutrients from the seafloor that attracts both seabirds and marine mammals. Amongst the many possible bird species, we will be specifically targeting the locally endemic Hutton's Shearwater and Westland Petrel, both of which nest on the mainland of South Island. Other possibilities include both Southern and Northern Royal Albatross, Wandering Albatross of three varieties, Shy and Black-browed Albatross, Southern Giant and White-chinned Petrels, the quick Common Diving Petrel, and Arctic Skua.

Arthur's Pass. Here we will look for Black-fronted Terns feeding over fast-flowing streams and the large and friendly Kea, an Alpine parrot, around the village. We will walk a trail near the village, through beautiful Beach Forest to look for the tiny Rifleman, Pipipi (Brown Creeper) and South Island forms of New Zealand Robin and Tomtit, the latter with a yellow breast.

At night we may hear the calls of Great Spotted Kiwi from the surrounding forest.

Mount John Observatory. Time permitting we'll make a short stop here for the introduced Chukar Partridge.

Omarama area. We will search the Omarama area in earnest for Black Stilt. This is one of New Zealand's most endangered species and thought to be the world's rarest wader at less than 250 individuals. We also have further chances for the beautiful endemic Double-banded Plover (Banded Dotterel) Black-fronted Tern and Wrybill, which nest on the braided riverbeds. The scenery is breath-taking, and we will see New Zealand's



The critically endangered Black Stilt by Erik Forsyth



South Island Saddleback by Adam Riley

highest peak, the snow-covered Mount Cook at (3 724m). Other species possible in this area may include New Zealand Falcon, Swamp Harrier, Paradise Shelduck, New Zealand Scaup, Grey Teal, Eurasian Coot, Great Crested Grebe, Masked Lapwing, New Zealand (Australasian) Pipit, Australian Magpie and Common Redpoll.

Small passerines introduced from Europe are another feature of this area, with possibilities for Yellowhammer, European Greenfinch, European Goldfinch, Common Redpoll, Song Thrush and Dunnock.

Fiordland National Park. This morning we head through to Fiordland National Park, allowing for breath-taking views of this area, New Zealand's largest national park, also rightfully declared as a World Heritage Area. We'll be on the lookout for the scarce New Zealand Falcon as well as Blue Duck, should we still need this species. Near the Homer Tunnel, we will take a hike of 2 - 3km return, to look for the rare and localised New Zealand Rockwren. We will have to be patient and scan the large boulders carefully for this tiny bird!

Afterwards, we will take various stops in Beech Forest to look for New Zealand Kaka, Yellow-crowned Parakeet, New Zealand Robin, Tomtit, Pipipi (Brown Creeper) and Rifleman, a member of the endemic family of New Zealand Wrens. The fantastic Kea, a true Alpine parrot are also found here.

Stewart Island. After boarding a ferry in Bluff, we'll sail to Stewart Island, New Zealand's third largest island and newest national park. Stewart Island is wild and rugged, with few roads and high numbers of birds, making it a very exciting place indeed! This afternoon we will catch a water taxi to Ulva Island in Paterson Inlet, a forested jewel, which will put us into some of the best avian bush walking in New Zealand. Ulva Island is a predator-free haven for a variety of birds, including the Stewart Island form of Weka, Tui, New Zealand Bellbird, the South Island form of New Zealand Kaka, both Red-crowned and Yellow-crowned Parakeets, South Island Saddleback, the endangered Yellowhead, New Zealand Robin and New Zealand Pigeon (locally known as the Kereru). There is an excellent series of paths around the island, and we'll be out for several hours before taking the water taxi back to Golden Bay on Stewart Island. On one evening, we will search for the localised Stewart Island form of Southern Brown Kiwi.

Pelagic – Stewart Island. A highlight on Stewart Island is the opportunity for a pelagic tour exploring nearby islands and the spectacular coastal scenery. Again, those who require motion sickness medication will want to plan ahead as our trip will take us around the south-eastern side of the island, to South Cape and the Southern Muttonbird Islands.

We will encounter several new species of albatross, shearwaters and diving petrels today, with possibilities including Wandering, Northern Royal, Campbell's, Salvin's and Buller's Albatross,



Buller's Albatross by Erik Forsyth



The entertaining Kea by Erik Forsyth

Southern Giant Petrel, Brown Skua, Sooty Shearwater, Cape and Mottled Petrels, Common Diving Petrel as well as chances for Grey-backed Storm Petrel and three species of penguins – namely Yellow-eyed, Fiordland and Little (Blue). Antarctic Terns also have a small breeding colony south of here and we will be looking for sightings of this rare bird for New Zealand.

Taiaroa Head. We will spend time at this headland looking for Northern Royal Albatross, here at their only mainland breeding site. Depending on the conditions (the windier the better), we can admire these gigantic and extremely impressive birds (weighing up to 9kg!) as they fly past the headland. Active colonies of Spotted Shags, Red-billed Gulls, White-fronted Terns and a few Royal Spoonbills will vie for our attention as they nest on a nearby cliff face.

Dunedin area. We'll visit a nature reserve dedicated to protecting the Yellow-eyed Penguin, New Zealand's rarest endemic penguin species, where the adults may be seen returning to their nesting burrows after fishing at sea.

Tour Grading & Key

Overall Ease		Moderate. Suitable for all birding / wildlife interest levels and most mobility capabilities.
Birding Ease		Undemanding, most species provide good visuals. Night birding for kiwis can be tricky. A small number of scarce/rare target species.
Accommodation		Comfortable.
Walking / Trails		Moderate. Short walks on flat ground, with a few longer hikes. Night walks for kiwis can be challenging on narrower trails, some might be muddy.
Vehicles / Roads		Comfortable vehicle on good quality sealed roads. A number of long drives.
Photography		Good to very good. Pelagic opportunities can be outstanding in good weather conditions.
Annoyances		Pelagic conditions can vary from calm to rough.

Financial Arrangements and Important Notes

Tour dates, prices, single supplement, approximate flight costs and tour spaces are displayed on our website.

Tour inclusions:

- All meals from lunch on day 1 to breakfast on day 17;
- All lodgings;
- All ground transportation during the tour;
- All reserve entrance fees;
- Pelagic;
- All guiding services
- Tips for local guides, drivers and services.

Tour exclusions:

- Visa fees;
- ANY flights;
- Any beverages (including mini-bar charges at hotels);
- Optional excursions (ie: Royal Albatross hide);
- Special gratuities;
- Telephone calls, laundry and other items of a personal nature.

Single Supplement: The single supplement cost for this tour will be charged if you wish to have single accommodation. If RBL cannot provide you with a rooming partner for these nights although you choose to share, the single supplement will become applicable. We will make all reasonable efforts to ensure that a rooming partner is found if you do wish to share.

Tipping: As noted above, gratuities (drivers, hotel staff, restaurants etc.) are included on this tour. However, this does NOT include your Rockjumper leader/s. If you feel that they have given you excellent service, it is entirely appropriate to tip them at your discretion.

- **Due to constantly fluctuating exchange rates, we quote our tours in 4 currencies. The tour price is fixed only in the currency printed in bold, and the actual cost in the other currencies listed will be adjusted according to prevailing exchange rates at the time of final invoicing. The same applies to approximate flight and single supplement rates.**
- **Rates are based upon group tariffs; if the tour does not have sufficient registrations, a small group supplement will be offered to confirm the tour.**
- **Tour prices are subject to unforeseen increases in tour related costs and may have to be adjusted as a result.**
- **The designated tour leader/s may be changed at short due to unforeseen circumstances.**
- **The itinerary is indicative only. Changes made need to be made to the order in which the tour is conducted, or some of the venues we visit closer to departure. We will attempt to adhere as close to the original program as possible.**

- It is important for the comfort of your fellow travellers that you do not over-pack. Kindly stick to 20kg (44lb) for check in luggage and 8kg (+-18lb) for hand luggage.
- We recommend an overnight bag/backpack during our short stay on Kapiti Island. We will carry our gear on a trail from the beach to our lodge. Suitcases will be safely locked in the vehicle. Two trips can be made to fetch gear from the landing area if need be.
- Accommodation throughout the trip is of a good standard and the hotels and resorts that we make use of range from comfortable to good. There is no camping on this trip.
- Please note that the seas during the pelagic trips can be unpredictable, and guests who opt for this activity, must bear this in mind. It is essential that you bring along some motion sickness medication if you suspect that you

could be prone to seasickness. We suggest that you contact your travel doctor for information regarding the various medication options.

- If you have any medical conditions or physical limitations relating to balance and mobility, please do let the Rockjumper office know.

Arrival and Departure Details

The tour will begin in Auckland on Day 1, according to the above itinerary. The tour will conclude after breakfast at Dunedin International Airport on Day 17.

The above information in respect of arrivals and departures is a guide only. Precise arrival and departure information will be sent to you in your Tour Confirmation package once the tour has been officially confirmed. If you wish to arrive early and/or depart late and would like assistance in this regard, kindly contact the Rockjumper office.

Auckland Airport, Auckland (IATA: AKL) is the main port of entry for international flights into New Zealand and is well serviced by many of the world's major airlines. The tour ends at Dunedin International Airport, Dunedin (IATA: DUD).

Visa requirements differ by country, nationality of the traveller and duration and purpose of your intended stay. It may be necessary to obtain a visa or an electronic travel authorization in advance of your travel. It is therefore vitally important that you check with your travel agent/consulate/embassy for exact visa requirements. The following website provides detailed information about visa eligibility and assistance with online applications options where viable: Visa HQ for Travel

DO NOT book any flights until the Rockjumper Team have officially confirmed the tour.