

ITINERARY FOR A PHOTO TOUR in association WITH WRYBILL BIRDING TOURS, NZ



21 day bird & wildlife photography tour

12 November to 2 December 2019

Max group size of 8

Led by Brent Stephenson & David Tipling

Highlights

Albatross's so close you can reach out and touch them.

Photograph some of the rarest birds on earth including Wrybill, Black Stilt, Takahe, Kokako, Saddleback's, Stitchbirds and New Zealand Storm Petrel.

Kiwi's under moonlight.

Photograph and swim with dolphins.

Photograph spectacular alpine scenery and elfin forests.

Maximum group size of just eight photographers with two leaders.

Albatross's so close you can reach out and touch them, Kiwi's on a moonlit beach, and close encounters with some of the most endangered birds on earth are just a few of the photographic encounters that make a tour to New Zealand so enticing.

This tour is designed first and foremost for photographers who are interested in capturing as much of New Zealand's wildlife, particularly the endemic and native birds, and scenic beauty as possible.

Your guides will be Brent Stephenson and David Tipling., Brent has been travelling New Zealand with camera in hand for over 25 years.

The itinerary includes several boat trips to photograph seabirds and possibly marine mammals. Whilst our tour is photocentric, it has been designed to still see many of New Zealand's special bird species, and aims to see and photograph members of the six endemic New Zealand families – the kiwi, the New Zealand parrots aiming at both kaka and kea, the New Zealand wrens, the New Zealand wattlebirds, the stitchbird and the New Zealand creepers. On top of that we also hope to photograph both New Zealand fur seal and sea lion, both dusky and Hector's dolphins, and a chance to see Sperm whale (if you chose that option on Day 11). We will also look for tuatara, a very special reptile endemic to New Zealand.

Whilst we aim to follow the itinerary as planned, please note that this itinerary should only be used as a guide.

DAY 1



Auckland to Waipu (3 hours driving).

Pick-up at accommodation in Auckland (as Auckland is a large congested city, we suggest people stay at the Auckland Rose Park Hotel). One of our first stops offering superb photographic opportunities will be on the rugged west coast at one of New Zealand's three mainland Australasian gannet colonies.

The afternoon will be spent at several coastal locations photographing shorebirds, including variable oystercatcher, New Zealand dotterel, black-winged stilt (pied stilt) and Arctic migrants such as bar-tailed godwit. Perhaps we will be lucky enough to find the very rare fairy tern (with less than 50 of this endemic subspecies now remaining).

DAY 2

Waipu to Warkworth (2 hours driving).

This morning we will head back to the same coastal sites as the previous day to photograph similar subjects in morning light. In the afternoon there is the option to head into some forest for our first chance with some of the endemic land birds, such as bellbird,

whitehead and tui, or visit some wetland areas for brown teal, purple swamphen, paradise shelduck and buff-banded rail.

Accommodation in Warkworth, where we will stay for two nights.

DAY 3

Warkworth, Hauraki Gulf Pelagic.



Leaving from Sandspit we will head out into the beautiful Hauraki Gulf towards Little Barrier Island and chum at several locations nearby. Our main focus will be to locate the seabirds which are most easily seen in the northern part of New Zealand, such as the recently rediscovered New Zealand storm-petrel (which Brent and Sav rediscovered in January 2003), as well as black and Cook's petrel, Buller's, flesh-footed, and fluttering shearwater, and white-faced storm-petrel.

Depending on weather and conditions we may venture further to some scenic islands which provide interesting photographic subjects, or out still further where the water drops off beyond the Continental shelf, and where we sometimes encounter a different range of seabird species. Eyes will not just be on the look-out for birds, as this area is also excellent marine mammal habitat, with both common and bottle-nosed dolphins, frequently Bryde's whales, and very occasionally killer whales.

DAY 4

Warkworth to Tiritiri Matangi Island (1 hour driving).

Once farmed, the island is now an open sanctuary that has been extensively replanted, with some areas of original forest remaining. We will focus on photographing many of the



endemics on the island, with North Island saddleback, kokako, stitchbird, takahe, and brown teal being present and often very approachable. Other more common forest birds such as whitehead, tui, bellbird, New Zealand fantail, grey gerygone, and North Island robin will be seen, and we may look for spotless crane to appear at one of the small ponds. After dinner we will head out to look for and attempt to photograph morepork an endemic owl and hopefully little spotted kiwi which we should see but can offer a challenge to photograph. Tuatara, an extremely primitive endemic reptile, are also present on the island and we will spend time looking for these and probably see little penguin as well.

The night will be spent in accommodation on the island, with this being limited to a communal bunkhouse, with bunk beds in shared rooms. Although rustic the experience is well worth it, and not to be missed. An overnight bag will be taken with minimal gear, bedding will be provided, but due to the shared nature of the accommodations remember some nightwear!

DAY 5

Tiritiri Matangi Island to Miranda (3 hours driving).

Getting up early will allow us to hear the dawn chorus, the kokako has been described as having one of the most hauntingly beautiful of all bird songs on earth., We will make the

most of early morning light for photography looking for and photographing anything we missed the previous day, before leaving Tiritiri Matangi at midday, via water taxi.

Back on the mainland we head south to one of New Zealand's premier shorebird sites, the world-renowned Miranda, in the Firth of Thames. We are likely to see wrybill, bar-tailed godwit, red knot, red-necked stint, ruddy turnstone, New Zealand plover, banded dotterel (double-banded plover), variable and South Island pied oystercatcher, black-winged stilt, black-billed gull, and Caspian tern. Shorebird watching and photography in this area is largely dependent on the tides, so we will be working around the high tide, and may visit other nearby areas if time permits.

We will stay the night at accommodation very close to Miranda.

DAY 6

Miranda to Turangi (3 hours driving).

Pureora Forest Park to the west of Lake Taupo, holds some of the oldest trees in the central North Island, saved by protestors during logging operations in the late 1970s and early 1980s. As well as beautiful forest, this extensive area is one of the best places in the North Island to see New Zealand kaka, yellow-crowned parakeet, long-tailed koel (cuckoo), shining bronze-cuckoo, rifleman, and we will also encounter other more common forest species. We will also be on the look-out for New Zealand falcon which inhabits this area, and New Zealand pipit may be seen on the roads in the area. Bird photography can be challenging here but we should get some opportunities, the forest however is very photogenic.

We will head to Turangi in the early evening to our accommodation, where we will spend two nights.

DAY 7

Turangi to Turangi (2-3 hours driving).

Our main focus will be to find and photograph the endemic blue duck. Inhabiting swift-flowing mountain streams these birds have declined markedly, even at sites where they were reliable only a few years ago. There are only a handful of locations where they can be seen without a major hike. If the weather allows we should be able to see the three central North Island volcanoes, Mt Ruapehu, Ngaruhoe, and Tongariro as a backdrop, and will visit some locations for photography of these scenic icons.

We will spend the night at the same accommodation in Turangi.

DAY 8

Turangi to Foxton (3-3 hours driving).

This morning we concentrate our efforts around Turangi. Then head south towards Foxton, checking into our accommodation, before then making the most of afternoon light to photograph shorebirds at the Manawatu Estuary. Shorebirds at this location are often extremely confiding, and we will hope to photograph bar-tailed godwit, red knot, variable oystercatcher, and target the unique wrybill, which can often be approached very closely.

Accommodation for the night will be in Foxton.

DAY 9

Foxton to Picton (2 hours driving).

We may visit the Manawatu Estuary again this morning, or travel further south to some coastal wetland areas that can hold confiding waterfowl, cormorants, and shorebirds. We then drive south along the scenic Kapiti Coast towards Wellington.

The Inter-island ferry leaves Wellington, across to the South Island via the Cook Strait. Spotted shag, fairy prion, fluttering shearwater, and white-fronted tern, should be seen, and depending on weather conditions and prevailing winds New Zealand wandering, white-capped and Salvin's albatross, northern giant-petrel, Westland petrel, and sooty shearwater are all possible. Although not ideal for seabird photography, the ferry is an excellent platform to photograph the very beautiful Marlborough Sounds.

The ferry docks in Picton, and our accommodation is less than 5 minutes away.



DAY 10

Picton to Kaikoura (3. hours driving).

Today we tour the Marlborough Sounds, to explore Queen Charlotte Sound. We have several targets for the morning, that include the tiny endemic Hector's dolphin, with its little rounded dorsal fin. The area is also famous for several predator free islands, and we will visit at least one of these for birds and perhaps walk to a scenic lookout, with views out over the entrance to Queen Charlotte Sound. Capt James Cook spent much time in this beautiful area during his voyages around New Zealand.

We then travel south to Kaikoura.

We will spend the next two nights in Kaikoura,

DAY 11

Kaikoura (1 hour driving).

This morning we take a pelagic trip which should prove to be one of the photographic highlights of the tour. Due to the depth of the Kaikoura canyon just offshore, we are able to be in water 4,000 m deep within half an hour. The edges of the canyon create nutrient rich waters that swarm with seabirds. Although the species list varies throughout the year, in any season we can expect to have at least 3 species of albatross, normally as close as 5-6 feet away, including Northern and Southern Royal, New Zealand wandering, black-browed, Campbell, white-capped, and Salvin's albatross. On top of this add Cape petrel, Westland and white-chinned petrels, northern giant-petrel, and the endemic Hutton's shearwater, which breeds in the mountains behind Kaikoura, plus the potential for other species like grey-faced petrel, southern giant-petrel, sooty and short-tailed shearwater, and you have the makings of a truly memorable morning. The area is also renowned for dusky dolphins.

The afternoon can either be spent out on the water with an option to do either a sperm whale watching trip which allows some photographic opportunities, or swimming with dusky dolphins, or just being onboard the boat from which swimmers are in the water with the dolphins. The swimming offers excellent photo opportunities if you have an underwater camera/housing, and the observing from the boat can be excellent for taking photos, as this species of dolphin is very acrobatic. If you are already buried under the mass of digital images already taken and want some time to sort and edit these, or take some time for a rest, or to do laundry, then these are also possibilities.

We will stay at the same accommodation as the night before in Kaikoura.



DAY 12

Kaikoura to Punakaiki (6 hours driving). We will be up early for a sunrise pelagic trip, getting out on the water at 0600 and therefore having different lighting, and perhaps different birds from the previous day. After a late breakfast, we hit the road for a drive through the scenic Arthur's Pass to Punakaiki on the rugged West Coast.

Arthur's Pass is at altitude, and so passing through this alpine zone we hope to photograph the cheeky mountain parrot the kea which is prone to creating mischief in the town.

We will spend the night in accommodation very near to Punakaiki, where we will stay for two nights.

DAY 13

Punakaiki and surrounds (2-3 hours driving).

We will likely head north to Westport, and the Cape Foulwind area. As well as a chance to see some forest birds (such as New Zealand brown creeper, and South Island tomtit and robin), we will have a relatively relaxing day with cameras in hand.

Accommodation the same as the night before.



DAY 14

Punakaiki to Fox Glacier (3 hours driving).

This morning we drive south, down the West Coast, stopping to photograph coastal scenery, forest birds, and some of the beautiful lakes along the way.



Nearby Franz Josef and Fox Glaciers are scenically spectacular, with slim chances of seeing Mt Cook (Aorangi, our tallest mountain). Our afternoons activities will be dictated by weather, and the evening light will play a part in what we choose to do.

We will spend the night at accommodation near Fox Glacier.

DAY 15

Fox Glacier to Wanaka (3 hours driving).

Reflections, mountains, and morning light should make for some excellent photo opportunities. We then head south to a forested area, where we will take a slow walk through near-elfin forest, draped in mosses and ferns. We will eventually make it to a rugged beach, to look for Fiordland crested penguin.

We then head south to Haast. Haast Pass is home to a number of forest species, including yellow-crowned parakeet, rifleman, South Island tomtit, and New Zealand brown creeper.

We then drive to the beautiful lake-side town of Wanaka, just over an hour away, to our accommodation.

DAY 16

Wanaka to Te Anau (6 hours driving)

Today will involve quite a bit of driving, but we will be passing through some of New Zealand's most spectacular scenery, heading towards Milford Sound. Our focus will largely be on the scenery, but depending on past successes with forest birds, we will adapt to have time with those also. However, we plan to head through to the renowned Milford Sound to do a boat tour of the fiord.

We will spend the night at accommodation in Te Anau.

DAY 17

Te Anau to Stewart Island (5 hours driving).

This morning we head back into the beautiful Eglinton Valley, which we passed through to get to Milford Sound yesterday. After lunch we head for Bluff, where we catch the late afternoon ferry to the third main island of New Zealand – Stewart Island. Depending on sea and weather conditions the one-hour ferry crossing can be excellent for seabirds, with albatross (Southern Royal, white-capped, and Salvin's), giant-petrel, mottled petrel, Cape petrel (pigeon), common diving-petrel, fairy prion, sooty shearwater, and brown skua all possible. We will also see Foveaux shag, either as we leave Bluff or on arriving at Stewart Island. Upon arriving we check into our accommodation, and should be able to photograph New Zealand kaka, New Zealand pigeon, and tui around the township of Oban.

After dinner we head out to look for Southern brown kiwi as they come down to feed on the beach. This should present us with opportunities to get some photos, although they can be shy and we will restrict photography to using just the beam from the torch of our guide.

We will stay in the same accommodation for two nights.

DAY 18

Ulva Island and Stewart Island pelagic.

Ulva Island is another predator free sanctuary, and home to some of the South Island specialties we may still want to photograph. Yellowhead, South Island saddleback, weka and some of the more common forest species such as brown creeper, red-and yellow-crowned parakeet, kaka and rifleman can all be found here. We will spend the morning wandering the forest trails looking out for these species, as well as orchids, ferns, and mosses, and then get on a boat to head out for our afternoon pelagic.

Having lunch on the way we will head out to some of the Mutton Bird Islands, where we might photograph Yellow-eyed Penguin, Brown Skua and Sooty Shearwater, before then heading out into deeper water to look for more pelagic species, including albatross. With such a close proximity to the Southern Ocean, and large seabird colonies being on many of the surrounding islands we should encounter an excellent array of seabirds. In particular target birds to photograph are Southern royal albatross, white-capped, and Salvin's Albatross, both northern and southern giant-petrel, mottled and Cook's Petrel, broad-billed and fairy prion, and common diving-petrel. Other more common species we will almost certainly see are Cape petrel, sooty shearwater, spotted and Foveaux shags, brown skua, white-fronted tern, and red-billed gull.

Depending on our success with Southern Brown Kiwi the previous night, we may head out again after dark. Our accommodation will be the same as last night.

DAY 19

Stewart Island to Moeraki (4 hours driving).

We leave fantastic Stewart Island on the early morning ferry. We head north towards Moeraki, taking in the very scenic Catlins Coast. This coastal section is renowned for its scenic views and weather-beaten coastline. During a stop at one of the beaches along the way we hope to photograph Hooker's sealion (a New Zealand endemic). Our goal is to arrive at Moeraki in the late afternoon and head to a beach where we can photograph yellow-eyed penguins coming ashore. We will make the most of the evening light, photographing the iconic Moeraki boulders.

Our accommodation for the night is near Moeraki.

DAY 20

Moeraki to Twizel (4 hours driving).

After a visit to the Moeraki boulders at sunrise, we travel inland to one of the driest parts of the South Island – the arid Mackenzie basin. The landscape here is dotted with stunning glacial till-coloured lakes, and red tussocks. We will search for the world's rarest shorebird, the black stilt. With a population of around 100 wild birds, they are a species which has a considerable conservation effort invested in them.

We will spend the night at accommodation in Twizel.

DAY 21

Twizel to Christchurch (4 hours driving).

Depending on how we did with Black Stilt yesterday, we will be up early to enjoy the morning light before we then head towards Christchurch. Our tour ends at the International Airport in Christchurch at around 1PM, or we can drop you at accommodation should you be choosing to stay on for a few days. If departing from the Airport we recommend not booking any flight before 3:30pm to allow enough time. If staying in Christchurch for just one night, we suggest hotels adjacent to the Airport. We can help with bookings. If staying for longer then please enquire with us before booking anything to make sure drop-off is feasible.

NOTE THAT THE PACKAGE COST INCLUDES:

- All transport within New Zealand from the pick-up point (generally Auckland Rose Park Hotel) to the drop-off point (Christchurch Airport or accommodation), travel through the country, ferries, and boat charters
- All accommodation during the tour, from Day 1 through to Day 20. Accommodation on Day 0 in Auckland if you choose to arrive a day early (recommended), and Day 21 in Christchurch at the end of the tour can be organised at extra cost.
- Breakfast, lunch and dinner. Breakfast generally consists of a continental style breakfast with cereal, fruit and yoghurt and tea/coffee. Full cooked breakfast is not generally possible at most locations. Lunch will generally consist of a packed lunch style meal eaten in the field, with sandwich/filled roll, fruit, and a drink. Dinner will consist of several options for main, with the choice of either an appetiser or dessert.
- All Guide services and additional tour fees eg. kiwi tours, Department of Conservation concessions, Albatross Encounter pelagic, etc.
- A copy of Birds of New Zealand: A Photographic Guide and a Tour booklet which includes a checklist, copy of the itinerary, and pages for taking notes on locations, etc.

THE PACKAGE DOES NOT INCLUDE:

- Flights to/from New Zealand or Travel Insurance which we highly recommend.
- Transport to and from the meeting and drop-off points.
- Additional drinks/snacks throughout the day, and alcoholic or non-alcoholic beverages at dinner.
- Personal

COST

NZ \$13,500.00

Single supplement is an additional NZ\$1,500.

Payment to be made to Wrybill Tours in NZ \$. 25% of tour cost payable on booking.

To book and all enquiries concerning this tour please email Brent at brent@wrybill-tours.com

