

21-Day NEW ZEALAND

LIMITED TO
10 RIGS

NATURE & BIRDING CARAVAN

PER PERSON PRICES 2010
DOUBLE OCCUPANCY \$4890
SINGLE OCCUPANCY \$6590

TOUR DATES:
Nov 09, 2010 TO Nov 29, 2010

TOUR DESCRIPTION

New Zealand offers nutrient-rich blue seas teeming with whales, dolphins and fur seals over which glide Albatrosses, Petrels and Skuas; shorelines of Penguins; rugged coastlines and dramatic capes hosting Gannet and Tern colonies; estuaries for Spoonbills, Stints and Tattlers; wetlands supporting Bitterns, Rails and Crakes; mirrored lakes, sheep-grazed hills; mossy forests and ancient podocarpus forests where Kokako glide across the high canopy; alpine meadows and scree slopes; braided rivers spilling down from snow-covered mountains and hanging glaciers; geysers, hot springs, boiling mud pools and volcanoes; and endemic birds with strange names like Kea, Kiwi, Takahe, Tomtit, Tui, Weka, and Wrybill.

This trip includes airflight from Brisbane, Australia, to Auckland and a night at a hotel in Auckland. Tiritiri Matangi Island is a must-visit site for birders hoping to see New Zealand endemics. We take a 30-minute ferry ride from Auckland and a guided tour of the island, once a farmland but now is native forests resulting from an enormous revegetation project from 1984 to 1994. Some 78 species of birds have been observed on or near the island, including endangered species such as Little Spotted Kiwi, Brown Teal, Takahe, Stitchbird, and Kokako. Other endemic species are New Zealand Pigeon, New Zealand Bellbird, Tui, New Zealand Robin, and Whitehead. We will pick up our RVs in the morning and bird the shores of Hauraki Gulf, especially Mangere Sewage Works and Muriwai Beach where a colony of 2000 Australian Gannets reside. Endemics found here include Spotted Shag, Paradise Shelduck, Variable Oystercatcher, Red-breasted Dotterel, Red-billed Gull, Grey Gerygone, Tui and Tomtit.

We travel south of Auckland to a campsite near Waitomo Cave. Pureora Forest Park is our best chance to see Kokako, a semi-flightless bird that runs along high branches and glides between trees in the podocarpus forest. Another localized endemic found here is Common Kaka, as well as New Zealand Falcon, Yellow-fronted Parakeet, Rifleman, and Long-tailed Koel. We camp at Rotura for two nights. Famous for its geysers, hot springs and boiling mud pools, the Rotorua lakes support New Zealand Scaup, New Zealand Grebe, Black-billed Gull, and Saddleback. The Saddleback is only one of two surviving members of the wattletail family, endemic to New Zealand.

East of Pureora Forest Park is Lake Taupo, New Zealand's largest lake and a site to find Australian Bittern, Spotless Crane, and Fernbird. Our campsite is adjacent to thermal pools. Our visit to Cape Kidnappers coincides with the presence of the largest mainland colony (7500 pairs) of Australian Gannets and a colony of White-fronted Terns. Ahuriri Estuary offers Little Pied Cormorant, Australian Shoveler, Rufous-necked Stint, Sharp-tailed Sandpiper, White-headed Stilt, Double-banded Plover, Masked Lapwing, and Kelp Gull. Camp at Napier. En route we pass Classic Sheepskin Factories where you could have a tour of the sheep tanning process and purchase sheepskin products.

On the way to Wellington we stop at Manawatu River for Black-fronted Dotterel and at the estuary we can find Gray-tailed Tattler picking for food in the gravel banks and seawatch at Taranaki Peninsula, maybe catching sight of White-bellied Storm-Petrel, Little Pied Cormorant, New Zealand Scaup and Kelp Gull. Cook Strait separates North Island and South Island. During our 75-min. car-ferry ride we have an excellent chance of seeing up to six species of Albatross and Buller's Shearwater as well as Common, Dusky and Hector's Dolphins and Killer Whales. Camp is in Picton on South Island. We'll take the Albatross Encounter pelagic boat tour offshore from Kaikoura seeking Buller's Albatross, Buller's Shearwater and other Albatrosses, Petrels, Shearwaters, and Storm-petrels. These nutrient-rich

waters are famous for Humpback, Killer and Sperm Whales, often seen at close quarters. Kaikoura, a small fishing town, is known for its crayfish (rock lobster) and also hosts a New Zealand fur seal colony. At Akaroa Harbor is the best place to see the white-flipped form of Little Penguin. We can watch Black-fronted Terns and other waterbirds from Kaituna Lagoon at Lake Ellesmere. Camp in Christchurch.

From Christchurch to Greymouth we pass through Otira Gorge and then cross the Southern Alps at Arthur's Pass, hoping to find the very rare and threatened Blue Duck along the river. State Highway Six, running along the west coast north of Greymouth offers specialties such as Great Spotted Kiwi, South Island Wren, and Yellowhead. We might find Westland Petrel and Royal Spoonbill. Camp again in Greymouth. South of Greymouth we will see Franz Josef Glacier and Fox Glacier, with spectacular views of the Southern Alps, while keeping an eye out for Keas. Drive through pine forests to Bruce Bay, an old gold mining settlement, and then through dramatic Hasst Pass. Then, briefly, we swing northward into the Waitaki Valley to the village of Twizel, near Mt. Cook, at 12,136 ft. the highest mountain in Australia.

We visit the Black Stilt Captive Breeding Center and perhaps be fortunate enough to see these in the wild, the world's rarest wading birds. Other species found in the braided rivers of the Mackenzie Basin are Wrybill - a peculiar shorebird with a bill that hooks to the right - Banded Dotterel, South Island Pied Oystercatcher, and Black-fronted Tern. Camp tonight is Queenstown, originally a sheep run, then a gold rush town and now South Island's most popular resort, set on Lake Wakatipu among rugged peaks and hills smoothed by glaciers. In the expansive 12,000-sq.km. Fiordland National Park, encompassing wet forests, lakes, braided rivers, alpine meadows, glaciers, snow-capped peaks, and fiords, we find a broad selection of New Zealand endemics, especially seeking South Island Wren, often voted by visiting birders as the "bird-of-the-trip". The mini-pitta of a bird favors boulder-strewn slopes. Campsite in Te Anau.

We can take another look at Fiordland National Park, trying again to catch a glimpse of Yellowhead, one of the hardest endemics to see. It favors the high canopy where Rifleman and New Zealand Robin also reside. We cross the southeast coast of South Island at Dunedin. On the Otago Peninsula we visit the only mainland breeding colony of Royal Albatrosses in the world. We may also see Bronze Shags, a few Spotted Shags and, perhaps, the rare Hooker's Sea-lion. Maybe we will have time to tour the famous Cadbury Chocolate Factory in Dunedin. Heading north to Christchurch, we stop at Oamaru to see Yellow-eyed Penguins, the world's rarest penguin, a species that breeds and sleeps in burrows. We turn in our RVs by 3 PM, shift to a Christchurch hotel and enjoy our farewell dinner. Return flights from Christchurch.

Note: This is an exclusive caravan, limited to ten customer rigs (plus one or two to allow for possible cancellations). This gives the distinct advantage of more flexibility on side trips and accommodations at great birding spots. Greater attention from birding guides, social directors and staff significantly enhances the value of this specialized caravan trip.

Note:

Flights: Airfare is not included. This option allows you more freedom of movement and a chance to use your frequent flyer miles.

Includes Motorhome
Rental in New Zealand

ITINERARY & PRICE INCLUDES

- ✓ Services of Full-Time Professional Birding Guide / Wagonmaster
- ✓ Airfare from Brisbane to Auckland
- ✓ RV Rental (18 days)
- ✓ RV Park Campground Fees
- ✓ Diesel Tax Recovery Fee
- ✓ Welcome to New Zealand Breakfast
- ✓ Auckland Hotel (2 nights)
- ✓ Local Birding Guide at many Locations
- ✓ Tiritiri Matangi Islandboat Transit and Island Tour
- ✓ Cook Strait Ferry
- ✓ Albatross Encounter Pelagic Boat Tour
- ✓ Christchurch Hotel (1 night)
- ✓ Farewell Dinner
- ✓ Customized Bird Checklists for birding sites
- ✓ Bird sightings Checklists Updated Weekly
- ✓ Services of Staff who will Organize Tours & Optional Activities
- ✓ "What you Should Know Before you Leave" Preparatory Document
- ✓ Trip Preparation Packet & Checklist
- ✓ Travel Logs and Regular Briefings

DAY 1-2 Auckland

- ▶ Tiritiri Matangi Island (By Charter Boat)

DAY 3 Waitomo

- ▶ Hauraki Gulf, Muriwai Beach, Mangere

DAY 4-5 Rotorua

- ▶ Pureora Forest Park
- ▶ Rotorua, Lake Rotorua, Lake Rototoi

DAY 6 Taupo

- ▶ Lake Taupo

DAY 7 Napier

- ▶ Ahuriri Estuary, Cape Kidnappers

DAY 8 Wellington

- ▶ Manawatu River, Manawatu Estuary
- ▶ Taranaki Peninsula

DAY 9 Picton

- ▶ Cook Strait (Ferry to South Island)

DAY 10 Kaikoura

- ▶ Albatross Encounter Pelagic Boat Tour

DAY 11 Christchurch

- ▶ Akaroa Harbour, Lake Ellesmere
- ▶ Kaituna Lagoon

DAY 12-13 Greymouth

- ▶ Arthur's Pass
- ▶ Paparoa National Park
- ▶ Cape Foulwind, Punakaiki

DAY 14 Fox Glacier

- ▶ Franz Joseph Glacier, Fox Glacier
- ▶ Lake Matheson, Southern Alps

DAY 15 Twizel

- ▶ Waitaki Valley, Ahuriri River
- ▶ Tasman River, Cass River
- ▶ Lake Pukaki, Mount Cook

DAY 16 Queenstown

- ▶ Ahuriri River, Lake Benmore

DAY 17 Te Anau

- ▶ Fiordland National Park
- ▶ Knobs Flat, Kiosk Creek, Lake Gunn
- ▶ Homer Tunnel, Milford

DAY 18-19 Dunedin

- ▶ Otago Peninsula
- ▶ Taiaroa Head, Cape Saunders

DAY 20 Christchurch

- ▶ Oamaru

DAY 21 Hugs & Good-byes