

# New Zealand Birding & Nature Species List | January 7-23, 2026 with Naturalist Journeys



**Compiled by guide Dave Mehlman with local guide Richard Schofield. Our clients included Alan, Anita, Anne, Freya, Holly, Kate, Ken, Pat, and Sue.**

An intrepid and experienced group of nine gathered in Auckland to meet with local Nature Quest birding guide Richard and Naturalist Journeys guide Dave for an incredible and highlight-filled tour of almost all of New Zealand and its birds. Starting on the North Island, we visited numerous birding sites, including islands, forested tracts, and coastal areas, as we worked our way south to Wellington at the southern end. Arriving there, we took the ferry across the Cook Strait (experiencing the “excellent customer service”—not of Bluebridge Cook Street Ferries!) to the sweet little town of Picton at the northern end of the South Island. We continued from there by van, on boats, and on foot to explore the myriad habitats of the “mainland” on our way south. Here, too, we explored numerous kinds of forest types (including some mystical and memorable old-growth tracts), coasts, off-shore waters, lakes, and alpine habitats in search of New Zealand’s endemic bird species.

Arriving in Bluff, just south of Invercargill at the south end of the South Island, we shed our gear for a few days and enjoyed a walk-on trip on the ferry to the tranquil and delightful Stewart Island. On Stewart, we experienced kiwis on a nocturnal walk, watched Little Penguins emerge at dusk from their daily ocean voyage, watched an albatross feeding frenzy, and experienced the delight of the predator-free Ulva Island, all without driving a single kilometer in our van! Upon our return to the South Island, we wound up the trip in the lake town of Te Anau, where we were rewarded with a full-on Aurora Australis at night over the lake, exploration of the scenic Eglington Valley, and a classic Milford Sound cruise. The tour ended in the lovely university town of Dunedin, where the trip concluded with a wet, but enjoyable, boat trip around Taiaroa Head to see a nesting colony of Northern Royal Albatross.

This tour truly had so many highlights it was nearly impossible to comment on them all. Impressive habitats included ancient old-growth podocarp and southern beech forests (thankfully saved from cutting by far-sighted conservationists), the critically important “wintering” shorebird habitats at Pukorokoro Miranda, and the most classic pelagic birding and wildlife-watching waters in the world. Of the birds, we found almost all of the avian, endemic, “target” species we were looking for; of the few missed, we tried very, very hard for them. Best birds depend, of course, on the viewer, but we admired the widespread, but incredibly showy Tui; had a great night with several Southern Brown Kiwis; had great views of a total of 17 Procellariiform species (tubenoses), many at very close range from boats; enjoyed the well-known antics of a Kea or two; found several Rifleman and a pair of South Island Wren (aka, Rock Wren) which are members of the family of the very earliest-evolved Passerines; saw all three extant species of Wattlebirds (Kokako and Saddleback); and twitched a rare Maned Duck from Australia. We literally could not have asked for more from this tour or our incredible guide Richard.

BIRDS 118 species were recorded of which 42 were endemic and 23 were introduced.

The eBird link below details the 118 species of birds our group observed during the tour. If you’re new to eBird, be sure

to click "Show All Details" on the right side of the list to expand the report and reveal where and when each of the birds were seen and how many.

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### MAMMALS (6):

**New Zealand Fur Seal** *Arctocephalus forsteri* — Seen frequently at several coast sites or on boat trips; probably most numerous at the Ohau Point Lookout and seal colony just north of Kaikoura

**New Zealand Sea Lion** *Phocarcos hookeri* — Large male seen loafing on a beach during the Halfmoon Bay boat trip

**Hector's Dolphin** *Cephalorhynchus hectori* — Several seen on the Taiaroa Head boat trip

**Dusky Dolphin** *Sagmatias obscurus* — Several seen on the Kaikoura Albatross Encounter boat trip

**European Hare (I)** *Lepus europaeus* — Several seen at Arthur's Pass Wilderness Lodge

**European Rabbit (I)** *Oryctolagus cuniculus* — Encountered numerous times during the trip

### **LOCATIONS AND NOTES:**

Day 1: Wednesday, Jan. 7; Muriwai Gannett Colony, Tarawhanui Reserve, Auckland

Day 2: Thursday, Jan 8; Tiritiri Matangi, Auckland

Day 3: Friday, Jan. 9; Pukorokoro Miranda Shorebird Centre, Waimangu Volcanic Valley, Rotorua

Day 4: Saturday, Jan. 10; Lake Rotorua, Whakamaru Dam, Pureora Forest, Tokaanu Wharf Road, Majors Bridge, Whakapapa

Day 5: Sunday, Jan. 11; drive to Wellington, ferry to South Island, Picton

Day 6: Monday, Jan. 12; Marlborough Sounds, Blumine Island, Blenheim WTP, Lake Elterwater, Ohau Point Lookout, Kaikoura

Day 7: Tuesday, Jan. 13; Kaikoura, Albatross Encounter

Day 8: Wednesday, Jan. 14; Waikuku Beach/Ashley Estuary, Maned Duck "twitch", Arthur's Pass Wilderness Lodge

Day 9: Thursday, Jan 15; Arthur's Pass Wilderness Lodge

Day 10: Friday, Jan. 16; Arthur's Pass Village, Castle Hill, Peel Forest, Lake Murray, Lake McGregor, Twizel

Day 11: Saturday, Jan. 17; Ohau C Ponds, Lake Pukaki/Glentanner, Aoraki/Governor's Bush Track, Mueller Lookout Walk, Lake Ohau Road, Twizel

Day 12: Sunday, Jan. 18; Lake Ohau Road, Tarras/Lake Dunstan, ferry to Stewart Island, Oban, kiwi spotting

Day 13: Monday, Jan. 19; Halfmoon Bay, Ulva Island, penguin spotting, Oban

Day 14: Tuesday, Jan. 20; ferry to Bluff (South Island), Eglington Valley, Te Anau

Day 15: Wednesday, , Jan. 21; Mirror Lakes, Homer Tunnel, Milford Sound, Te Anau

Day 16: Thursday, , Jan 22; Te Anau Bird Sanctuary, Dunedin, Tairoa Head boat trip

Day 17: Friday, Jan. 23; Dunedin, departures