



*New Zealand*

# A TWITCHER'S PARADISE!

*People from all over the world flock to see the unique birdlife to be found in New Zealand. Captain Cook, on one of his visits in the 1700s, described the birdsong he heard as deafening!*

In the first of a two-part series, we look at the South Island and Stewart Island in terms of the people and companies who can take visitors up close to some of the rarest birds found anywhere in the world. Some of the most passionate people and most successful bird conservation projects are working to ensure that our amazing birdlife will be here for generations to come. >

Buller's albatross





Spotted kiwi

There is increasing recognition that birdlife is a very important part of our tourism industry, and is one of the reasons why people — local and international — want to get into our wonderful outdoors to catch a glimpse of birds that are endemic to New Zealand.

There are plenty of options for the traveller or bird enthusiast, but the best way of seeing some of our rarest birdlife in a variety of settings, is to join up with some of our specialist tour operators. These are usually run by some of the most knowledgeable and passionate ‘bird people’ to be found anywhere, and it’s by linking up with them that you’ll be virtually guaranteed sightings and amazing photo opportunities of some of the most endangered birds in the world.

The New Zealand Birding Network is a group of operators located throughout the country who offer bird-watching orientated tours, excursions and accommodation, along with sanctuaries and conservation programmes.

Paul Keating, owner-operator of E-Ko Tours in the Marlborough Sounds, has been in the business of showing people the natural wildlife of the area for more than 15 years. He rates sightings of two of the rarest birds in the world — the king shag and the rowi (kiwi) — as highlights for his visitors, with the rowi growing in numbers thanks to a recovery programme on Motuara Island in Queen Charlotte Sound. > continued p54

**TWITCHER?**

A twitcher is someone who travels long distances specifically for the purposes of seeing rare birds, and who usually has a list of target birds which can be ticked off, an activity similar to the traditional train spotting pastime. According to Wikipedia, the term originated in the 1950s when it was used to describe the nervous behaviour of British birdwatcher, Howard Medhurst.



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# The New Zealand Birding Network

w. [birdingnz.co.nz](http://birdingnz.co.nz)

If you’re at a loss to know where you can see different bird species throughout New Zealand, you’ll be pleased to find that the New Zealand Birding Network can help.

The network was set up 16 years ago to point people in the direction of New Zealand birds. Back then it was difficult to find adequate information in one place about birdwatching in New Zealand, but a lot has changed and that’s no longer the case.

There are currently 46 network members spaced from Paihia in the north to Stewart Island in the south, who’ve joined together to promote New Zealand as one of the world’s unique bird watching destinations – a destination that boasts beautiful back drops and some very special species, some of which are endemic to New Zealand.

Members of the Birding Network offer a range of bird watching experiences over the whole country. There are tours by tractor and trailer, tours by specially designed 4WD vehicles, kayaks, boats and buses. There are tours that are fully guided or some that are a simple journey of self-discovery where you can guide yourself.

Whatever your preference may be, the Birding Network can provide the answers and the opportunities to learn about and enjoy the birds



that live around us and share our environment with us.

Some are in need of protection, some are thriving, but all of them require our care and our commitment to ensure they’re able to flourish in the years ahead.

One key attribute that is held by all network members is that they operate unique tours and experiences, which focus on New Zealand’s magnificent birds, and they all possess a desire to share these opportunities with you.

From the ocean to the bush, the coastline to the mountains, and the lakes, rivers, national parks and fiords in between, get into birdwatching and discover some of New Zealand’s most pristine areas while learning about the natural environment around you.

You’ll be enriched and rewarded as a result.

# All New Zealand Birds can be found in one place!

**Have you ever wanted to see New Zealand’s significant bird species but not been sure where to find them?**

Check out [www.birdingnz.co.nz](http://www.birdingnz.co.nz) for comprehensive information about birding tour operators throughout New Zealand.

Experience the beauty and diversity of our unique birdlife; learn from the experts and get off the beaten track to some very spectacular locations.

**Make a Birding Tour a big part of your next trip!**



[www.birdingnz.co.nz](http://www.birdingnz.co.nz)







Spoon Bill, Okari Estuary



Southern royal albatross, photo Ewen Bell

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Stew Robertson at the helm of Abel Tasman Eco Tours, is another passionate local keen to show visitors the abundant bird, animal and insect life to be found in and around the forests, beaches and rivers of this amazing National Park.

Not far away is the Resurgence Luxury Eco-lodge (in 2013 voted as one of the world's best eco-lodges), nestled in 20ha of bush adjacent to Kahurangi National Park. Owners, Peter and Clare are only too happy to arrange birding and nature trips as well as kayaking, hiking and boat tours. Peter is chairman of the Friends of Flora, one of New Zealand's largest community conservation projects. With nearby Farewell Spit and Golden Bay a World Heritage site for migratory birds, it's not hard to see why this is an absolute paradise lodge for the nature lover.

Albatross Encounter in Kaikoura started off in 1989 offering marine mammal tours, but instigators Lynette Buurman and the renowned Gary Melville, saw the need for seabird tours. Lynette says the business started because she had a boat and Gary had the bird expertise, so they started taking people offshore to see the abundant bird life off the coast.

"Our most active markets are the UK, Europe, Australia and America with increasing numbers coming from Asia," she says. "We're getting more requests from photography groups so we now provide facilities for those wishing to better their photography skills." > continued p54



The cheeky kea, the second most intelligent bird in the world

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## Albatross Encounter – Kaikoura

p. 03 319 6777 or 0800 733 365 w. [encounterkaikoura.co.nz](http://encounterkaikoura.co.nz)



Kaikoura offers the greater variety of different types of seabirds within a small area, than anywhere else along the New Zealand coastline.

One of the reasons for the large number of different species of seabirds, is the presence of a deep water trench (the Kaikoura Canyon) close inshore. Upwellings of cold, nutrient-rich water over the shallower coastal waters, produce and sustain a vibrant food chain supporting a large variety of fish species, marine mammals and seabirds.

The species you'll see include albatross, shearwater, petrel and many others.

You can see five varieties of great albatross: the wandering, the antipodean, Gibson's, northern royal and the southern royal.

As well, nine varieties of the smaller lesser albatross (sometimes referred to as mollymawks) can be seen - white capped, Sub Antarctic black browed, Campbell Island, Salvins and Bullers are the most commonly sighted species.

Seven varieties of shearwater can be seen including flesh-footed, Buller's, sooty, short-tailed, fluttering and Hutton's, and there are 14 Petrel varieties including Westland, common diving, white-chinned, southern giant, northern giant and Wilson's storm petrel.

Many varieties of other seabirds can be found in the area such as shags, prions, penguins, gulls and terns.

The best way to see and learn about this diverse range of birdlife is to take an Albatross Encounter tour. The business was established in

1998 to specifically offer seabird watching by boat, usually all within 15 minutes of Kaikoura.

The company says some of the species are in decline and this makes it even more of a focus to share the magnificence of these majestic birds with as many people as possible. Learning about these seabirds and the environment they live in, their foraging habits, their courtship rituals and their desire to find a mate for life, are just some of the fascinating facts that enthrall the visitor.

The tours operate all year round and there are some seasonal variations of species which occur. The Kaikoura coastline is a superb backdrop that sets the scene for outstanding photography.

Prepare to be exhilarated, inspired and enlightened when you see first-hand the array of seabirds so close to shore.



## Albatross Encounter Kaikoura, New Zealand.

Kaikoura is regarded as the best place in the world to see seabirds.

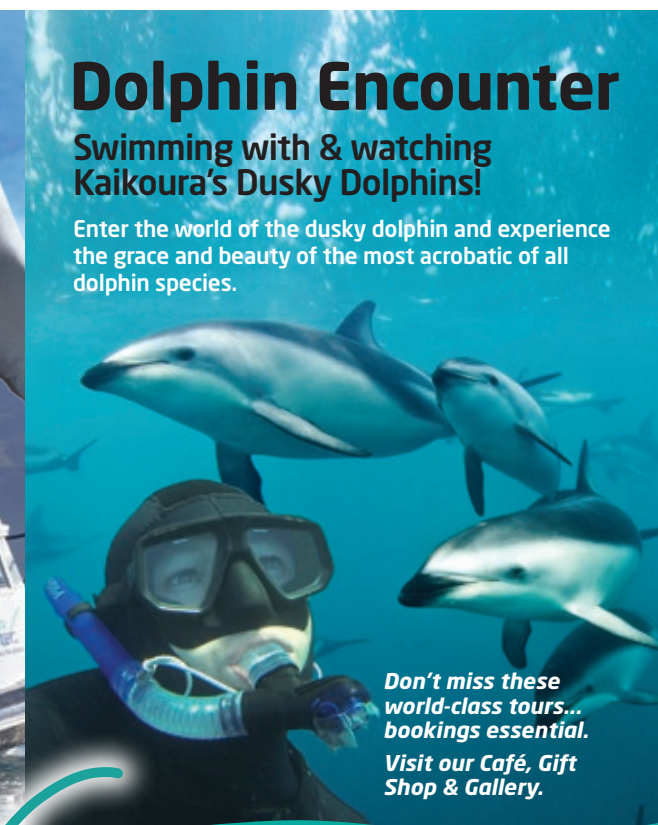
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Coastal and inland Westland is renowned for its unspoilt habitat of unique flora and fauna. The Ōkārito Lagoon, 130kms south of Hokitika, covers 12 square kilometres and is New Zealand's largest unmodified wetland. When gold was discovered there in the mid-1860s, the population of the town reached 1500, but now less than 30 die-hard locals live there. Ōkārito is a haven for birdwatchers, hikers, kayakers and photographers with views of the Southern Alps and Aoraki/Mt Cook providing stunning backdrops.

Paula and Swade Sheridan run Ōkārito Boat Tours, and Swade, who has lived on the West Coast for more than 40 years, recommends a number of tours including the two-hour nature tour in the afternoon or their overnighter, which offers a restful stay in a cottage by the sea.

> continued p56



Yellow eyed penguins watch the Spirit of Enderby arrive in the Auckland Islands



White heron with two chicks, Whataroa, Westland

## Heritage Expeditions

p. 0800 262 8873 e. enderby@hotmail.com

*Are you aged 18-30? Do you have an interest in wildlife, conservation, eco-systems and a sense of adventure? If so, this could be your calling...*

Heritage Expeditions will once again be welcoming Enderby Trust Scholarship recipients on board our vessel to explore the Southern Ocean with us this season.

Founded by the Russ family, the Enderby Trust allows people aged between 18 and 30 to experience the same spirit of exploration and discovery as those who joined the early vessels that sailed these seas. By offering scholarship opportunities for young people to visit this remote region, the Trustees hope participants will share their experiences and enthusiasm with other people and grow awareness of the Southern Ocean.



Inspiring new generations to appreciate and protect the astounding natural biodiversity in this region and protect the important wildlife that live here, will provide strong advocates for future conservation in this region.

This year, scholarships will be available to the subantarctic islands of New Zealand and Australia, and for one very lucky scholarship recipient, a berth will be available to Antarctica.

Full details about the expedition, including dates and prices, will be released in August. Please contact enderby@hotmail.com to register your interest, or visit our Facebook page: www.facebook.com/HeritageExpeditions and click on the Enderby Trust Scholarships App where we'll be posting details as soon as they're released.

## BIRDING EXPEDITIONS IN THE SOUTHERN OCEAN

For the past 30 years, Heritage Expeditions has pioneered voyages to the most interesting parts of the planet. Our goal is to increase awareness and conservation of the natural world through responsible expedition travel.

### Antarctica from New Zealand

From massive penguin rookeries and colossal ice shelves to historic huts and scientific bases, each day is an epic adventure of discovery. In the Ross Sea of Antarctica, whether you're a polar history buff, photographer, wildlife enthusiastic or simply an adventurous spirit, this is the expedition for you. Step inside Shackleton and Scott's Huts, zodiac cruise the Ross Ice Shelf, be warmly welcomed at Antarctic bases, whale watch from the bow and cruise the ice edge on the lookout for photogenic Emperor Penguins, lazing seals and spectacular orca. Expeditions priced from US\$22,300 pp.

**Ross Sea: In the wake of Scott and Shackleton:**  
11 Jan – 9 Feb 2017 & 10 Feb – 11 Mar 2017

**Extended 35 day expedition to the Ross Sea and Bay of Whales:** 9 Feb – 15 Mar 2017

We are also taking bookings for our next **East Antarctic expeditions to Commonwealth Bay**  
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### Subantarctic Expeditions

This summer, explore the remote and wild Subantarctic Islands south of New Zealand, including Australia's own Macquarie Island – home to endemic Royal Penguins and curious elephant seal pups. Expeditions leave between November and January, priced from US\$4,300 pp.

**Birding Down Under:** Macquarie Island and the New Zealand Subantarctics,  
16 Nov – 4 Dec 2016

**Forgotten Islands of the South Pacific:**  
16 – 23 Dec 2016 & 4 – 11 Jan 2017

**Galapagos of the Southern Ocean:**  
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## Elm Wildlife Tours

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Our tours enable small groups to visit amazing wildlife spots on the Otago Peninsula, the most spectacular being our restricted-access private conservation sanctuary, where close-up viewing of some of the world's rarest wildlife is available.

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Whataroa in South Westland is the starting point of boat tours to New Zealand's only white heron (kōtuku) nesting place. White Heron Sanctuary Tours, operated by Dion Arnold and members of his family in association with the Department of Conservation, is the only tour to actually visit the nesting site, which is deep within the Waitangiroto Nature Reserve, and only accessible by boat.

The Otago coast and peninsula is alive with marine life, perhaps the most popular being the blue and yellow eyed penguins which can be seen at their waddling, comical best at Oamaru's Blue Penguin Centre or with Elm Tours, which has a private conservation sanctuary for the birds.

Further south, Stewart and Ulva Islands offer some of the most natural habitat for some of New Zealand's most endangered bird species. Sails Ashore and Kowhai Lane Lodge offer



A much needed recovery programme is underway for the endangered Kakapo, endemic to NZ and one of the rarest birds in the world. Photo John Burke

**SOUTH ISLAND SNAPBOX**

**Wairau Lagoon** – over 90 species of birds including the weird looking royal spoonbill (kōtuku ngutupapa)

**Brancott Estate Heritage Centre** – with its breeding programme for the New Zealand falcon (kārearea)

**Kaikoura** – a coastal marine wildlife extravaganza

**Orokonui Eco Sanctuary (Dunedin)** – a haven for the south Westland kiwi species rowi and Haast kiwi or tokoeka

**Ōkārito Lagoon** – home to Ōkārito brown kiwi (rowi).and the White Heron and 70 more species

**Oamaru and Dunedin** – Blue and yellow-eyed penguin colonies

**Ulva Island** – predator-free, a photographer's paradise for rare and endangered birds



Under the canopy of rainforest and towering Southern Alps lies NZ's largest unmodified wetland - home to wading and forest birds and feeding grounds for migratory species. Watch white herons stalk their prey alongside pied stilts, godwits and spoonbills and the more elusive fernbirds and bitterns in the reeds and rushes.

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accommodation and guided tours with hosts Peter and Iris Tait who can claim more than 70 years of Stewart Island residency between them!

Ruggedy Range Wilderness Experience offers authentic natural history and birding adventures with plenty of photo opportunities. Their experienced guides are keen to share their knowledge of the nocturnal and diurnal kiwi, albatross, penguins and petrel, all of which you're bound to see at some stage during your stay there.

The South Island and Stewart Island are ideal for bird lovers and photographers to get up close to some of the world's rarest birds. The people who will take you to them, the scenery and natural habitat and the beauty of the birds and other wildlife, will provide you with some of the most memorable experiences and photos you'll encounter anywhere in the world. 🌐

## Are You Interested In Birds?



and regional level. We help fund studies and support the wider knowledge and enjoyment of birds. We encourage members to learn more about birds, where to find and how to study them. We publish the quarterly scientific journal Notornis and the popular magazine Birds New Zealand.

## Please Join Us !

**Birds New Zealand Research Fund**

This important national fund is managed by Birds New Zealand on behalf of a New Zealand Charitable Trust. We invite applications from individuals or organisations prepared to make a difference through ornithological research, with outcomes likely to provide for better management of New Zealand birds or their environment. This year's closing date is 1 September 2016.

For details visit: [www.osnz.org.nz/Birds-New-Zealand-Research-Fund](http://www.osnz.org.nz/Birds-New-Zealand-Research-Fund)



- Receive Birds New Zealand and Notornis for FREE!
- Participate in bird activities
- Membership fees start from \$35

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Birds New Zealand is a voluntary charitable society that depends on the enthusiasm, active participation, knowledge and financial support of its members. We encourage and promote the study of birds by organising projects and activities at national



Variety of southern ocean albatross with the black-browed albatross in foreground; photo: Ewen Bell

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