

Tour report

11 – 31 October 2025

21-day tour with Wrybill Birding Tours, NZ & Maryland Ornithological Society



Takahe by the Tiritiri Matangi Lighthouse. Mathieu Poot.

Led by Mathieu Poot, Wrybill Birding Tours, NZ

Participants

Diane Durham, Steve Krupa, Kurt Schwarz, Carla Roverse, Maryanne Dolan, Meg Parry, Georgia McDonald, Dan McDonald

Images

Diane Durham, Kurt Schwarz and Mathieu Poot

What a fantastic tour of New Zealand! We had a mix of everything along the way – great people, amazing food, good weather, seriously bad weather, great birds and a few unfortunate dips.

The highlights of the trip are too many to list, but the Southern Brown Kiwi was definitely up there, with some amazing interactions with several birds. Unearthing a young Little Blue Penguin, much to its surprise and mine, was another special interaction. Crazy views of Spotless Crake, great pelagics, Kokako on Tiritiri Matangi, staking out Penguins, a lot of memorable moments along the way.

The birds didn't always make it easy for us, with Orange-fronted Parakeet, Black-fronted Dotterel and Southern Royal Albatross requiring extra effort on our behalf. And despite our best efforts, some birds did not show, leading to a couple of dips such as Long-tailed Cuckoo and Baillon's Crake.

The weather, and subsequent weather-related road closures, kept us on our feet! We were held back a day and turned around various times, missing the West Coast and some of the Far South, and witnessed New Zealand's four seasons in full power. This unfortunately led to another couple of dips – Kea and Okarito Kiwi – but we made the most of the hand we were dealt. Luckily all the wind and rain was contrasted by lots of beautiful sunny days.

We finished the trip on 148 species, inc Long-tailed Cuckoo heard only. Bird of the trip was the Southern Brown Kiwi, with Black Stilt and Little Blue Penguin the runners up.

Thanks to everyone for joining the trip, and a special thanks to Diane and Kurt for the amazing photographs.

Mathieu Poot (Wrybill Birding Tours, NZ Leader)

11 October 2025 – Day One

We packed up the van and departed from our central Auckland hotel, making our way to a Kauri Forest patch. There we spotted our first endemics, including New Zealand (NZ) Pigeon, Kaka, and Tui. We also noted a few Australian introductions, adding Eastern Rosellas and Sulphur-crested Cockatoos to our list.

Next, we headed to our first bakery - quite chaotic, but we were in and out in a reasonable time – before we headed on to the lunch spot. We enjoyed our meal at a picturesque beach, watching NZ Dotterels and Variable Oystercatchers on the beach, and Grey Gerygone and Tui in the bushes nearby. We went down the road to our first Poo Ponds (wastewater treatment plant) for the trip, and added NZ Scaup, Australasian Shoveler and NZ Grebe to the list.



New Zealand Dotterel. Diane Durham.

Our next destination was a predator-fenced reserve where we took a walk through the bush by a stream. Along the track we found Bellbird, North Island Robin, Whitehead and North Island Saddleback. We saw Brown Teal in the creek, Brown Quail in the sand dunes and a Shining Cuckoo calling from a tree.



North Island Robin. Diane Durham.



Shining Cuckoo. Kurt Schwarz.

12 October 2025 – Day Two

With our first pelagic coming up, we headed down to the local marina. A Banded Rail on the lawn was a nice surprise, before we parked the van and boarded our boat. As we ventured into the Hauraki Gulf, we began to see Fluttering and Buller's Shearwaters, Gannets, and as we got deeper, Flesh-footed Shearwaters and Cook's Petrel.

We arrived at our chumming spot and soon had White-faced and New Zealand Storm-petrels, Fairy Prion, Black Petrel and White-capped Albatross all join the days tally. Some great birds and a fantastic start to our Pelagic Adventures. Flybys from Short-tailed, Sooty and Little Shearwater, Pycroft's Petrel and Common Diving-Petrel completed a great day.



NZ Storm-petrel. Diane Durham.

13 October 2025 – Day Three

We woke up, had breakfast and hit the road, heading straight out to a local beach. Several Brown Quail were feeding by the carpark as we arrived. Setting off along the beach, we passed Red-billed Gulls and Variable Oystercatchers. Part way down, we saw a NZ Pipit scurrying around in the dunes, followed by several more as we continued walking. Reaching a small estuary, we observed Pied Stilts and Paradise Shelducks. This area sometimes yielded Fairy Tern – a big target for the day - but it was not to be today!



Red-billed Gull. Kurt Schwarz.

We headed to a large estuary to continue our search for the Terns. We looked over exposed mudflats, with birds feeding along the waterline. We saw Kelp Gulls and Red-bills, plus Bar-tailed Godwits. After some scanning, we spotted a distant white bird hovering over shallow water. Fairy Tern! It stayed distant and was moving fast, but everyone got long-range flight views before the it flew off towards the mouth of the estuary.

We jumped back into the van and headed north, soon stopping at a smaller estuary. A Banded Rail ran into the undergrowth ahead of us, and we saw Bar-tailed Godwit, NZ Dotterel and Ruddy Turnstone on a sandspit.



NZ Pipit. Kurt Schwarz.



Australasian Little Grebe. Diane Durham.

We stopped in at a small lake where we enjoyed great views of both New Zealand Dabchick (Grebe) and Australasian Little Grebe. We observed Aussie Little Grebes building and maintaining their nests, as well as Brown Teal and Black Swans with cygnets.

Upon arriving at our accommodation, we checked in, had dinner, and then ventured out for our first round of Kiwi spotting! We went for a walk from the van, soon finding our first North Island Brown Kiwi. We then saw a chick, which hunkered down in the bushes, followed by another adult. We heard more calling, as well as Morepork, and the stars put on an incredible show.

14 October 2025 – Day Four

We rose early and were out the door! This time headed south for our second pelagic trip, with the conditions looking good once again.

We arrived at the marina, collected our lunch for the day and headed out to sea. Red Knots and South Island Oystercatchers were feeding on the mudflats by the harbour entrance, and we circled around a small island, adding Pacific Reef Heron to the list.



Heading out to Sea. Mathieu Poot.

Exiting the harbour, we turned towards the open sea, heading for the ocean side of several nearby Islands. Buller's, Flesh-footed & Fluttering Shearwater flew past the boat, along with the occasional Little Shearwater and Common Diving-petrel. Upon reaching our chumming location, it didn't take long for the birds to arrive. Black Petrel and Flesh-footed Shearwater surrounded the boat, with various other species flying by. White-faced Storm-petrel began appearing in the slick, and before long, we had a NZ Storm-petrel. Next, a Pintado (Cape) Petrel arrived, an uncommon bird to find this far north, and Grey-faced Petrels made flybys throughout the day.

We had lunch floating by a nearby island, hearing Red-crowned Parakeets and North Island Saddleback, before heading back into shore. Then it was back to the motel and off to dinner, with another busy day coming up.

15 October 2025 – Day Five

Another early start saw us driving south to a marina, unloading our bags and getting onto a ferry. Our destination was Tiritiri Matangi Island, one of the crown jewels of NZ's conservation estate.

Arriving on the island, we listened to the Welcome Introduction, with Bellbird, Red-crowned Parakeet, and Tui flying in the background. As we began our walk, we quickly spotted several Stitchbird at a sugar feeder, along with North Island Saddleback. The forest was filled with North Island Robins, NZ Pigeons, Whitehead, and various other birds as we strolled along the paths.



Stitchbird. Diane Durham.



NZ Pigeon. Kurt Schwarz.



North Island Kokako. Diane Durham.



Fernbird. Diane Durham.

After checking in and stopping for lunch at the Bunkhouse, we took a few hours to relax during the heat of the day. Some visited the small shop, others took a nap and some read a book inside.

When we set out for our afternoon walk, the island was quieter, as day visitors and school groups had departed. However, the birds were out in force, and we soon spotted our first Kokako! A foraging pair – one on the ground and another in a tree - offered fantastic views. Reaching the northern end of the island, we encountered another Kokako and several Fernbirds before exiting the forest into a more open area. A large patch of Flax was alive with Red-crowned Parakeet, Bellbird and Tui, all flitting around and landing on the flowers. As we made our way back to the bunkhouse, we were happy to come across a Takahe – a large, colourful, flightless Rail, thought to have been extinct for many years.

After a few drinks and a traditional BBQ dinner, we felt refuelled and ready to pursue our next Kiwi species - the Little Spotted Kiwi. We heard several call as we headed down the hill, but on reaching the coast we had found no sign of them and headed back up the hill. Several of the group headed to bed at this point, while some stayed out for another lap. So, it was back down the hill, where we were soon stopped by some rustling in the bushes beside the track - Little Spotted Kiwi! After admiring the Kiwi, we finished our walk to the coast, seeing another Kiwi and pausing for several Little Blue Penguins to walk past us. Then it was back to the bunkhouse, seeing a third Kiwi along the way. Several people opted to sleep outside, falling asleep with stars overhead and Kiwi calling in the distance.

16 October 2025 – Day Six

While some of the group opted for a sleep in, the rest of the group rose at first light and took a walk to enjoy the dawn chorus. We enjoyed the early morning bird song as we walked along the paths, listening to Saddleback, Bellbirds, Whitehead and Kokako.

Back at the bunkhouse, everyone was waking up and having breakfast. After getting ready, packing our bags, and loading the truck, we hit the tracks again. Following now familiar paths we headed down to the wharf, where it was soon time to board the water taxi and leave the island. Once on the mainland we retrieved the van and continued south, stopping for lunch and for Indian Peafowl along the way.

Arriving at our accommodation, we saw a lone Eastern Cattle Egret associating with a group of White-faced Herons. We checked in and had few hours of downtime, allowing for washing, swimming, and relaxation, before heading out in the afternoon.

A short drive down the road had us arriving at one of NZ's best shorebird sites, with huge flocks of swirling birds already visible as we exited the van. Making our way to a hide, we spotted thousands of Bar-tailed Godwits and hundreds of Red Knots blanketing the mudflats. Continuing further, we found a large group of Wrybill, the company's namesake bird! They were accompanied by a lone Double-banded Plover, several Sharp-tailed Sandpiper and a Red-necked Stint. We checked out another hide, finding a roost of Black-billed Gulls, as well as Royal Spoonbills and a NZ Dotterel.

17 October 2025 – Day Seven

With a big drive ahead, we loaded into the van and soon reached our first stop - a wetland. We scoped it from a hide, locating two glossy Ibis amongst the regular wetland birds. A Great Cormorant was roosting in a distant tree and a flock of Cattle Egrets fed around some cattle nearby.

After a big drive, we picked up some lunch before arriving at a large patch of forest. This area of old-growth native forest held several interesting endemics and served as our main birding location for the day. We had lunch at the forest's edge, observing Kaka and NZ Pigeon flying around before venturing deeper into the forest. Our first target was the Yellow-fronted Parakeet, and after some patience, we enjoyed excellent views of these bright little birds. We saw plenty of Kaka and NZ Pigeons and enjoyed the impressive forest, before it was time to search for our next big target of the day - the Long-tailed Cuckoo. We slowly cruised down a long gravel road, listening for their distinctive call. After stopping the van and stepping out to listen more carefully, we heard a distant bird calling. We waited for some time but were unable to get sight of it.

We pressed on in search of our next big bird – the Blue Duck – and soon arrived at a large river. With no luck at the first spot, we moved upstream and walked across a small bridge. We looked down the river and there it was! A quick reposition and we soon had a Blue Duck in the scope. A great way to end a busy day!



Yellow-crowned Parakeet. Kurt Schwarz.



Blue Duck in the scope. Mathieu Poot.

18 October 2025 – Day Eight

We started the day early, arriving at a large reedbed just at dawn, where we heard the faint booming of a Bittern as we jumped out of the van. We walked down a gravel road amongst the reeds, seeing Mallard in the ponds and Great Cormorant flying overhead. We then spotted an Australasian Bittern creeping through a patch of low reeds – a great bird to add to the list! A brief walk to the edge of a lake rewarded us with sightings of Fernbird, NZ Scaup, and Black-billed Gulls.

We stopped in for coffee before returning to our accommodation. We had a bit of time to pack up and enjoy breakfast, before we were back in the van, ready to hit the road.

Our first stop was another beautiful patch of forest. We took a walk, enjoying the trees once again, but finding it a little light on the birds. We saw several Whiteheads and North Island Robins, before we called it and continued on our drive.

Next, we visited a large estuary which yielded Double-banded Plover, Pied Stilt, NZ Dotterel and Red-necked Stint. We also saw several Rooks flying past, spotted by Kurt, on the walk out.

After checking into our accommodation, we headed out for a delicious dinner.

19 October 2025 – Day Nine

We started our day at a coastal estuary, featuring a muddy tidal creek that empties into a lagoon. We enjoyed seeing Royal Spoonbills feeding in the mud while we searched for our first big target of the day – the Spotless Crake. We first heard one calling in the reeds, then saw it briefly, before we located another feeding in the open on the mud. Fantastic extended views of this usually secretive species!

We carried on, seeing a Great Egret on route to the next spot. Black-fronted Dotterel was the next big target and after the first few locations were unsuccessful, we weren't feeling super confident. We decided to try one last spot, heading down into a riverbed. With the booms of bird canons from the neighbouring construction yard in our ears, we headed down the river and soon found our target running around on the far bank. With great scope views, we were very happy to get this species in the bag.

We crossed from the East to the West Coast, stopping along the way for a pair of Rooks and some lunch. Then we arrived at our accommodation, checked in and headed out to the local estuary. Double-banded Plover, Wrybill and Red-necked Stint were picked out from amongst the distant Bar-tailed Godwit flock. Then it was dinnertime and off to bed, ready for another big day of travelling tomorrow.



Spotless Crake. Kurt Schwarz.

20 October 2025 – Day Ten

We awoke to a clear day and began our journey towards the capital city to catch our ferry to the South Island. Along the way, we stopped at an estuary and went for a walk, observing NZ Scaup, Variable Oystercatchers, and White-fronted Terns. At the end of a sand spit, a lone Wrybill was running along the water's edge, nearby to some roosting Gulls. At a nearby lagoon, we saw three species of Cormorant – Pied, Little Pied and Little Black – before it was time to get back in the van and continue South.

Upon arriving at the ferry terminal, we lined up and loaded onto the ferry, where we were fed and went out on deck. Several delays had us waiting onboard for some time, before we finally cast off and headed towards the Strait. In the harbour, we saw Red-billed Gulls, White-fronted Terns, and Fluttering Shearwaters, and shortly after entering the Strait, we started spotting some great birds. We added White-capped and Salvin's Albatross to our list and enjoyed fantastic comparison views of Hutton's and Fluttering Shearwater flying side by side. We also saw Sooty and Flesh-footed Shearwater, Fairy Prion and a lone Northern Royal Albatross as we continued the crossing.

We entered the Malbrough Sounds, seeing Parasitic Jaegers hassling Terns and Spotted Shags on the cliffs, as we sailed through the beautiful forested hills.



Little Black Shag. Kurt Schwarz.



The crew on the Ferry. Random Stranger.

21 October 2025 – Day Eleven

We awoke to a very wet and windy day and took a short walk down to the marina, where we boarded our boat and set off into the Sounds. We quickly encountered White-fronted Terns and Fluttering Shearwaters feeding in the rain, with several Little Blue Penguins nearby. We watched a Parasitic Jaeger chasing White-fronted Terns again, and visited a Spotted Shag roost. And nearby was a lone King Shag! This species is the rarest cormorant in the world, with a population of only 600-700, and is only found in the Marlborough Sounds, so it was an exciting bird to add to our list!



King Shag. Diane Durham.

We bashed our way out to a predator-free Island and disembarked to go for a walk. We saw several very wet Weka, a NZ Pigeon and several Bellbirds, but overall it was very quiet in the incremental rain. Mat found a baby Penguin under a log, while looking for bugs, with both him and the Penguin getting quite a surprise! A short walk yielded several Orange-fronted Parakeets, a rare endemic twice declared extinct and the main target for the island.

Back on the mainland, we grabbed some pies for lunch and hit the road, soon arriving at our first stop - the local poo ponds. We spotted nest-building Royal Spoonbill, as well as hundreds of Black Swans, Australasian Shoveler and Grey Teal. At one point we had 27 Glossy Ibis fly overhead, equalling the NZ high count for this species.

Our next stop was a lake where we found Hoary-headed Grebe, a new native restricted to this area. We also saw Great-crested Grebe, Australasian Shoveler, Grey Teal, and NZ Scaup. Several Fire trucks sped past as we were loading back into the van – an ominous premonition for the next few days.



Hoary-headed Grebe. Diane Durham.

We headed South and soon came up on a large line of traffic. The police told us that the fierce winds had started several fires in the direction we were headed and that the road was closed. Bugger! We pulled into a café and soon had a backup plan in motion – we were heading back the way we had come and would stay there for the night. Hopefully to resume our regular scheduling tomorrow!

22 October 2025 – Day Twelve

After calling the local Police Station, and confirming that the road was open, we were in the van and back in action.

We stopped in at a NZ Fur Seal Colony, where we watched pups playing in shallow pools and big males basking on the rocks. Silver Gulls, White-fronted Terns and Spotted Shags were nesting on the nearby rocks, and hundreds of Hutton's Shearwaters flew offshore. A fly-by from a Northern Giant Petrel was also a nice surprise.

As we approached the town, we started seeing evidence of yesterday's fires. Fire trucks putting out flare ups, houses burnt to the ground and powerlines down after their poles had burnt. A sobering sight and very evident as to why we couldn't come through last night.

We arrived at the location for our next Pelagic (which was meant to be earlier that morning, but we had re-booked for the afternoon). Heading out to sea, White-capped Albatross and a Northern Giant Petrel began following the boat. We started chumming and soon had White-capped and a few Salvin's Albatross surrounding the boat. White-chinned, Westland and Pintado (Cape) Petrel, as well as Hutton's and Sooty Shearwater all made appearances as well. The local Dusky Dolphins put on an impressive show as we headed back to shore.



Dusky Dolphin. Diane Durham.

After enjoying a traditional Kiwi dinner of Fish and Chips, we headed out in search of our next Owl – an introduced crepuscular species called the Little Owl. We slowly cruised quiet farm roads, looking and listening, but with light beginning to fade had had no luck. We opted to get out of the car in a promising spot and after a little patience, a Little Owl flew up into the tree next to us!

23 October 2025 – Day Thirteen

With a big day ahead, we hit the road south, making a large estuary our first stop. We walked along the shore, finding feeding Royal Spoonbill and several long-staying vagrant Little Egrets and Black-fronted Terns. With the wind increasing, we headed off to start making our way inland, seeing a Mute Swan in a Creek along the way.

Leaving the estuary, we turned towards the Southern Alps, feeling the power of the increasing wind as we went. After passing blown over trees and sheds, we stopped to grab lunch at a famous local pie shop. As we were having lunch, we heard news that Arthur's Pass (the road we were about to take) was closed, once again due to wind. Cue another change of plan! We did a 180 and started heading South, now with a very big day of driving ahead of us. A couple of quick stops along the way, mainly looking for Black Stilts, yielded nothing, before we arrived at our new accommodation for the night.



Black-fronted Tern. Diane Durham.



Getting Windy! Mathieu Poot.

24 October 2025 – Day Fourteen

We headed out in search of Black Stilts once again, this time heading to a beautiful river delta near New Zealand's largest Mountain. The wind was still out in force, but we soon found several of our target birds. We made our way closer, with several people getting wet feet in the process, for good scope views.

We then had another big drive ahead of us, arriving at our coastal destination early afternoon. We checked out an old wharf with thousands of Otago Shags nesting on it, then headed up the road to look for Penguins. Arriving at a lookout over a beach, we began patiently waiting, watching several NZ Fur Seals on the beach. After an hour or so a head popped up in the surf - Yellow-eyed Penguin! The bird waddled out of the surf, and we watched it make its way up the beach and into the bush, pausing for a moment's sunbathing along the way. We headed back to town and out for a lovely dinner, all talking about Stilts and Penguins.



Attempting to stay Dry. Mathieu Poot.



NZ Fur Seal. Kurt Schwarz.

25 October 2025 – Day Fifteen

With no major targets for the day, we opted for a nice sleep in before making our way inland.

Arriving at a beautiful lakeside town, we made our way down to the waterfront marina. We watched a pair of great Crested Grebes building their nest while several NZ Scaup swam around nearby.

We decided to relax for the rest of the day. Some went shopping, some went for walks and some did a touch of birding in the surrounding gardens. A beautiful dinner and we were off to bed, ready for a big day tomorrow.

26 October 2025 – Day Sixteen

Our first stop for the morning was below a hill just out of town. A pair of NZ Falcon had nested there in the past and we soon had one flying overhead, albeit brief and distant views.

We continued on, stopping to take in the view from the Crown Range, and for a quick lunch stop. The drive then took us through stunning scenery as we wound our way into the mountains, heading towards Milford Sound.



Tomtit. Diane Durham.

We came across another closed road, with yet another plan adjustment required as a result. We could no longer go right up into the mountains or to Milford Sound, but luckily we were already in an area of stunning native Beech Forest, so we opted to go for a couple of walks instead. We saw Weka, Tomtit, Bellbird, NZ Fantail, South Island Robin and lots of Riflemen. We walked past huge Beech trees and reflecting mirror lakes and enjoyed being in NZ's largest National Park.

Heading back out of the park, we visited a small pond that sometimes holds Baillon's Crake. However, with lots of wind and no sign of the Crakes, we called it quits for the day and headed to our motel.

27 October 2025 – Day Seventeen

We were up early and in the van, headed for Bluff to catch our ferry to Stewart Island. After checking in and parking the van, we boarded the ferry and began our crossing of the Foveaux Strait. The weather was overcast and relatively calm, resulting in few birds. We saw a slow trickle of Sooty Shearwaters and Common Diving Petrels, along with a Fairy Prion and a Broad-billed Prion. As we approached Oban, several Foveaux Shags flew past.

After checking in on Stewart Island and enjoying lunch, it was time to catch our afternoon water taxi. We left the wharf and followed the coastline, soon finding a Fiordland Crested Penguin in a sea cave with a chick. We carried on, finding lots of White-fronted Terns feeding on Whitebait with Penguins beneath them. Before we knew it, we arrived at Ulva Island, another pristine predator-free sanctuary.

We started out on a walk, winding through beautiful native forests and along beaches. We heard Yellowhead calling high above us, and soon they dropped down, giving us nice views of a large flock. We also enjoyed great views of South Island Robin, Kaka, Weka, Riflemen, Red-crowned Parakeet, and Brown Creeper.

We headed back to the mainland, enjoyed dinner and then headed out for Kiwi spotting one last time. A short drive led us to the location, where we began walking and soon found a Southern Brown Kiwi that came within a few meters of us, sniffing the ground and running around. We saw another four birds before calling it a night and heading back, no doubt to dream of Kiwi once again.



Yellowhead. Diane Durham.



The crew checking out a South Island Robin. Mathieu Poot.



Southern Brown Kiwi. Kurt Schwarz.

28 October 2025 – Day Eighteen

We boarded our boat for the final pelagic of the tour and headed out to sea. We took another look for Fiordland Penguins, spotting several among the boulders onshore. We cruised further out, surrounded by White-capped and Salvin's Albatross, and passed a small island. We spotted a Yellow-eyed Penguin on the beach, which along with a Fiordland crested and Little Blue in the water nearby, meaning we had all three mainland NZ Penguin species at once! Several Brown Skuas did low passes over the boat nearby, another cool sight.

Continuing out, we steamed down the coast for just under an hour before arriving at an offshore reef. We began chumming and soon had a good number of birds surrounding us. The seabirds seen include White-capped, Salvin's, Black-browed and Campbell Albatrosses, Sooty Shearwater, Short-tailed Shearwater, Common Diving Petrel, Northern Giant Petrel, Pintado (Cape) Petrel, Fairy Prion, Westland petrel and Grey-backed Storm-petrel.

After finishing chumming, we turned back toward Oban, with numerous Albatrosses now following the boat. We checked out a Foveaux Shag colony before arriving back at our accommodation, with a couple of hours free to relax.



Brown Skua. Diane Durham.

29 October 2025 – Day Nineteen

We checked in our bags, boarded the ferry, and began crossing the Foveaux Strait. The crossing was quiet again, with Sooty Shearwaters and Common Diving Petrel, as well as the odd Albatross, keeping us company. Once back on the mainland, we retrieved the van and turned north with a big drive ahead.

With a couple of Albatrosses still absent from the list, we headed to an Albatross Colony on the end of a Peninsula and got the scope out. We spotted plenty of Sooty Shearwaters, as well as White-capped Albatross, Salvin's Albatross and several Northern Giant Petrels. After plenty of waiting and scanning a distant large bird with a lot of white came into view – Southern Royal Albatross!

Very happy with our new addition to the list, we continued on our drive, checked in, had dinner, and then headed to bed.

30 October 2025 – Day Twenty

Being in an area we had already seen (due to our unexpected itinerary changes earlier in the trip) we decided to take it slow the last couple of days. After a sleep in we loaded the van and turned inland, with our first stop the famous Fairlie Bakehouse. We secured our breakfast/lunch and continued on, stopping at various lookouts and viewpoints and enjoying the stunning lakes & mountains. We still made sure to check out a few birds along the way as well, with Black Stilts, Wrybill and Double-banded Plover all making appearances.



Views over the Lake. Mathieu Poot.

We visited a local salmon farm, which provided great close views of NZ Scaup, Black-billed Gulls, and Great Crested Grebe. After a trip debrief over a few drinks, we headed out for our final dinner together.

31 October 2025 – Day Twenty-One

We loaded the van for the last time and hit the road. Heading east, we enjoyed stunning views of Aoraki - Mt Cook once again as we passed by. We stopped again at the famous pie shop, before arriving in Christchurch.

Then it was time to say our Goodbyes. It was hard to believe our tour had come to an end. We had seen some amazing birds, shared lots of laughs, and enjoyed a fantastic group of people!



The Crew. Mathieu Poot.