

**New Zealand, November 2010**  
**Ian Reid**

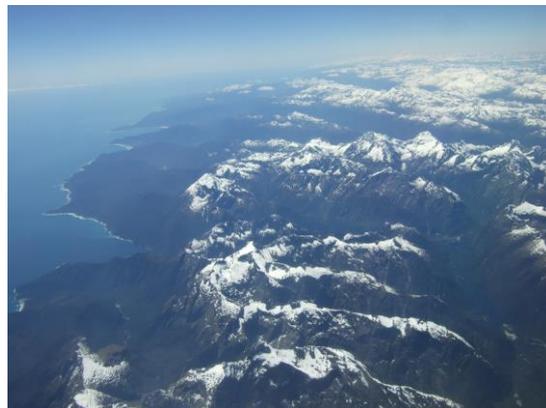


I had never harboured any great desire to go to New Zealand, and it certainly -- and in retrospect, surprisingly -- never featured for me as a possible birding destination. However when I was invited to give a keynote presentation at a conference in Queenstown I realised I should look into what the country, especially South Island, had to offer birding-wise. Extensive research on birdforum, birding-nz and reading trip reports made me realise to my shame that this was a prime destination, and I should do what I could to take in at least some of the key sites. In the end, immediately pre- and post-conference (and one afternoon during) I packed in a huge amount at every opportunity, and although it was not quite a clean-up trip, it was staggeringly good considering the time I had available.

**Day 1, 6/11/2010**

The morning of my intended travel I woke to the news that a Qantas A380 had shed one of its engines mid flight over Indonesia, narrowly escaping a crash and massive loss of life. Qantas' entire fleet of A380s was grounded. I breathed a sigh of relief that I had booked QF2, to Sydney via Bangkok, a Boeing 747 and unaffected by the grounding other than having passengers displaced from the Singapore leg. This ingenious bit of foresight also scored me some cheeky and utterly gripping stopover birds on my return leg – but that is a different report...

After 30 hours in the air, by mid-afternoon on my third calendar day of the trip I was finally approaching NZ, greeted by my first glimpse of the incredible scenery that would be the backdrop for my conference and birding over the next week or two. The views as far north as Mt Cook, and down to Milford Sound directly below us as we descended into Queenstown were the greatest I had ever witnessed from an aircraft.



My original plan – flying in the day before my talk on the opening morning – had been scuppered by a prohibitive airfare. Bringing the flight forward by 24

hours brought the fare down by 40%, and gave me the bonus of a “recovery” day. Making full birding use of this unexpected extra day, I went straight from baggage claim to pick up my hire car and was immediately on my way to Milford Sound.

As the crow flies, Milford Sound is only about 60km from Queenstown, but there is no road over the southern alps that split the west coast from the rest of South Island, so the only choice (other than flying) is a 260km drive that heads south, then west then back north again. Perhaps a long drive on the back of a day and half in the air is not the best idea, but adrenalin kept me going.

**NZ Fantail** was my first lifer endemic as I left Queenstown, with **Australasian (Swamp) Harrier** common throughout the drive that got progressively more and more scenic heading into the territory I had flown over earlier in the day. **Paradise Shelduck** and **NZ Scaup** were also lifer endemics, while various other familiar birds were picked up en route: **Pied Oystercatcher, Black Swan, Canada Goose, Black Shag, Mallard, Spur-winged plover, Pied Stilt, Black-backed Gull, Rock Dove, Blackbird, Song Thrush, Skylark, House Sparrow, Yellowhammer, Starling** and **Australian Magpie**.

I had one particular destination in mind with two key targets and drove north past Te Anau, destination Homer Tunnel. I stopped a few times for photos of increasingly stunning vistas, the last at a viewing point just before the road reaches the Lower Hollyford River. A very tame **Kea** in the carpark scored the first of the two targets.



I arrived at Homer Tunnel with the sun having already tracked below the ridges above, so the whole area was in shadow and there was a chill in the air. Several **Keas** (as predicted by numerous trip reports) were present, but my quarry was a much smaller and rarer bird. Homer Tunnel has become *the* place to see the charismatic and now close to critically-endangered NZ Rock Wren and the various reports I'd seen suggested a few possible places to try near here. I walked the marked nature trail up above the car park for 20 completely birdless minutes until on my second or third circuit of the top trail a faint squeaking call reached my ears. In the absence of any other avian activity, and not knowing the perpetrator I found a seat and scanned to rocks in front. Suddenly a tiny yellow and green jewel, like a miniature pitta, bounded into view, bobbed up and down a few times, then flew up to a crevice where I observed it placing a twig from its beak with others – incredibly I had stumbled on a nesting site of **NZ Rock Wren!** I observed it coming and going a few times, but in the fading light a flash was called for if I was going to bag a decent record shot. I raced down to the car to grab my proper flash-gun, bought recently for just such an occurrence. Back at the car

Kea's were making a mess of my windscreen wiper blades and rubber windscreen trim, but all I could do was shoo them away temporarily.

I raced back up the trail and easily relocated the wren, but now realised that the batteries were completely dead. What a waste of those 10 minutes. In spite of this error I was still on a massive high, and watched the almost tailless little jewel for a few more minutes before getting back to the car and completing my journey down to Milford Sound where I had pre-arranged one night in the basic but comfortable, Milford Sound lodge. A quick recce into the town before dark gave me four more lifer endemics, **Tomtit** by the river outside my room at the lodge, **Bellbird** in the town, brief unsatisfactory views of **Tui** (I would fix this later), and a few **Variable Oystercatcher** on the shores of Milford Sound, including both pied and black phase birds.

## Day 2

The next morning I was up early and drove down to the dock where I was booked onto the Mitre Peak, one of the smaller vessels that cruise the sound, chosen by me because it had the earliest departure. Milford Sound is one of the wettest temperate places on earth, with an average of fewer than 60 sunny days per annum. My luck was in and today was one of the 60. We cruised up the deep blue, calm waters of the sound enjoying some of the most



spectacular scenery anywhere in the world. Apart from my constraints of needing to be back in Queenstown later in the day, I was also keen to get the first boat out because I felt this would maximize the chances of encountering my next target. Sure enough, halfway up the sound, the captain eased back the throttle and drew the craft closer the edge where we could see three **Fjordland Crested**

**Penguins** making their way down the rocks before jumping into the water and swimming off for a day's fishing. Other birds encountered on the cruise were **Red-billed Gull, Pied Shag, White-fronted Tern**, as well as NZ Fur Seals on the rocks on the return journey.

I grabbed a bite to eat at a local café before heading back towards the Homer Tunnel. It was still only early afternoon and I had no trouble relocating the **Rock Wren** which this time posed brilliantly for photos, at one point coming to within 2m to check me out as a sat still on the track. Various other cars and a tourist bus stopped to photograph the **Keas** but few people ventured up the trail. Then, just as I was packing up in the car a couple arrived armed with bins and big lenses. I guessed correctly that they were after the Rock Wren – they had dipped in a 2-3 hour cold dawn vigil, had driven down to the Sound

and had just arrived back for another crack. I was in no great hurry so took them back up to the spot before heading south myself.



The drive from Milford Sound to Homer Tunnel, and now south of the tunnel along the Lower Hollyford River was punctuated with regular stops whenever I had a view of the river as I tried in vain to find the other possible but exceedingly are endemic here, Blue Duck.

I stopped at the forest by Lake Gunn where there are trails into lovely temperate rainforest. I found an obliging **NZ Robin** and **Tomtit**, and another cracking lifer parrot the **Kaka**. My main target here was really quite elusive, but with patience I eventually tracked down a **Rifleman** for decent views, if not photos. My other target in this area, Yellow-fronted Parrot, would be one of the main dips of the trip. Indeed all of the gettable endemics with “yellow” in their names would elude me.

I stopped again soon after Te Anau for a rest and stroll at an area labeled as a “wilderness scientific reserve” (opposite Lagoon Creek Rd) and strolled around this interesting looking area for 20mins or so. Although the low scrub looked promising for a range of different species from those I’d already seen in the wet forests, the ones it produced were decidedly British: **Yellowhammer** and **Redpoll**. I made it back to Queenstown in time to do the final polishing of my presentation for the morning (and to trip-tick **Great Crested Grebe** on the lake in front of my hotel) and get a good night’s sleep.

### Day 3

Heading into the final afternoon of the conference my concentration was waning and I was looking forward to my next destination of Stewart Island. Spur of the moment I decided to jump in the car and drive to Mt Cook. I had solicited gen on Black Stilt from various sources, and Nick Allen, a Christchurch birder, was especially helpful. He had told me about a possible (but unlikely) pure Black Stilt often to be found on the Ashley River north of Christchurch. But with the “Black Bomber” not having been seen for a while, realistically my only chance of one of the world’s rarest waders, was to drive -- right now -- north to Twizel about 3 hours away. The drive along the Kawarau Gorge then over the Lindis Pass to Omarama took about 2.5 hours but was punctuated by fantastic scenery all along the way.

As well as the gen on Black Bomber, Nick had also suggested the unsealed road on the Ahuriri River as a possibility, and I was tempted to go for it as I passed it about 2 hours into my journey, but I decided to keep this in reserve. The 12km or so up the road would probably take over an hour of slow driving and scanning with no guarantees of success, eating into precious time. I decided to head directly for Twizel and seek the latest gen from the Dept of Conservation.

They were very helpful here, and armed with three possibilities (including, ironically, the Ahuriri River), I headed out to Lake Poaka the closest site, only a few km NE of Twizel. Here I spent a good hour scanning the ponds from the raised dyke next to the canal, finding numerous **Pied Stilts** and hybrids, as well as **Banded Dotterel**, **Spur-winged Lapwing**, **NZ Scaup**, and **White-faced Heron**. Finally at the western end beyond the lake itself in a shallow pond I found a lone bird that seemed likely for a juvenile pure Black Stilt. I took a few distant SLR photos but had wandered some way from the car without my scope, so was unable to digiscope it. Later close inspection of my DSLR photos revealed leg-bands on the juvenile, a dudeish but unequivocal way to confirm its identity as a juvenile **Black Stilt**.



Mindful that my time was limited I decided to move on and look for more Black Stilt but also have a crack at another key wader target, the curious curve-billed Wrybill. There are known to breed at the delta of the braided Tasman River at the head of Lake Pukaki.

I parked just north of the Glentanner Airstrip as described in various trip

reports, and walked out enjoying the stunning views up to Mt Cook and the numerous photogenic **Banded Plovers**, a few **Pukeko** (Purple Swamp Hen) and a few gorgeous **Black-fronted Tern**. I found no Stilts of either species, nor, disappointingly, Wrybill.

One final hope was to drive further up the Mt Cook Rd to Fred's Stream. As I retraced my way slowly from there back south I scanned over the marshy areas and bingo, there was a lone **Black Stilt**. It was too distant for the SLR, and no cover available to walk closer, but now I had my scope to hand and I was able to get some digiscoped record shots of an adult. Nice.



**Day 4**

In a trip that really packed stuff in, this was to be one of the most manic days of all. It began when my alarm went off at 4.15am. By 4.45 I was on the road to Invercargill and by 7.30 I had dropped off my rental car and checked in to the flight to Stewart Island. A trip to NZ's third island, most of which is pristine national park, was not even part of my original itinerary, but when Margaret Hopkins of Aurora Charters wrote to me to announce they had space on a pelagic trip, I decided to rearrange some stuff to accommodate it. I would have preferred the ferry – cheaper and with the chance of some sea-watching en route – but I simply didn't have the time available.

The flight was due in to Halfmoon Bay at 8.30 and the pelagic due to set off at 9am. Fortunately Margaret had said I would be dropped by the wharf from the airstrip and they would wait for my arrival, so it was just about doable – until



there came a dreaded announcement that our take-off would be delayed by thick, low-lying fog until it burned off. I managed to get a message to Margaret and was relieved to find out they would hold the boat's departure until I arrived, as long as it was not too long.

Luckily the delay was only half an hour, and we were on our way in a small twin-prop plane over the Foveaux Strait. Within a few minutes of arrival I was on the Aurora heading out to the south east of Stewart Island.

The good weather I'd had in Milford Sound persisted here too, which was pleasant, and this combined with little swell certainly reduced the pelagic species count. Nevertheless I had an awesome day, though it did begin with a dip. I was keen to see Yellow-eyed Penguin here because I would not have time to get over to Dunedin where they have a major breeding colony and are "easy" to see. At my request we made a slight detour, tracking the coast north-east for a short time to rocks where skipper, Colin Hopkins, sees them regularly, but it was not to be today.

We resumed a more normal trajectory south east towards Whero Rock where first on the list were **Stewart Island Shags** (both Pied and Bronze phases). Soon after a lone **Brown Skua**, a few **White-fronted Tern**, a single **Little Blue Penguin**, several **Sooty Shearwaters** and numerous **Red-billed Gulls** kept up interest while we tracked the coast.

As we came around to the southern edge of the island we headed out into the southern ocean towards a place known as The Traps. We started chumming

and almost immediately several stunning **NZ White-capped Albatross** arrived, and soon after a few of the similar but darker headed **Salvin's Albatross**. The other lifer pelagic species on this first stop was **Common Diving Petrel**, while **Cape Petrel** were common and **Northern Giant Petrel** ugly but entertaining.

We moved to a deeper spot further out at about 10.30am and chummed again, attracting further Giant Petrels. Inspection of my photos afterwards shows a greenish bill tip, diagnosing these as **Southern Giant Petrel**. It remained fairly quiet until at around 11.15 a huge albatross cruised in, my first ever of one of the great albatross species. The heavy body, thin black line on the cutting edge of the upper mandible, and white leading edge to the wing identified this as a **Southern Royal Albatross**, one of main reasons for coming on this pelagic. In all we saw three. Twenty minutes later another large albatross came in and I realized that this one had the all dark upper wing of **Northern Royal Albatross**. I also found an immature **Black-browed Albatross** before we made a move back towards the island at around midday.





Colin had a few more species to show us on the southern shore of the island, and guided the vessel through the channels into the South Arm towards Sylvan Cove. Large numbers of **Stewart Island Shag** and **White-fronted Terns** were here, a few **Fjordland Crested Penguins** circled the boat and gave brilliant views, and eventually we tracked down a pair of the relatively rare **Antarctic Tern** roosting on the rocky shore.

I'd hoped we would circumnavigate the island, maybe giving us another crack at Yellow-eyed Penguin, but it would be an extra one to two hours to complete the circuit so we headed back along the east coast again. At one point I saw a falcon holding up into the wind above the cliffs, but we cruised past at pace and I never got enough on it for an unequivocal tick of the rare NZ Falcon. By 16.30 we were entering the harbour at Oban.

I spent the next 20min or so on the Wharf scanning the harbour in the hope of lucking onto a Yellow-eyed Penguin. A close bronze-phase **Stewart Island Shag** yielded nice photos but there was little else of interest. I made my way through the village to the basic but adequate Stewart Island Lodge where I was booked in for the night, dumped my stuff in the room and headed back to the South Sea Hotel for dinner and a pint of appropriately named Tui Lager.

The day's birding was not yet at an end. Having been on standby right up to 5pm this evening, I had managed to squeeze onto Phillip Smith's cruise to look for Stewart Island Brown Kiwi. I had been fretting about this for much of the afternoon, in part because I had effectively traded my planned night on Tiritiri Matangi (chance of Little Spotted Kiwi) for my night on Stewart Island. Being taken to see the birds, rather than a self-find was not really my ideal, especially having read Larry Wheatland's great tale of walking the island for three days (see

<http://www.birdforum.net/showthread.php?t=100901&highlight=stewart+island&page=19>), but when you have just over 24 hours on the island, needs must.

As the sun set, I and the cast of a dozen or so from the Birdquest “Ultimate NZ” tour headed out from the bay once more. There was a double irony that ended up on this trip with Birdquest: when I first checked the dates of my conference, I realized that the period afterwards coincided with the latter part of their tour in South Island. I therefore mooted the idea that I join their tour for the latter part but was told it was counter to company policy to allow anyone to participate in less than half a tour. Then, later, I got in touch with Chris Gaskin to see if I could get on one of his Hauraki Gulf pelagics out of Auckland. He had a trip running on a convenient date but it was fully booked by a tour company. There was still some space on the boat so Chris promised to ask if they’d mind one extra. The answer: not allowed. The company? Guess who! At least I’d managed to get on this one, in spite of the apparent number of people being over what Philip had told me was the limit.

This time we headed for Glory Cove on the sheltered western side of the peninsular that juts north into the strait on the eastern edge of the island. The seaward beach, just a few hundred metres across the narrow isthmus is perhaps the world’s most reliable site for Kiwi, where they are seen most calm nights hunting sand-hoppers. Indeed this was the setting for one of David Attenborough’s iconic scenes in his epic “Life of Birds”.

With light rain falling outside, there was a briefing session before we disembarked, then we headed single-file through the forest to the beach. Fortunately the rain abated and once on the beach it did not take too long for our official national park escort to locate a **Stewart Island Brown Kiwi** high up the beach. We watched it by dim, indirect torchlight in awe for some minutes as it shuffled in its slightly ungainly way about, poking the sand with its long snout, snaffling up sand-hoppers. I tried a few SLR shots with the ISO turned right up, post-processing revealing a barely adequate record shot (no flash photography allowed of course). I even resorted to trying some digi-binning for a bit of video. We found another further up the beach and grilled it similarly.

As we walked back single-file to the boat another crossed the path almost directly in front of me before diving into the dense undergrowth and disappearing forever, and a **Morepork** called for a “heard only” trip tick. **Fairy Prions** attracted to the boat’s lights flew in and out of our torchlights like white bats as we steamed back to Halfmoon Bay.

## Day 5

I was up early to walk across to Thule Bay (nice **Tui** on a wire en route) where I had booked Peter Cox’s water taxi aiming to be the first one over to Ulva that morning. One or two **Little Blue Penguins** were swimming in the bay as we headed out on the dead calm waters to the idyllic predator free sanctuary island. I spent an excellent couple of hours wading the trails and beaches, picking up several new ticks (though not the ever elusive yellow birds, this

time Yellowhead). Birds seen here for the first time in the trip were **South Island Saddleback**, **NZ Pigeon**, **Weka** (very tame on the beaches), **Red-crowned Parakeet**, **Grey Warbler**, **Brown Creeper**, as well as further views of **Tui**, **Kaka**, **Bellbird** and **White-fronted Tern**. **Rifleman** went down as a heard-only.

My flight out was at 1.30, so I reluctantly had to leave before I'd explored all the island or connected with Yellowhead. Peter met me in the water taxi and soon after I was down at the check-in offices ready for the flight back to Invercargill. **Banded Dotterel** on the airstrip completed my Stewart Island birding.

The connecting flight to Christchurch was not for two hours so my meticulous planning came off again as I crammed in yet another birding diversion at Invercargill. For a small, wholly deserved fee, I picked up at the airport by Ian Gambles and driven to his B&B where he and his partner Jenny own and maintain a private reserve protecting rapidly diminishing coastal salt marsh habitat on the south coast. The prime attraction here is **South Island Fernbird** and it took barely 20 minutes walking the coastal trail to locate one, then another, and finally a third (though all eluded my efforts at a decent photo). After a cup of tea at the B&B Ian dropped me back at the airport only 10 minutes from their house, and soon I was on my way to Christchurch.

Soon I was en route in the car to my next destination of Kaikoura. There was no way I'd make Kaikoura itself by dark, but the Ashley River mouth, just north of Christchurch was only a 10min diversion and so seemed worth a stop. I found the tracks leading to the beach and parked up on an area of rough ground next to the small estuary. Five **Bar-tailed Godwits** were the only new birds here. I rolled into Kaikoura quite late and went straight to bed at the basic but decent Albatross Back-packer Inn.

## Day 6

This was another day I had been looking forward to and much of my planning had been based around coming to Kaikoura, arguably the world's best place to see pelagic birds. I was up early to walk around to Albatross Encounter on the beach-front in time for a 6am pelagic. Again I was blessed with the weather – at least as far as comfort is concerned – as our small group of 6 cruised out into the pristine waters in glorious sunshine.

Almost immediately we spied the dorsal fins of Hector's Dolphin's, then scores (eventually hundreds) of Hutton's Shearwaters. We started chumming only a few kilometres off shore and within minutes various species started to appear. The star here was **(Gibson's) Wandering Albatross**. Wanderer was one of my most-wanted birds anywhere and to see it in perfect weather with the backdrop of the Kaikoura Ranges was almost too perfect to be true. In all we counted 10. I wanted a picture as it sailed against the snow-capped mountains and came close with one or two, but I never got the iconic picture I sought.

We also found 2 **Southern Royal Albatross** allowing a direct comparison between the more elegant Wandering and the bulkier Royal. A single **Westland Petrel** was also a lifer. Also seen in the two hours were 5 **Salvin's Albatross**, 1 or 2 **NZ White-capped**, up to 30 **Cape Petrel** (mostly the "Snares" *australe* race, but a few of the nominate "Southern" *capense* race), 6 **Northern Giant Petrel**, **Black-backed Gull** and **Red-billed Gull**. A possible Fluttering Shearwater was noted, and a Buller's Shearwater was seen by the skipper, but not me.



One of the great things about Kaikoura is that this diversity is available only a short hop out from the coast, meaning a pelagic of only two hours can see a lot. These were two of the best, most exciting and certainly just about the most scenic hours of birding I had ever done. Luckily I knew, as we sailed back in to the harbor, that I knew would be able to repeat it all again at 1pm.

When booking the second trip, I even considered using the 3 hour "rest" in between to go out swimming with dolphins. It's technically possible to squeeze in the three trips but I decided that this would be doing too much. Instead I sat in the lovely café eating a fine breakfast of eggs benedict, drinking a welcome cup of coffee, and catching up on email using the free wifi.

At 1pm we boarded the vessel again and headed out, the weather still perfect. We saw a similar array of species in the afternoon, but also added **(Antipodean) Wandering Albatross** (1), and 3-4 **White-chinned Petrel**. A Grey-headed Petrel was called by the skipper but flew past and didn't return, so all I saw was an arse-end untickable view as it receded into the distance.

Heading back to the harbour 100s of **Huttons Shearwaters** cruised effortlessly alongside, and I tried hard to get a picture with Hector's Dolphin and a Mollymawk together but was just not sharp enough on the shutter.

Four hours of brilliant birding in amazing scenery was over as we moored up. I'd brought my car to the harbour in aid of a quick getaway: I wasn't sure how long it would take to get back to Christchurch airport where I was due for a flight to Auckland. As it turned out I made very good time, and the 15min saved by taking my car to the harbour was very useful in enabling me to squeeze another diversion to the Ashley River mouth.

This proved to be a very worthwhile 20 minute diversion. There was more birdlife here than the previous evening, with 8 **Bar-tailed Godwit**, 20+ **White-fronted Tern**, a **Turnstone**, **Banded Dotterel** and **Variable Oystercatcher**. I'd wandered some way from the car without scope or camera and now found myself cursing this "lazy" choice -- three small charadrius-sized waders with were roosting distantly on the far bank. Looking at them fairly casually I suddenly realized that the breast-band was diagnostic for **Wrybill**. Sure enough as I intensified my gaze one of them turned and afforded a slightly different angle from which I could see the unique curved bill. Disappointingly I had walked 10 min from the car and it would take too long to fetch the camera. I would have liked better views, but this was a real bonus to get here and I had no time buffer left. After another action-packed day I cruised into Christchurch just in time to catch my flight. Brother-in-law Nick met me at the airport and after a glass of wine with him and Wendy I crashed out. A **Morepork** calling from outside could not tempt me to get out of bed.

## Day 7

My final day birding I hoped would be another tick-fest. I had booked myself on the ferry from downtown Auckland to Tiritiri Matangi. The trip out of the inner harbour gave great views of the city and the surrounding islands, and even some new birds. First a few **Australasian Gannets** were observed from the upper deck, then a lifer **Buller's Shearwater** cruised alongside and then sheared across the bow, while finally an **Arctic Skua** powered its way very close by.

Quentin Paynter, an old birding mate of SMR Young's, now living in Auckland, had agreed to meet me for the day, and he boarded at Gulf Harbour for the final 25 min to the island. Once docked on the island, Quentin immediately led me a very short way to an unpromising, almost dry, small pool. Here, supposedly is a reliable site for Brown Teal, one of the planet's most endangered ducks. Sadly it was not there, though a pile of feathers suggested that it is even more endangered now.

The remainder of the day's birding was fortunately much more productive. As we set out along the western coastal trail **Whiteheads** were quite common. **North Island Saddleback** and **Bellbird** were quickly added, then I picked up a **Red-fronted Parakeet** that posed nicely. Breeding Variable Oystercatcher

on the beach were nice before one of the key targets was found in the forest, **Stitchbird**.



We tried the quiet grassy areas on the higher ground hoping to encounter a Takahe, but all we found was a small group of **Brown Quail**. Yet another on the critically endangered list, Takahe have been introduced to Tiri. Though most are quite shy – and it was these birds we hoped to find – one has become completely habituated, and so it was that I resorted to ticking off “Greg” the **Takahe** who roams the picnic spot hoping for scraps from peoples tables.



After lunch we descended back into the forests looking for a final endemic that had so far been very elusive.

The advantage of going with a local meant he knew the right places to find the local specialties and so a longish wait we finally pinned down a shy **Kokako**, a rather chunky blue-grey bird with curious blue wattles. It was difficult to see high up in the trees, keeping itself hidden in the dense foliage as it fed on flowers. We left satisfied with our views, but this was one of the few species for which I got no passable record shot.

Quentin had one last destination in mind, so we walked to the small dam near the centre of the island and scanned the margins carefully. After about half an hour, just before we were about to give up, Quentin picked up movement of a small dark bird at the far end of the reservoir. A **Spotless Crane** then picked its way along the bank, gradually getting closer and closer and affording pretty decent views.



I left the island well satisfy. Having scored with all of the gettable targets (Little Spotted Kiwi would have to wait for a time when I could stay overnight). The ferry leaves mid-afternoon so we still had several hours of

daylight. Quentin suggested a drive north, where on the gorgeous deserted beach at Wenderholm Park we located a beautiful **New Zealand Dotterel**. We still had hopes of a Brown Teal, and went a little north to a private marsh. We were unable to find a Brown Teal amongst the numerous **Grey Teal**, but I did add **New Zealand Dabchick** as the last of my NZ lifers for the trip. Quentin dropped me back at Nick and Wendy's early evening.

