

Chatham Island spiders are known for their large size; the survival of such spiders is evidence that remote islands are as much havens for insects as they are for other wildlife.

Photo: Don Merton



Summit of South-East Island, 24/1/86. Pyramid Rock in distance. All but two in the photo are from Pitt Island. Left — Right: Mr Bill Gregory-Hunt, Lisa Preece, Marie Gregory-Hunt, Geordie Murman (NZWS), Mrs Karen Preece, Mrs Dianne Gregory-Hunt, James Gregory-Hunt, Alison Davis (Auckland University), Jo Wyld, Mark Preece, Julie Preece, Dominic Preece.

Photo: Don Merton



At night grey backed storm petrels return to their burrows carefully constructed under dense vegetation to evade the predatory skua.

Photo: Don Merton

We moved on up the trail and I saw a beautiful kakariki. I tried to take a photo of it but it was too fast. Just by the track was a baby mutton bird which I had a hold of, then we saw a sick diving petrel so I took a photo of it. We went on climbing, hoping to reach the top.

Finally I reached the top of South-East Island from where we could see for miles around. We could see Pitt Island and all the other smaller islands surrounding Pitt. We walked down to the other part of the island and saw lots of birds. In the bush we saw a snipe which looks like a miniature kiwi. When we came out into the open the skuas dive-bombed us to make us go away.

We went over to the cliffs where we saw lots of seals and their pups. There were hundreds of them all over the place. On our way back to the woolshed we saw some skinks on the bush floor. You have to look carefully as they are very fast. Mr Chappell took me to the woolshed where we saw some very big spiders. The others had caught a big one and put it in a jam jar. It was as big as the bottom of the jar.

After lunch I set off with Alison who was going to show me the shore plovers she was studying. We sat on the beach for hours watching the birds. I also helped her by looking at the oystercatchers' colour bands on their legs. We realised that Dad would be looking for us so we set off towards the hut, then to the shore where Dad came to pick us up. We were steaming along and Mr Chappell came in the Zodiac to pick Alison up. I will always remember my trip, a chance of a lifetime!



The rare shore plover, only about 120 of which remain, although it was once widespread in mainland New Zealand. Today it lives only on Rangatira Island. Photo: Alison Davis

"In the bush we saw a snipe which looks like a miniature kiwi." This bird once inhabited all the Chatham Islands but predators reduced it to South-East Island. Today the Wildlife Service has re-introduced it to Mangere Island. Photo: Geoff Moon