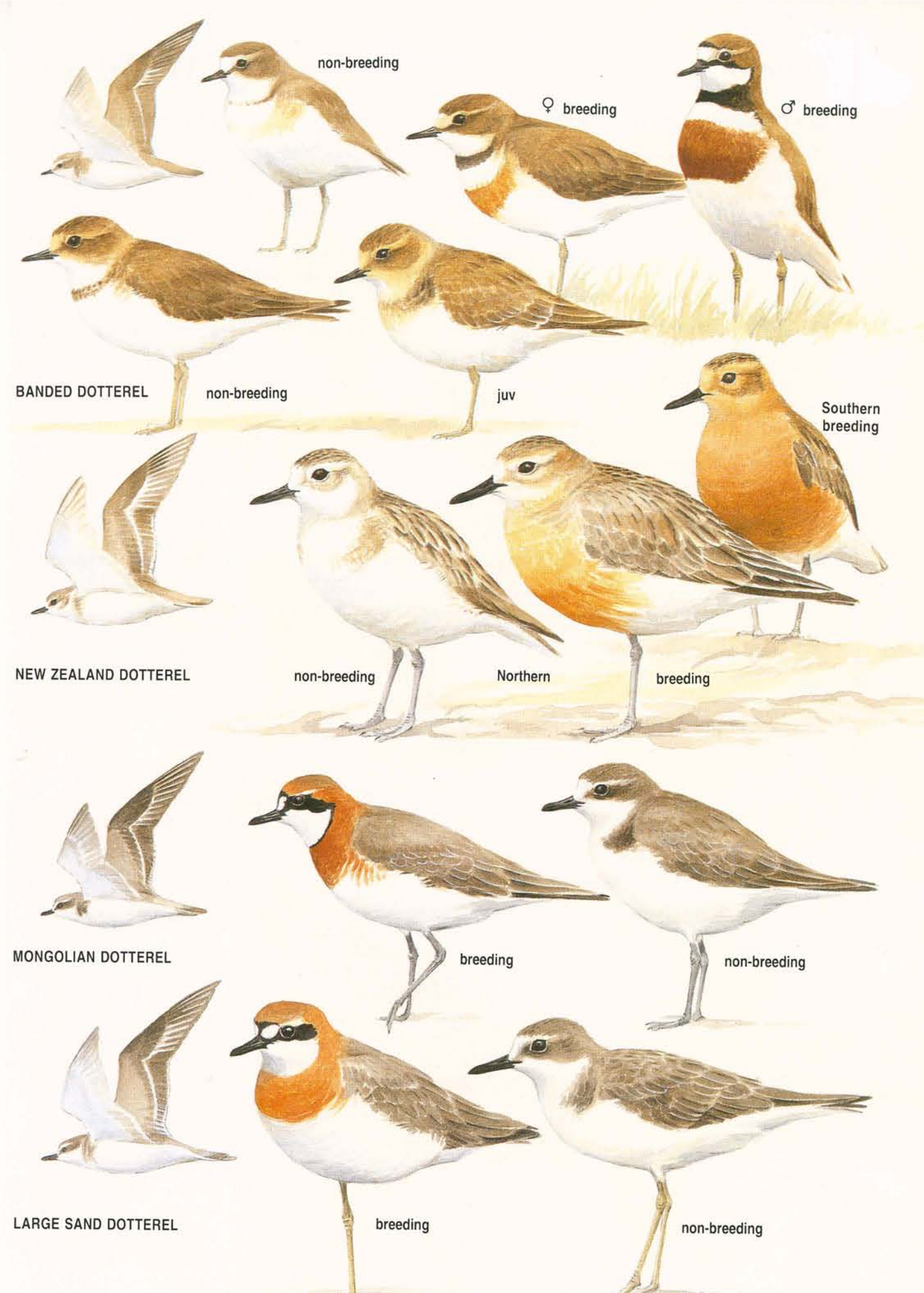


A large diverse group of birds of estuaries, coasts, riverbeds and farmland. Most are long-legged and feed in or near shallow water. Bill shape is varied; short and stubby in those (e.g. dotterels) that peck from the surface, but longer in those that feed in shallow water (e.g. stilts), or probe deeply (e.g. godwits). Flight strong and direct. Often form flocks while roosting or flying, but disperse to feed. Many species seen in NZ breed in the Arctic and arrive in September, with remnants of breeding plumage, and depart in March, often in breeding plumage. Most subadults and a few adults spend the southern winter here.

MONGOLIAN DOTTEREL *Charadrius mongolus*

Rare Asian migrant

20 cm, 60 g. *Medium-sized leggy dotterel with heavy short black bill.* Breeding adult has broad brick-red breast band with thin black line on upper margin, red extends onto nape and upper forehead; black facial mask sometimes with thin line down centre of forehead. Non-breeding like non-breeding Banded Dotterel and Large Sand Dotterel, separated only with care. *Forehead and eyebrow clean white; upperparts plain grey-brown, greyer than Banded Dotterel; conspicuous dark eye patch; underparts white, with broad grey shoulder tabs, sometimes meeting to form a band on lower neck.* In flight, distinct wingbar just onto primaries. Sexes alike. Usual call 'chirrip' with rolled 'r'. **Habitat:** Breeds Asia. Only a few reach NZ estuaries each year, most regularly at Manukau, Firth of Thames and Farewell Spit. [Sp 181]



PLOVERS, DOTTERELS and LAPWINGS
Charadriidae

About 65 species, most of which are migratory. There are about 29 plovers and dotterels, of which 5 (formerly 6) breed in New Zealand and 8 visit as migrants from the Northern Hemisphere; 26 lapwings, 1 of which breeds in New Zealand. Some authorities place the Red-kneed Dotterel with the lapwings rather than the plovers.

In New Zealand, the terms plover and dotterel mean the same thing; there is no clear distinction. All are plumpish with a thick, short neck, short tail, small, rounded head

with a high forehead and bill shorter than the head, pointed and slightly swollen at the tip. The plumage is a blend of black, white, brown and grey, sometimes more colourful in breeding plumage. They often have a bold pattern in flight. They have a characteristic 'walk and stop' way of feeding.

Lapwings tend to be inland on pasture and around coastal wetlands. They have wattles on the face and spurs on the bend of the wing, and are noisy on the ground and in flight, by night as well as by day.

181. MONGOLIAN DOTTEREL *Charadrius mongolus* Plate 40

Other names: Mongolian Plover, Lesser Sand Plover

Size: 20 cm, 60 g

Geographical variation: Birds of both *mongolus* and *atrifrons* groups of subspecies reach New Zealand, but most are of the latter group, which includes the two easternmost subspecies *mongolus* and *stegmanni* that breed in eastern and northeastern Siberia, and winter through the Western Pacific from Japan to Australasia.

Distribution: Breed in two widely separated groups: in central Asia and in far-eastern Asia. They winter on coasts of eastern and southern Africa, southern Asia and in Australasia, east to Fiji. In Australia, they are common on northern coasts and down the eastern seaboard to Victoria, Tasmania and South Australia. In New Zealand, they are a scarce but regular visitor, mostly in late September to mid-April or even early May. Most records are in the Manukau Harbour, the Firth of Thames and Farewell Spit, but they have been recorded at estuaries from Parengarenga

Harbour to Oreti Estuary, Invercargill. The most seen together is four at Karaka, Manukau Harbour, in 1981. Several birds have overwintered, and an individual stayed at Porangahau Estuary from March 1986 to January 1988 without going into breeding plumage.

Population: Normally, fewer than 5 birds visit New Zealand each summer, whereas c. 20,000 visit Australia.

Behaviour: Gregarious; in New Zealand they feed and roost with Banded Dotterels on mudflats and estuaries. They feed in the 'run-and-stop' manner typical of plovers, pausing often to crouch and lunge at prey seen moving. Their voice is similar to that of the Banded Dotterel but distinctive to the experienced observer, with a rolled 'r' component not present in a Banded Dotterel's voice.

Reading: Heather, B.D. & Robertson, H.A. 1981. *Notornis* 28: 82-83. Sibson, R.B. 1975. *Notornis* 22: 347-349.