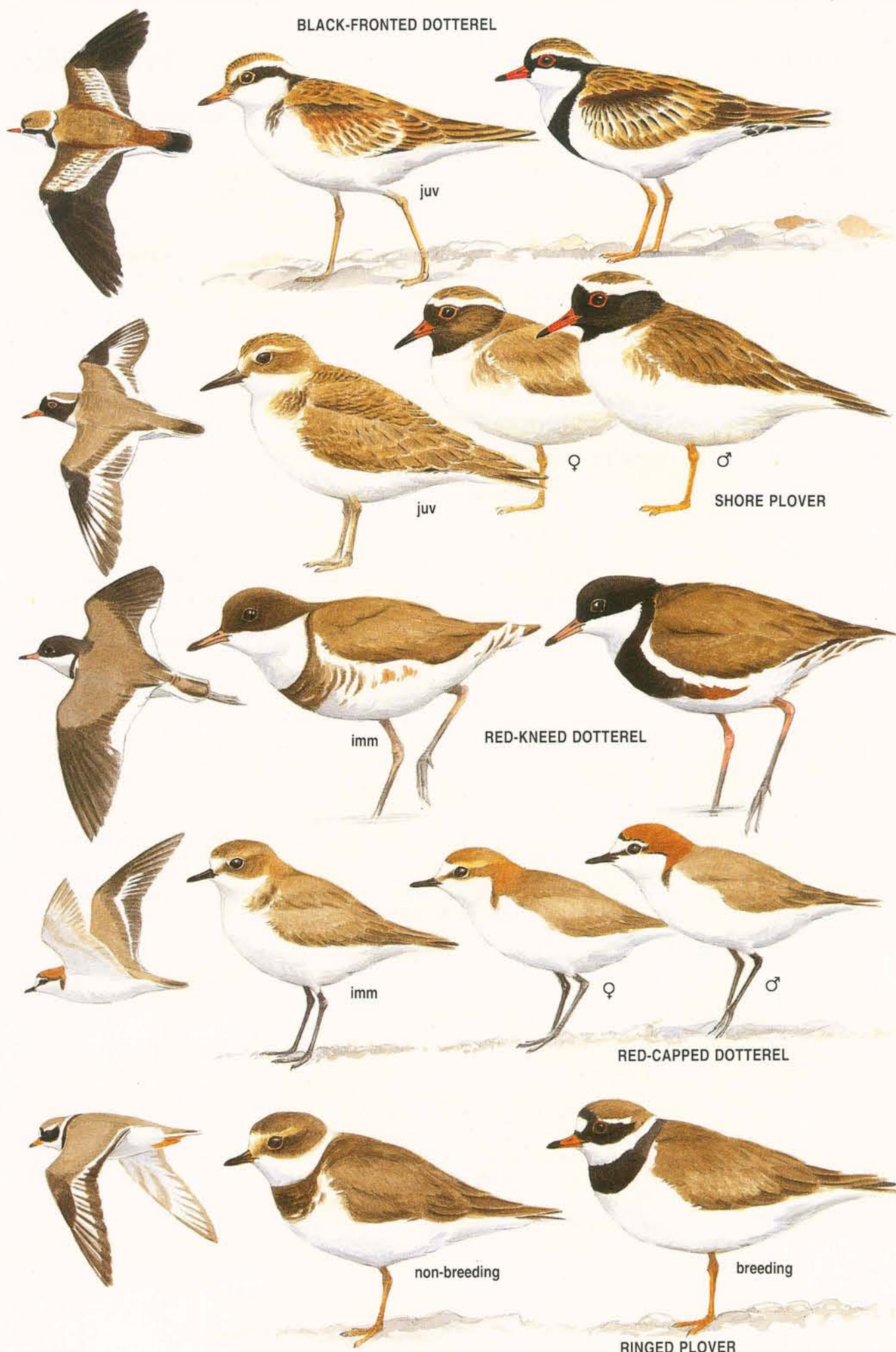


A large diverse group of birds of estuaries, coasts, riverbeds and farmland. Most are long-legged and feed in or near shallow water. Bill shape is varied; short and stubby in those (e.g. dotterels) that peck from the surface, but longer in those that feed in shallow water (e.g. stilts), or probe deeply (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.

RED-KNEED DOTTEREL *Erythrogonys cinctus*

Rare Australian vagrant

18 cm, 50 g. Distinctive dotterel with broad white trailing edge to chocolate brown wings and white tail with dark central stripe. Black head and breast band boldly contrasts with white chin and sides of neck. Back brown, underparts white with chestnut patch under bend of wing. Bill red, tipped black; long legs, pink above 'knee', grey below. Sexes alike. Juvenile has head grey-brown, breast band absent or smudgy grey-brown. **Habitat:** In Australia, usually feeds in freshwater or brackish wetlands. One NZ record: Manawatu Estuary, March 1976. [Sp 183]



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.

183. RED-KNEED DOTTEREL

Erythrogonys cinctus

Plate 41

Size: 18 cm, 50 g

Distribution: Breed only in Australia, mainly on inland freshwater lakes and swamps. They head inland to breed following heavy rains, but when the interior dries out they move towards estuaries and brackish coastal lagoons. One seen in New Zealand: Mana-

watu River estuary (March 1976).

Behaviour: Usually solitary and seen gleaning and probing for invertebrates on the edge of freshwater wetland margins or brackish coastal ponds. They swim readily.

Reading: Robertson, H.A. & Dennison, M.D. 1977. *Notornis* 24: 193-194.