A large diverse group of birds of estuaries, coasts, rivers and farmland. Most are long-legged and feed in or near shallow water. Bill shape is varied; short and stubby in those (e.g. ducks) with short pecking bills, parrot-like in those with very long, sharp bills (e.g. storks, 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 return moulting at breeding plumage, and depart in March, often in breeding plumage. Most subspecies and a few adults spend the southern winter here.

**RED-NECKED PHALAROPE**

*Phalaropus lobatus* (Sp. 226)

**Rare Arctic straggler**

19 cm; < 30 g; > 35 g. Unusal small slim and graceful wader. Feeds by swimming jerkily or in circles, pecking from the water surface. Short very fine black bill; very short dark grey legs with broad feet; white wingbar; large white patches on sides of rinse pattern with black strip down grey-tipped tail. Non-breeding adult like Grey Phalarope, but bill long, back feathers have dark centres and broad white edges, giving a ruddy appearance. Breeding adult unmistakable; mainly grey above, with rufous patch sweeping from behind eye down sides of neck to throat; male duller. Juvenile has grey patch behind and below eye, and grey on crown extends down hindneck to back. Habitat: Breeds Arctic. Migrates to pelagic waters off western North America, Africa, Micronesia and Nambibia. A few have strayed to NZ estuaries or coastal lakes.

**PHALAROPODES**

3 species, all of which are rare visitors to New Zealand.

A small anomalous family of medium to small waders with short pecking bills, which are larger and brighter than the males and conforme their breeding activities to the open nesting and laying eggs. Greatly when not breeding. All are expert swimmers, even in shallow water, with dense plumage on the breast and belly that traps air and makes them float high and buoyantly. Two of the three have a circumpolar breed range and spend the autumn and winter at sea where they have the salt gland highly developed. The third species, the Wilson's Phalarope, *Phalaropus occidentalis*, prefers freshwater wetlands and has normal salt glands.

All phalaropes are slim, having a small head on a slender neck and a sharp, straight bill. Their legs are laterally compressed, and their toes are lobed like those of grebes and coots. They swim, or pirouette, while swimming, stirring plankton or other invertebrates up from below - a technique used more on terrestrial lagoons rather than at sea. They also dab the bill into the water and wade in algal mats and, darting this way and that, feed on filters gathered there. New Zealand records are mainly at coastal lagoons, lakes and estuaries.

**226. RED-NECKED PHALAROPE**

*Phalaropus lobatus* (Plate 51)

Other name: Northern Phalarope

Size: 19 cm; male 30 g; female 35 g

Distribution: Breeds on arctic tundra in Greenland, Iceland, Scandinavia and the northern parts of Asia, Alaska and Canada. They migrate to three main zones of oceanic upwelling: off western North America, off Arabia, and between the Philippines and New Guinea, although some winter off Namibia. They are an annual migrant in small numbers to most Australian states, particularly in the northwest and southeast. Seven New Zealand records: Lake Elesmere (1929, December 2000, October 2002), Wanganui Estuary (April 1935, bill). Their legs are laterally compressed, and their toes are lobed like those of grebes and coots. They swim, or pirouette, while swimming, stirring plankton or other invertebrates up from below - a technique used more on terrestrial lagoons rather than at sea. They also dab the bill into the water and wade in algal mats and, darting this way and that, feed on filters gathered there. New Zealand records are mainly at coastal lagoons, lakes and estuaries.