

Text and images extracted from Heather, B.D. & Robertson, H.A. (2005) *The Field Guide to the Birds of New Zealand*. Penguin Books, Auckland. Pages 146, 393, 424, 427.

Passerines are the largest group of birds. They are small to medium sized land birds found worldwide, except on Antarctica. All species have four toes, three pointing forward and one back, well-adapted for perching. Most species are song-birds, with complex musical calls, but there are exceptions (e.g. crows). They show great diversity of form, behaviour and breeding biology.

MONARCH FLYCATCHERS

Monarchidae

About 170 species from Africa through southern Asia and Australasia to the South Pacific islands; 1 native species and 1 vagrant in New Zealand.

A varied group of insectivorous forest birds with proportionately large heads and short, broad bills with abundant bristles at the base. Most hawk insects in the air with short flights, but some glean insects from the foliage.

ADDENDUM

Since 1996, the following 11 species were accepted by the Rare Birds Committee of the Ornithological Society of New Zealand as having been reliably recorded for the first time in the New Zealand region. All appeared as single vagrants or stragglers, and none of the species has settled to breed.

WILLIE WAGTAIL *Rhipidura leucophrys*

Size: 20 cm

Description: Distinctive *black and white* flycatcher, similar in shape to a large Fantail, but with the *extremely long tail moved constantly from side to side*. Black head, neck, upperparts, wings and tail, relieved only by a white eyebrow. Lower chest and underparts white. Short black bill and black legs. Immature birds similar, but with brownish tips to feathers on the wing and upperparts. Frequents most habitats, and feeds mainly on the wing in short flights from a perch like a Fantail, but also hops on the ground. The call is a scolding 'chick-a-chick-a-chick' and they also have a brief musical Fantail-like song.

Distribution: Breeds in New Guinea, the Molluccas, Bismark Archipelago, the Solomons and throughout mainland Australia and on many of its offshore islands, but is rarely recorded in Tasmania. It is a partial migrant, with many birds breeding in Victoria and New South Wales moving north to overwinter in Queensland. One New Zealand record, a first-year bird at Mangere Island, Chatham Islands, in October 1999.

Reading: Gummer, H. 2002. *Notornis* 49: 186-188.