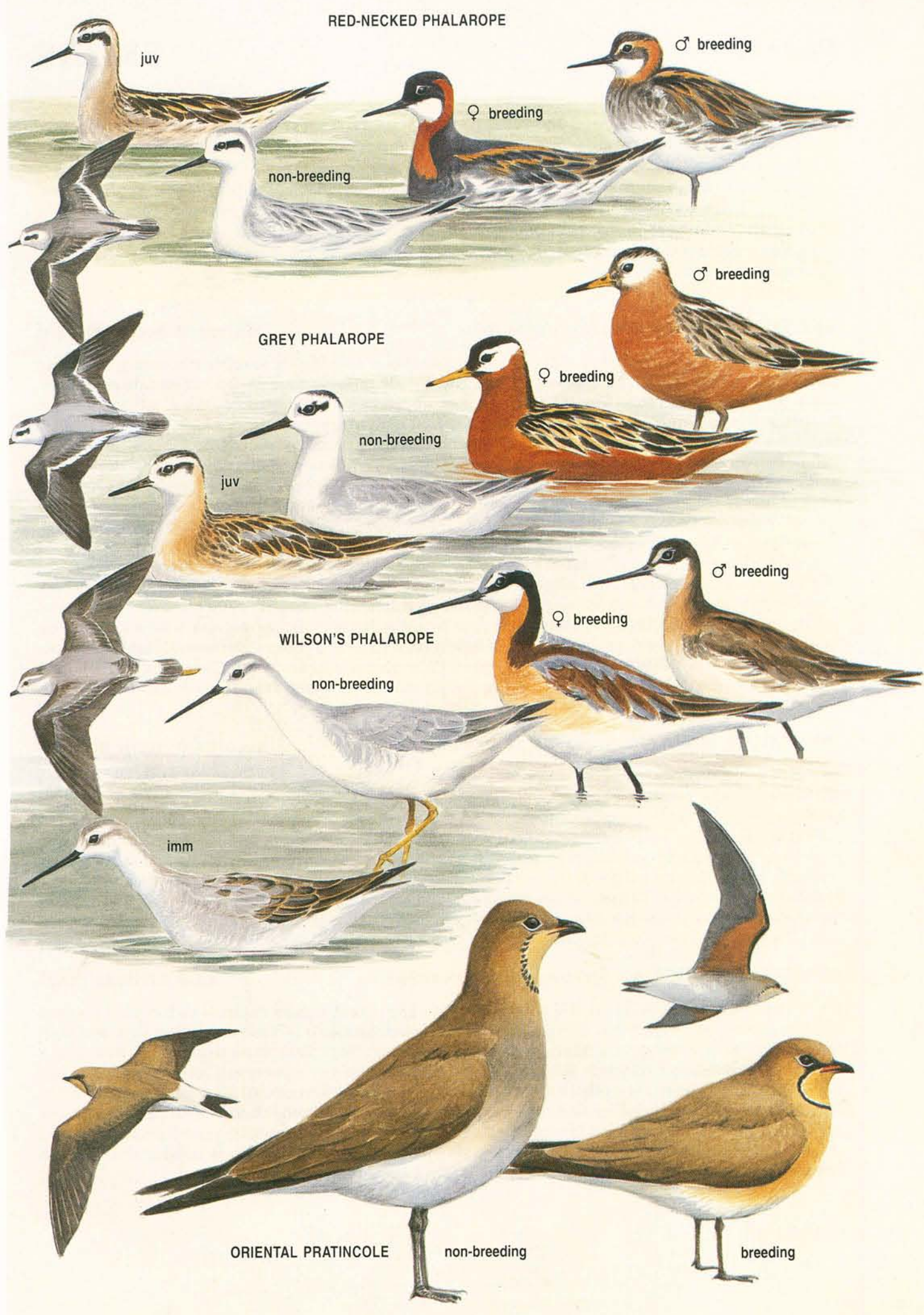


A large diverse group of birds of estuaries, coasts, riverbeds and farmland. Most are long-legged and feed in or near shallow water. Bill shape is varied; short and stubby in those (e.g. dotterels) that peck from the surface, but longer in those that feed in shallow water (e.g. stilts), or probe deeply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

GREY (Red) PHALAROPE *Phalaropus fulicarius*

Rare Arctic vagrant

20 cm; ♂ 50 g, ♀ 60 g. Unusual dainty wader. Feeds by swimming jerkily or in circles, pecking from the water surface. Short thick black bill (yellow with black tip in breeding adult); short brownish-grey legs with yellow lobes on feet; white wingbar; small white patches at sides to grey tail. Non-breeding adult like non-breeding Red-necked Phalarope but bill stouter, back feathers have very thin white edges giving a smooth appearance. Breeding adult unmistakable: neck and underparts mainly brick red, back black and buff, and white patch around back of head behind eye; male duller. Juvenile initially a warm pinkish buff but quickly becomes like non-breeding adult; however, retains buff edges to wing feathers. **Habitat:** Breeds Arctic. Migrates to pelagic areas of tropical Atlantic Ocean, off Namibia and S America. A few have reached NZ estuaries and coastal lakes. [Sp 225]



PHALAROPES

Phalaropodidae

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

prefers freshwater wetlands and has normal salt glands.

A small anomalous family of medium to small waders with reversed breeding roles, in which the females are larger and brighter than the males and confine their breeding activities to courtship, mating and laying eggs. Gregarious 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 breeding range and spend the autumn and winter at sea; they have the salt gland highly developed. The third species, the Wilson's Phalarope,

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 spin, 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 flies gathered there. New Zealand records are mainly at coastal lagoons, lakes and estuaries.

225. GREY PHALAROPE *Phalaropus fulicarius*

Plate 51

Other name: Red Phalarope
Size: 20 cm; males 50 g, females 60 g
Distribution: Breed through the high Arctic in Greenland, Iceland, Spitzbergen and extreme northern parts of Asia, Alaska and Canada. They migrate to three zones of plankton-rich oceanic upwelling: off Senegal and Sierra Leone, off Namibia and western South Africa, and off the western coast of South America. Vagrants, presumably from the group that winters off South America,

have been recorded seven times in New Zealand, mainly in the east and all in June or July, when they should have been breeding: Lake Wainono (1883, 1987), Lake Ellesmere (1925), Hastings (1934), Kaituna Cut (1977), Manukau Harbour (1992) and Inchclutha, South Otago (1993). All but the second Wainono bird were in breeding plumage or almost so.
Reading: Brown, B. & Latham, P.C.M. 1978. *Notornis* 25: 198–202.