

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.

**ORIENTAL DOTTEREL** *Charadrius veredus*

Rare Asian migrant

24 cm, 95 g. Medium-sized plover with a *slim elegant build, long legs and an erect stance*. Breeding adult has broad chestnut breast band with black lower margin. Non-breeding has plain grey-brown upperparts, but some have narrow buff margins to feathers; pale buff eyebrow, face and throat, broad grey-buff breast band contrasts with off-white abdomen. Juvenile like non-breeding but broad pale margins to feathers on upperparts. In flight, no clear wingbar, underwing grey. Fine black bill; proportionately long dull yellow legs. **Habitat:** Breeds N China. In NZ, at estuaries, in areas of dried mud or short pasture, often with Banded Dotterel or Pacific Golden Plover. [Sp 182]



**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.

**182. ORIENTAL DOTTEREL** *Charadrius veredus*

Plate 42

**Other name:** Oriental Plover

**Size:** 24 cm, 95 g

**Distribution:** Breed in Mongolia and Manchuria, and migrate to winter mostly in Indonesia and Australia. About 40,000 birds visit the coasts and open grassy plains, airfields and sports fields of northern Australia, but they are stragglers to southern states,

and a rare straggler to Lord Howe Island and New Zealand. Eleven New Zealand records, mainly of single birds: Raoul Island, Kermadecs (1908); a flock of ten at the Firth of Thames (1954-55), Parengarenga Harbour (1955, 1968-69); Manukau Harbour (1975, three in 1994), Lake Wainono (1977), Greymouth airfield (1982), Invercargill Estuary

(1988), Lake Ellesmere (1989) and Te Whanga Lagoon, Chathams (2000).

**Behaviour:** Gregarious, feeding in loose flocks. They take mainly insects by the usual

plover 'run-and-stop' method. Their call is a whistled 'chip' in flight, but a sharp, rippling trill when chasing one another on the ground.