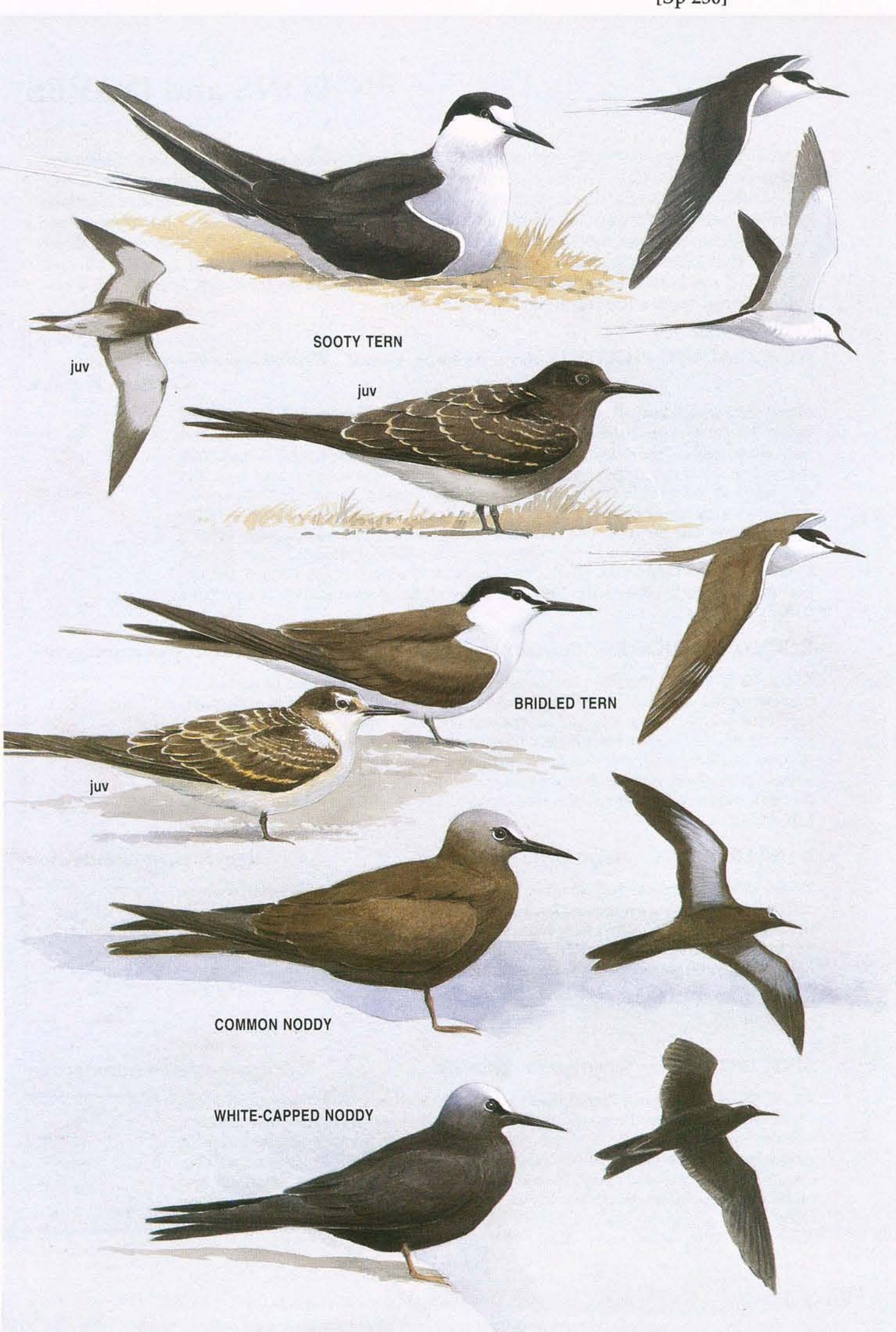
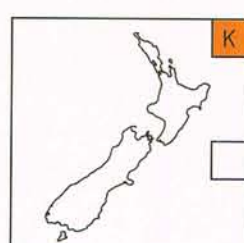


Gulls, terns and noddies are a large cosmopolitan group of mainly coastal birds. Most have short straight bills and short legs. Sexes alike. Usually grey, black or brown above, and white below in adults; juveniles usually have brown barring on back and wings. Bill and legs are often brightly coloured but usually change with age and/or season.

COMMON NODDY *Anous stolidus*

Rare native

39 cm, 200 g. Medium-sized dark tropical tern with *very long broad tail* with shallow central notch. Like large White-capped Noddy but *browner*, and in flight, *underwing has pale central panel*. Adult has whitish-grey forehead and cap, merging into brown on sides of face and nape; black line from bill to eye; body, upperwing and tail dark brown; underwing grey-brown, edged dark brown. Thin straight (4.5 cm) black bill; legs and feet black. Juvenile similar but duller, cap less clearly defined, and back and wing feathers edged pale. Flight buoyant. Feeds mainly from sea surface and sometimes settles on the water. **Habitat:** Tropics and subtropics; recently found breeding on Curtis I, Kermadecs. After breeding, disperses to feed in flocks over deep warm waters. Three records from near the NZ mainland. **Breeding:** Sep–Jan. [Sp 250]



GULLS, TERNS and NODDIES Laridae

About 88 species (47 gulls, 37 terns and 4 noddies) worldwide: 3 gulls, 6 terns and 4 noddies breed in the New Zealand region, and 8 terns visit regularly or as rare vagrants.

Gulls are coastal or inland birds in New Zealand. Adults have white bodies and grey or black backs, and broad wings with black and white patterning at the tips. Juvenile plumage has a distinctive buff barring on the back and wings. Gulls have a strong bill with a distinctive shape, deepest about a third of the way back from the tip. They walk well on quite long legs. Gregarious; breeding in colonies and feeding and roosting in large numbers. The ground nest is a shallow cup in a low, well-formed mound of vegetation. Chicks are fed by regurgitation. Gulls feed on a wide variety of foods, including human refuse, fish, shellfish, crustaceans and other invertebrates (including earthworms and grubs exposed by ploughing) and eggs of other birds.

Terns and noddies are mostly pelagic or coastal, except some are inland on rivers or over coastal lakes. Noddies breed only in the tropics or subtropics, and sailors may have named them for their absurd-seeming nodding courtship displays. Terns are usually

white below and shades of black or grey above, while noddies are more uniformly white, grey or brown. Juvenile plumage has buff barring, especially on the back and wings. Terns and noddies are more aerial than gulls and are more delicate; their wings are narrower and more pointed and their tail is often forked, sometimes deeply. They have straight, slender, tapering bills. They shuffle or waddle along on short legs. Gregarious; breeding in colonies and feeding and roosting in tight flocks. The nest is a simple scrape or depression in sand, shingle, shell or rock, but some noddies build a small platform nest in a tree or shrub, and White Terns simply lay their egg in a depression on a tree branch. Whole small fish, caught mainly by plunging or by picking from the surface of water and held crosswise in the bill, are usually brought in courtship display and to the chicks, but some tropical terns and noddies feed by regurgitation. Chicks go on begging for months after they can fly.

Reading: Grant, P.J. 1981. *Gulls: An Identification Guide*. Calton: Poyser. Harrison, P. 1983. *Seabirds: An Identification Guide*. Beckenham: Croom Helm. Serventy, D.L. et al. 1971. *The Handbook of Australian Sea-birds*. Sydney: A.H. & A.W. Reed.

250. COMMON NODDY *Anous stolidus*

Plate 58

Other name: Brown Noddy
Size: 39 cm, 200 g
Geographical variation: Of the five subspecies, *pileatus* breeds on islands in the Indian Ocean and in the tropical South Pacific Ocean, including the Kermadecs.
Distribution: Tropical and subtropical islands of the Atlantic, Indian and Pacific Oceans. In the South Pacific, they breed on many tropical islands from the northern Great Barrier Reef east to French Polynesia, but also in the subtropics at Norfolk and Lord Howe Islands, and at Curtis Island in the southern Kermadecs. There were two New Zealand records in the 1800s, then in 1989 they were discovered breeding on cliff ledges at Curtis Island. Subsequently, beach-wrecked birds have been found on Muriwai Beach (June 1992) and at Waitara (June 2002).
Population: c. 25 pairs nesting on Curtis Island in 1989.
Conservation: Protected native. This common

species has recently established as a breeding species in the New Zealand region.
Breeding: In some tropical places they breed year-round, but in the South Pacific they breed in spring and early summer. Eggs are laid on Curtis Island in September–November. The nest is usually an untidy heap of sticks and seaweed, cemented by guano, in trees, scrub and sometimes on the ground; at the Kermadecs all nests are on cliff ledges and steep slopes. They lay 1 creamy-white egg (53 x 36 mm, 36 g), blotched reddish brown. Both adults incubate for 32–35 days and care for the white downy young.
Behaviour: Gregarious; in New Guinea and Australia they breed in large colonies, often with Sooty Terns, but at Curtis Island they nest alone. After breeding, Common Noddies disperse and may be seen hundreds of kilometres from land, where huge feeding flocks are likened to smoke on the horizon.