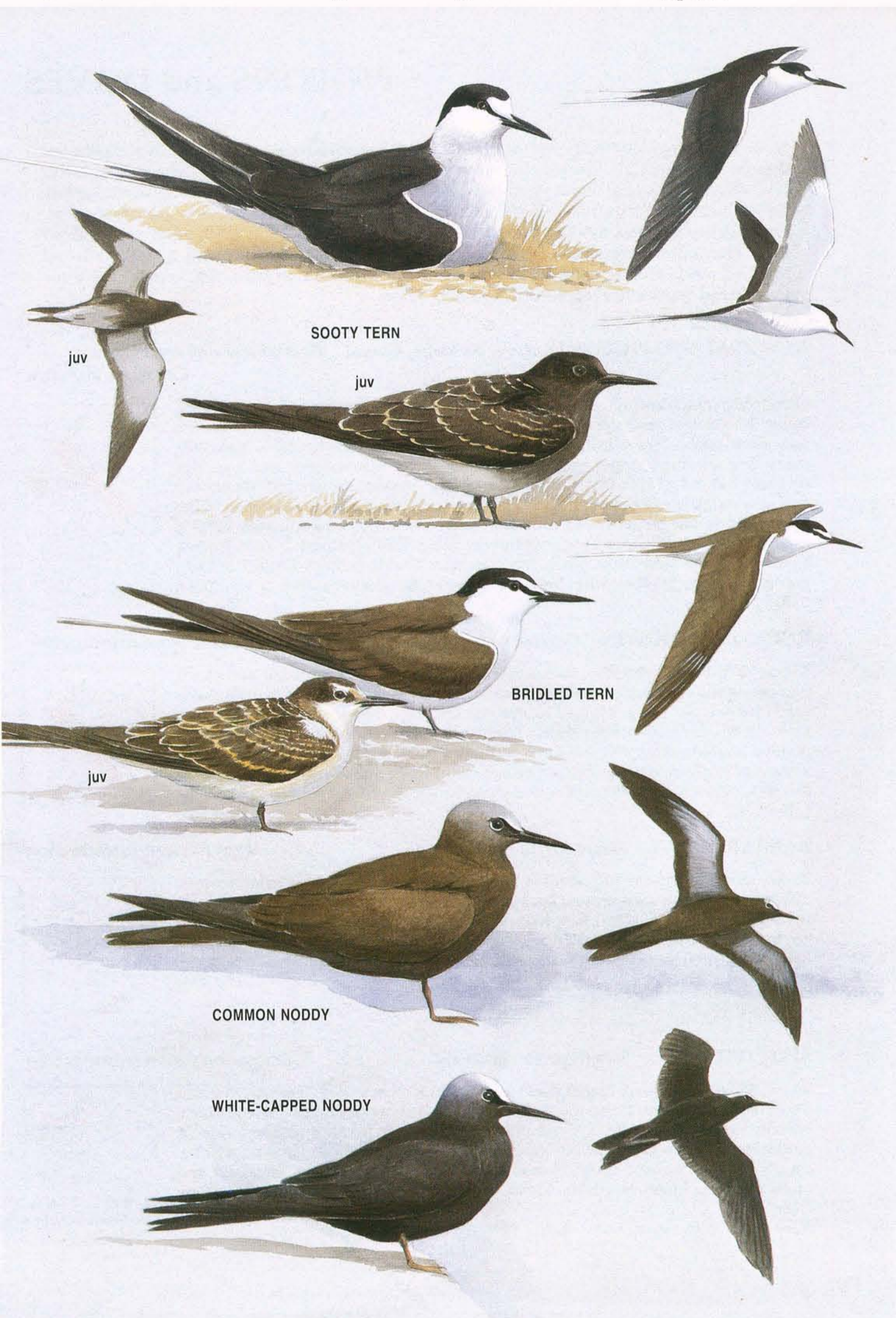
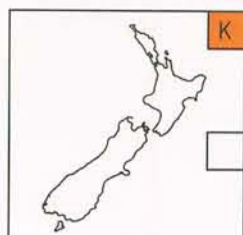


Gulls, terns and noddies are a large cosmopolitan group of mainly coastal birds. Most have short straight bills and short legs. Sexes alike. Usually grey, black or brown above, and white below in adults; juveniles usually have brown barring on back and wings. Bill and legs are often brightly coloured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

SOOTY TERN *Sterna fuscata*

Locally common native

45 cm, 210 g. Large tropical tern. Adult has white forehead and eyebrow to just above eye; cap, line through eye to bill, nape and upperparts dark brownish black; sides of neck and underparts white, washed pale grey towards long deeply forked tail. Bill and legs black. Juvenile dark brown except feathers on back and upperwings edged white or buff, underwings pale grey, and underparts white towards tail. Distinctive harsh 'wideawake' call. **Habitat:** Breeds tropics and subtropics, including Kermadecs. After breeding, ranges widely over deep water and a few reach northern NZ, especially after autumn and winter gales. **Breeding:** Oct–Mar. [Sp 242]



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.

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.

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.

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.

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

242. SOOTY TERN *Sterna fuscata* Plate 58

Other name: Wideawake Tern
Size: 45 cm, 210 g
Geographical variation: Many subspecies of doubtful validity, of which *serrata* of the southwestern Pacific is the one that breeds at the Kermadecs.
Distribution: Widespread in tropical and subtropical parts of the Atlantic, Indian and South Pacific Oceans, from the Great Barrier Reef and Norfolk Island east to Samoa and Tonga. They breed throughout the Kermadecs but now mainly at Macauley and Curtis Islands and in the Herald Group (North and South Meyer, and Dayrell Islands). After breeding, they become much more pelagic and are rarely seen at the Kermadecs between late April and August. Occasional vagrants reach the North Island, usually after autumn and winter gales. The sighting of at least 13 birds in two flocks at Pakiri Beach in July 1986 was exceptional.
Population: c. 22,000 pairs in 1990: Macauley 10,000 pairs, Curtis 5500 pairs, Herald Group 4000 pairs, Raoul 2000 pairs.
Conservation: Protected native. The current population estimate is well down from the 1966–67 minimum of 80,000 pairs in two colonies on Raoul Island alone. The Denham Bay and Hutchinson Bluff colonies on Raoul Island have been virtually wiped out by Norway rats (taking eggs and chicks) and feral cats (taking adults and young). The improved habitat and less disturbance on

Macauley Island since the eradication of goats has probably helped to offset some of the loss.
Breeding: Much more seasonal in the Kermadecs than in the tropics, where breeding can be continuous on a nine-month cycle. Laying at the Kermadecs is in October–December and is remarkably synchronised within large colonies, most eggs being laid over a few days. The nest is an unlined scrape in sand and low vegetation at the top of the beach. They lay 1 cream egg (53 x 36 mm), spotted and blotched dark brown and black. Both adults incubate for c. 28 days. The fledging period is c. 30 days, but the young stay at the colony for several months, sometimes forming a crèche. A chick banded at the Kermadecs was found breeding in the Indian Ocean at Aride Island, Seychelles, aged 33.5 years old.
Behaviour: Gregarious during breeding; their colonies are noisy, day and night, both from their harsh 'wideawake' calls and from their incessant nocturnal activity. The calls are also heard among feeding flocks.
Feeding: Diet is mainly squid, small fish and crustaceans, caught mostly at night by surface-dipping. Sooty Terns feed far out to sea, and so regurgitate to feed their young, whereas other terns that feed close to shore give whole undigested fish to their young.
Reading: Cossee, R.O. 1995. *Notornis* 42: 280.