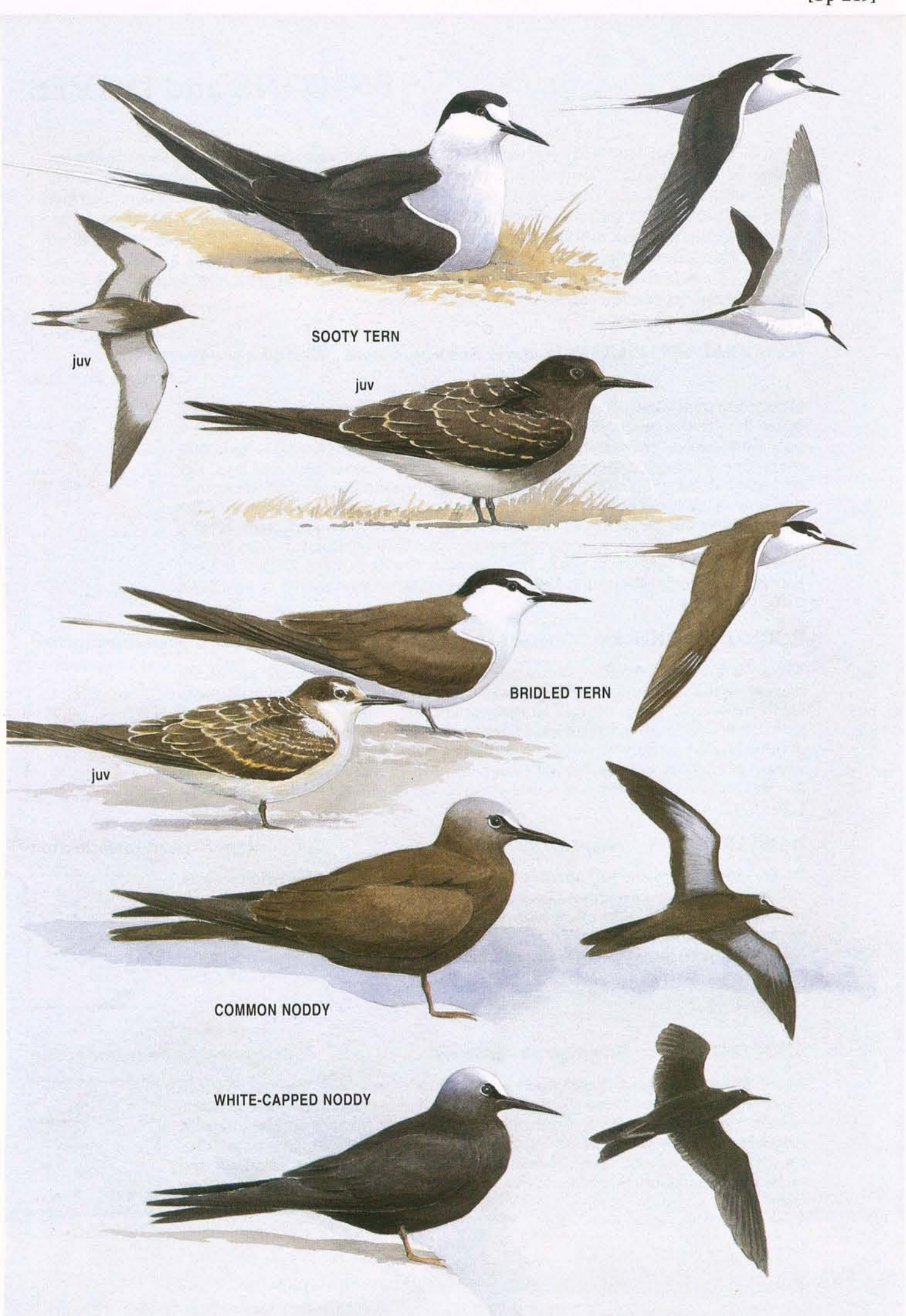


Gulls, terns and noddies are a large cosmopolitan group of mainly coastal birds. Most have short straight bills and short legs. Sexes alike. Usually grey, black or brown above, and white below in adults; juveniles usually have brown barring on back and wings. Bill and legs are often brightly coloured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

BRIDLED TERN *Sterna anaethetus*

Rare tropical vagrant

41 cm, 120 g. Like small pale Sooty Tern. Adult has white forehead and eyebrow extending well behind eye; black cap, line through eye to bill, and nape contrasts with dark grey-brown upperparts; sides of neck and underparts white, long deeply forked tail. Bill and legs black. Juvenile similar, but crown streaked white, incomplete black line between eye and bill, and feathers on back and upperwings edged white or buff. **Habitat:** Breeds tropics, including northern Australia. One NZ record: Canterbury, November 1987. [Sp 249]



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.

249. BRIDLED TERN *Sterna anaethetus*

Plate 58

Other name: Brown-winged Tern

Size: 41 cm, 120 g

Geographical variation: Of several subspecies, *anaethetus* breeding in New Guinea and northern Australia is most likely to reach New Zealand.

Distribution: Widespread across all tropical

seas but seldom straying to temperate waters. One record in New Zealand, a beach-wrecked bird at New Brighton, Canterbury (November 1987).

Reading: Hulsman, K. & Langham, N.P.E. 1985. *Emu* 85: 240-249. Tunnicliffe, G.A. & Langlands, P.A. 1990. *Notornis* 37: 131-139.