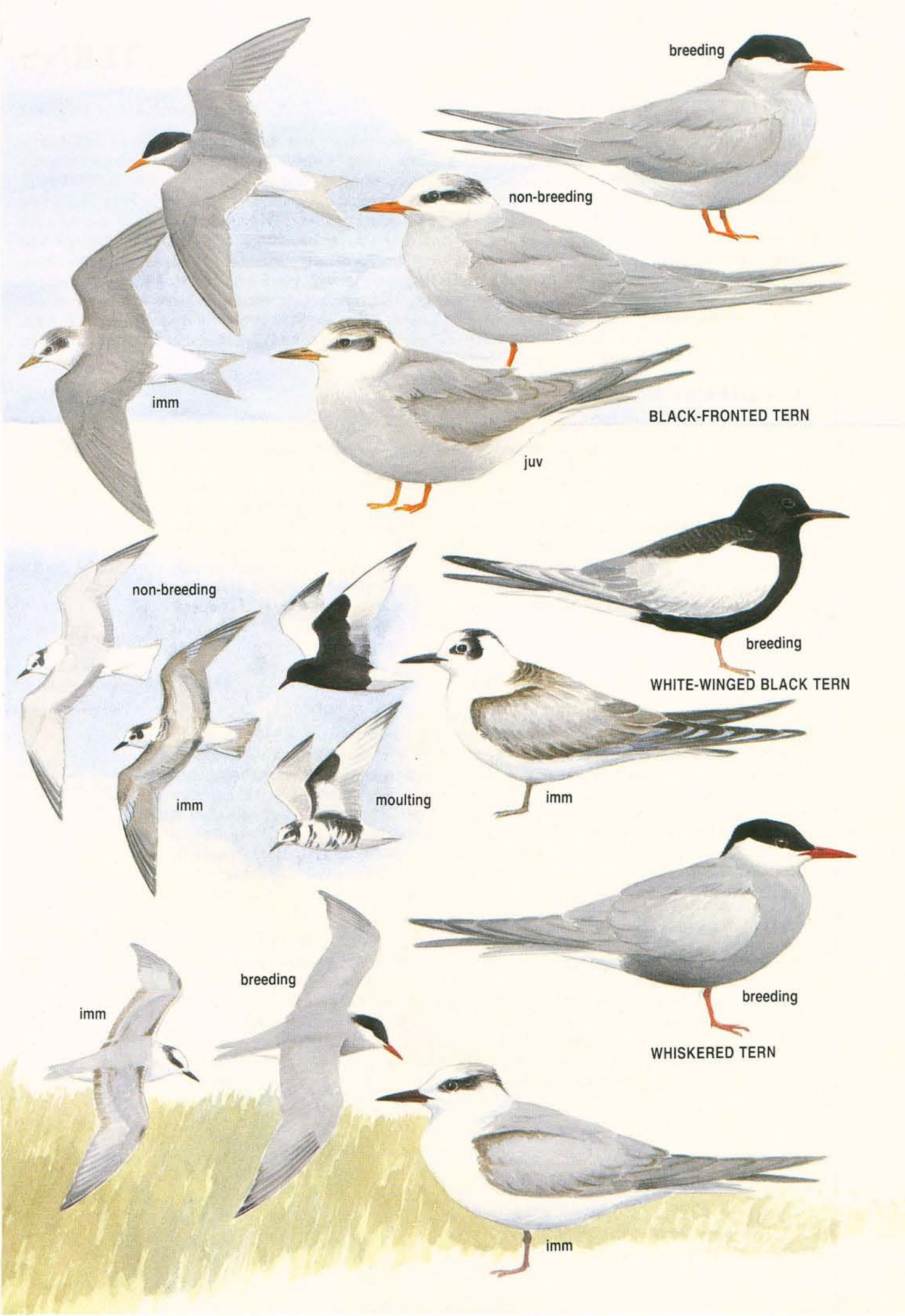


Gulls, terns and noddies are a large cosmopolitan group of mainly coastal birds. Most have short straight bills and short legs. Sexes alike. Usually grey, black or brown above, and white below in adults; juveniles usually have brown barring on back and wings. Bill and legs are often brightly coloured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

WHITE-WINGED BLACK TERN *Chlidonias leucopterus* Uncommon Asian migrant

23 cm, 65 g. Distinctive very small tern with slow buoyant flight. Black and white in breeding plumage; grey and white in non-breeding, but with distinctive black 'ear-muffs' and club-shaped patch on nape. Breeding adult has black head, neck, back and underparts: white rump and only barely forked tail; upperwing very pale grey, darker at tips; underwing black at base, white at tips; bill and legs red. Non-breeding adult has white head except crown streaked black, and black club-shaped band extends over top of head from behind eyes and also down nape; grey back; upperwing grey, darker at tips and along trailing edge of secondaries; shows dark carpal bar at rest; rump, tail and underparts white; bill and legs black, some with reddish tinge. Immature similar, but upperwings darker grey, rump very pale grey and tail grey. Hawks insects over water or land; flies persistently back and forth, dropping down to pick insects from water surface; rarely plunges. **Habitat:** Breeds Eurasia. Migrates to tropics and subtropics. A few reach NZ coastal lakes, swamps and estuaries each year. [Sp 237]



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.

237. WHITE-WINGED BLACK TERN *Chlidonias leucopterus* Plate 56

Other name: White-winged Tern
Size: 23 cm, 65 g
Distribution: Breeding in marshes from eastern Europe to Siberia, in eastern China, Mongolia and Manchuria. They migrate to winter in Africa, southern and southeastern Asia, and in Australasia. They are a regular migrant to New Zealand, from the harbours of Northland to the lagoons and estuaries of Southland, but especially around the Auckland isthmus and in coastal Canterbury. A pair bred among Black-fronted Terns at the mouth of the Opihi River, South Canterbury, in 1973-74.
Population: Usually fewer than 10 reach New Zealand each year, except for occasional small influxes, e.g. 13 at Ahuriri Estuary

(1972). A few overwinter in some years.
Behaviour: In New Zealand, some birds have a reversed plumage sequence, that of the Southern Hemisphere, and stay as though to breed. In the South Island, single birds often associate with colonies of Black-fronted Terns, and a pair attempted to breed twice in 1973-74. Normally the nest is a rough mass of vegetation, floating or moored in fresh water.
Feeding: Gregarious; overseas they forage in noisy flocks, but in New Zealand they are usually singles, beating into the wind and contact-dipping (i.e. submerging the bill only) to pick insects from the water surface.
Reading: Pierce, R.J. 1974. *Notornis* 21: 129-134.