

Text and images extracted from Heather, B.D. & Robertson, H.A. (2005) *The Field Guide to the Birds of New Zealand*. Penguin Books, Auckland. Pages 146, 393, 424, 427.

Passerines are the largest group of birds. They are small to medium sized land birds found worldwide, except on Antarctica. All species have four toes, three pointing forward and one back, well-adapted for perching. Most species are song-birds, with complex musical calls, but there are exceptions (e.g. crows). They show great diversity of form, behaviour and breeding biology.

MONARCH FLYCATCHERS

Monarchidae

About 170 species from Africa through southern Asia and Australasia to the South Pacific islands; 1 native species and 1 vagrant in New Zealand.

A varied group of insectivorous forest birds with proportionately large heads and short, broad bills with abundant bristles at the base. Most hawk insects in the air with short flights, but some glean insects from the foliage.

ADDENDUM

Since 1996, the following 11 species were accepted by the Rare Birds Committee of the Ornithological Society of New Zealand as having been reliably recorded for the first time in the New Zealand region. All appeared as single vagrants or stragglers, and none of the species has settled to breed.

BLACK-FACED MONARCH *Monarcha melanopsis*

Size: 17 cm, 25 g

Description: A slim bird with a rather long tail which often sallies into the air in pursuit of insects. Pale grey upperparts, wings, tail, head and chest, with a sharp border on the lower chest to rufous underparts and undertail. Adults have a large black patch on the forehead, throat, and upper breast, but the black does not reach the eye. Bill blue-grey. Calls varied, but mainly variations on a loud clear 'why-you, wichye-oo', or a

mellow descending 'why you'.

Distribution: Breeds in coastal eastern Australia from Cape York to Victoria, especially in the tropics. They migrate from the southern part of their range to northern Queensland and New Guinea, leaving in February to April, and returning in August and September. One New Zealand record: a juvenile male killed by a cat at Stratford (April 1996).

Reading: Tennyson, A. 1997. *Notornis* 44: 267–269.