

Watola, G. 2011. The Discovery of New Zealand's Birds. (3rd Edition in prep.)
Based on: Watola, G. 2009. The Discovery of New Zealand's Birds. (2nd Edition)
Arun Books, Orewa, New Zealand.
Updated and amended text supplied by George Watola, October, 2011.
Page numbers follow Watola, G. 2009 (2nd Edition)
Tomtit: pp 203-205.

North Island Tomtit (Miromiro) *Petroica macrocephala toitoi* (Lesson 1828), Endemic
April 1824 Bay of Islands, Northland

Lesson (1828) & d'Urville on the *Coquille* found this species at the Bay of Islands in April 1824. The specific name was based on one of the Maori names.

South Island Tomtit (Ngirungiru) *Petroica macrocephala macrocephala* (Gmelin 1789), Endemic
April 1773 Dusky Sound, Fiordland

Forster discovered this tomtit at Dusky Sound (Hoare 1982). It was later painted at Queen Charlotte Sound, under the name *Turdus minutus*. The type locality is given as Queen Charlotte Sound by Gmelin, based on Latham's "Great-headed Titmouse". Holdaway et al. (2001) considered the tomtits should be split into at least three species (*macrocephala*, *toitoi*, *dannefaerdi*), with *marrineri* probably also a good species. Miller & Lambert (2006) found that the tomtits diverged relatively recently and thought they should be maintained as subspecies. Tennyson (2009) accepted Holdaway et al's view.

Chatham Island Tomtit *Petroica macrocephala chathamensis* Fleming 1950, Endemic
July 1840 Chatham Islands

Dieffenbach discovered this tomtit on his visit in May-July 1840. Gray described it as *Miro dieffenbachi*, but mistakenly used a South Island bird as the type specimen. Buller (1873) compared the type with South Island birds, and understandably could not accept Gray's species. However, he had also examined Chatham Island specimens. Mathews & Iredale resurrected this subspecies in 1913. Charles Fleming (1950) founded a new name over a hundred years later.

Snares Island Tomtit *Petroica macrocephala dannefaerdi* (Rothschild 1894), Endemic
23/1/1888 The Snares

Reischek collected a black tomtit on January 23rd 1888 on the Snares. He thought it "was probably entirely new" and sent it to Finsch.

"I followed the birds, and at once saw three strangers—a black tomtit and a swamp-lark, which were common and tame; and a bell-bird, which was rare and shy. Unfortunately I had brought no gun on shore, and there was no time to return for it, so Mr. Bethune and I chased them, and succeeded in obtaining two, one tomtit, and one swamp-lark; both of which I have sent to Dr. Finsch for examination. I have not seen either of these birds before, nor can I find any description of them, so they are probably entirely new. The tomtit was hopping about the lower branches of the trees near the ground, just as the tomtit of the South Island does. It differs, however, from it in its plumage, which is entirely black" (Reischek 1888).

Reischek originally correctly identified it as a tomtit. It was thought to be the same species as the Black Robin by both Finsch and Buller (1890), so was not described. In 1894 Dannefaerd collected more specimens and sent them to Rothschild (1894), who finally described it.

In 1944, Falla found "that the Snares Black "Robin" ("*Miro*" *dannefaerdi* Roths.) has the appearance,

behaviour and song of a tomtit (*Petroica*)“ (Fleming 1950). On the Snares Island Expedition in November-December 1947 Falla and Fleming vigorously debated whether it was a tomtit or a robin. Falla’s view prevailed.

Auckland Island Tomtit *Petroica macrocephala marrineri* (Mathews & Iredale 1913) Endemic
1913 Auckland Islands

Dr. Holmes, of the American Exploring Expedition, noted “a smaller species of a black colour spotted with yellow, which sang very sweetly” about 07/03/1840 (Wilkes 1845). McCormick, on the *Terror*, collected a tomtit on Enderby Island, Auckland Islands in c. November 1840. It was also found in January 1888 by Reischek, and collected by Lord Ranfurly in 1901 and 1902.

Mathews & Iredale described it in 1913, noticing it differed from the South Island Tomtit in its larger size. Both sexes resemble each other, unlike other tomtits (Fleming 1950).