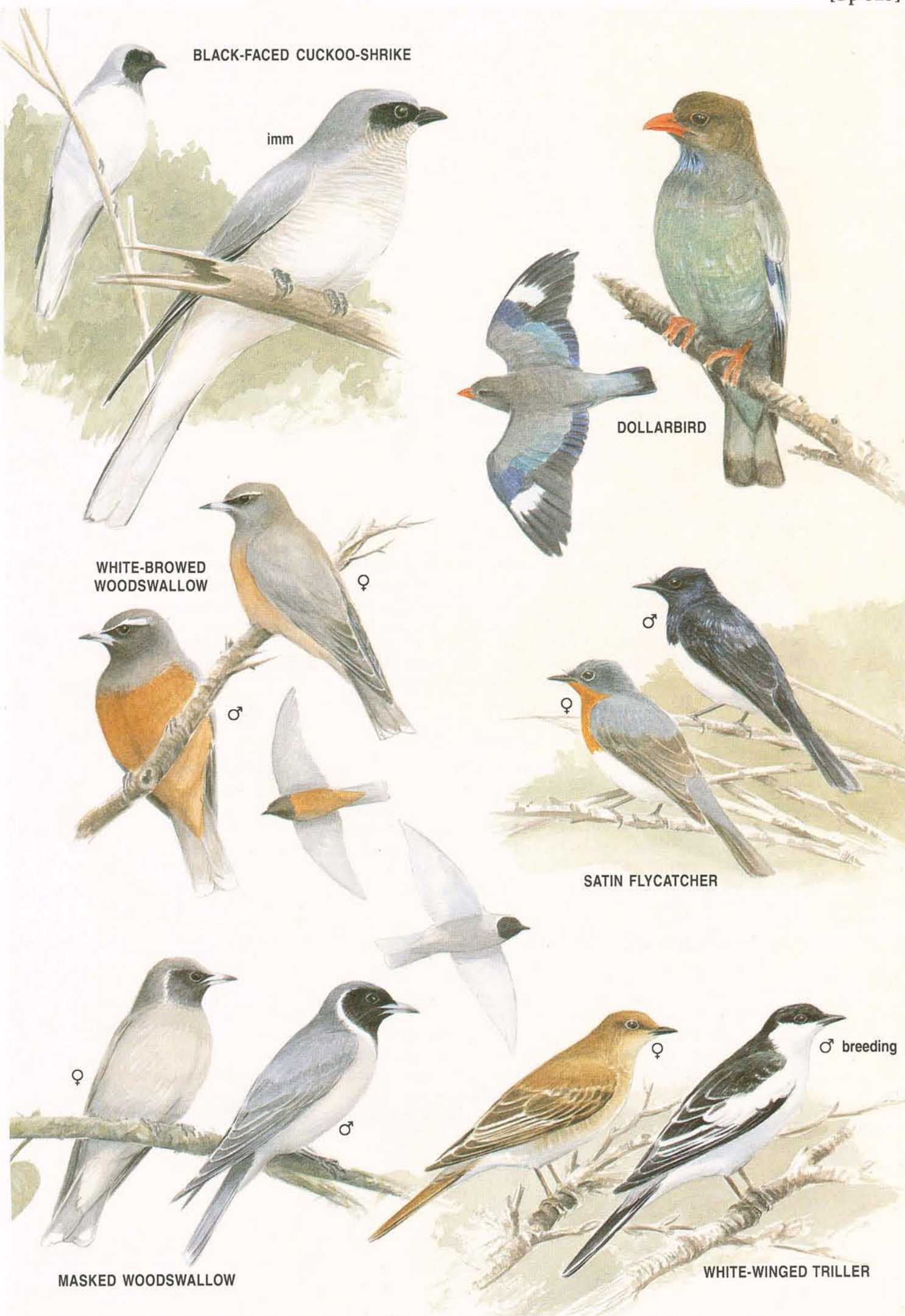


Passerines are the largest group of birds. They are small to medium sized land birds found worldwide, except on Antarctica. All species have four toes, three pointing forward and one back, well-adapted for perching. Most species are song-birds, with complex musical calls, but there are exceptions (e.g.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

WHITE-BROWED WOODSWALLOW *Artamus superciliosus*

Rare Australian vagrant

19 cm. In flight, like a small slim Starling soaring and gliding gracefully. Head, throat and upperparts dark blue-grey; chestnut underparts; a prominent broad white eyebrow in males, less distinct in females. Feeds on insects taken in the air and on the ground; also nectar. **Habitat:** Open country. Two NZ records. [Sp 325]



WOODSWALLOWS

Artamidae

10 species in Australasia; 2 are vagrants to New Zealand, although 1 of them bred once.

Woodswallows are not closely related to the swallows (Hirundinidae) and are probably related most closely to the bell magpies (Cracticidae). They are accomplished fliers, soaring and gliding gracefully on long, curved

wings as they catch insects with their short, stout bill with a strongly decurved upper surface. They also feed on the ground and take nectar and pollen. Woodswallows build a flimsy platform nest of fine twigs in a tree fork. They are gregarious, often roosting huddled in tight bunches.

325. WHITE-BROWED WOODSWALLOW *Artamus superciliosus* Plate 65

Size: 19 cm

Distribution: Breed in mainland Australia only, especially in eastern states. They are migratory and nomadic, and vagrants have reached New Zealand. Four males were seen at Naseby Forest, Central Otago, between December 1971 and July 1973, associating with

a pair of Masked Woodswallows that apparently bred there. On 21 September 1991, a single male appeared on the site of the limeworks at Miranda, Firth of Thames.

Reading: Child, P. 1974. *Notornis* 21: 85–87. Child, P. 1975. *Notornis* 22: 67–68. Darby, J.T. 1972. *Notornis* 19: 114–117.