

A large diverse group of birds of estuaries, coasts, riverbeds and farmland. Most are long-legged and feed in or near shallow water. Bill shape is varied; short and stubby in those (e.g. dotterels) that peck from the surface, but longer in those that feed in shallow water (e.g. stilts), or probe deeply (e.g. godwits). Flight strong and direct. Often form flocks while roosting or flying, but disperse to feed. Many species seen in NZ breed in the Arctic and arrive in September, with remnants of breeding plumage, and depart in March, often in breeding plumage. Most subadults and a few adults spend the southern winter here.

RINGED PLOVER *Charadrius hiaticula*

Rare Arctic vagrant

19 cm, 60 g. Small plump dotterel with a short stubby bill and a *white ring around neck* separating the brown nape from the back. Breeding adult has black breast band, eye patch, forecrown and line from eye to bill; bill orange, tipped black. Non-breeding has white forehead and pale buff eyebrow to well behind eye. Crown, eye patch, line to bill, back and breast band grey-brown. Bill black with dull orange base; orange legs. **Habitat:** Breeds Arctic. Two NZ records, at Firth of Thames. [Sp 179]



PLOVERS, DOTTERELS and LAPWINGS
Charadriidae

About 65 species, most of which are migratory. There are about 29 plovers and dotterels, of which 5 (formerly 6) breed in New Zealand and 8 visit as migrants from the Northern Hemisphere; 26 lapwings, 1 of which breeds in New Zealand. Some authorities place the Red-kneed Dotterel with the lapwings rather than the plovers.

In New Zealand, the terms plover and dotterel mean the same thing; there is no clear distinction. All are plumpish with a thick, short neck, short tail, small, rounded head

with a high forehead and bill shorter than the head, pointed and slightly swollen at the tip. The plumage is a blend of black, white, brown and grey, sometimes more colourful in breeding plumage. They often have a bold pattern in flight. They have a characteristic 'walk and stop' way of feeding.

Lapwings tend to be inland on pasture and around coastal wetlands. They have wattles on the face and spurs on the bend of the wing, and are noisy on the ground and in flight, by night as well as by day.

179. RINGED PLOVER *Charadrius hiaticula*

Plate 41

Size: 19 cm, 60 g

Distribution: Breed in northeastern Canada, Greenland, Iceland, northern Europe and northern Asia east to the Bering Sea. They winter mainly in Africa, but a few winter on the coasts of Japan, Korea and China, and vagrants reach Indonesia, New Guinea,

Australia and New Zealand. The two New Zealand records of single birds are both at the Firth of Thames (December 1970–May 1971 and November 1983–October 1985).

Reading: Brown, J.A. *et al.* 1971. *Notornis* 18: 262–266.