

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.

**AMERICAN GOLDEN PLOVER** *Pluvialis dominica*

Rare Arctic vagrant

26 cm, 165 g. Like Pacific Golden Plover but slightly larger, deeper chested with stouter bill and shorter legs (especially tibia). *Tip of tertials falls well short of tip of tail*, and wing usually much longer than tail. Breeding plumage male has *completely black flanks*; non-breeding adults and juveniles are greyer than Pacific Golden Plover, golden tones restricted to the back and scapulars. Juvenile has more mottling and barring on underparts, and ear coverts and cap are darker, making white eyebrow more prominent. **Habitat:** Breeds Arctic America. Migrates to inland S America. One confirmed NZ record. [Sp 187]



**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.

**187. AMERICAN GOLDEN PLOVER** *Pluvialis dominica* Plate 42

**Size:** 26 cm, 165 g

**Distribution:** Breed on the arctic and subarctic tundra from northern and central Alaska east to Baffin Island (Canada). They migrate to winter in the interior of South America from Bolivia and southern Brazil to central Argentin

ina. One New Zealand record accepted: Karikari Peninsula (January 1991); but two other likely records: two birds on Farewell Spit (1981) and one at Pollen Island, Auckland (1989). All were birds in non-breeding plumage and with Pacific Golden Plovers.