

Order Charadriiformes, Family Charadriidae,  
Genus Charadrius.

*Charadrius melanops* Vieillot (the Black-fronted Dotterel).

By A. M. Morgan, M.B., B.S.

Description.—Upper Surface—A triangular patch of black, with the base at the lores, extends from the bill to the middle of the forehead, bounded on either side by a patch of white extending over each eye as a narrow band, and meeting behind to form a crescent at the nape; a fine line of black above the eye runs through the ear coverts, and extends backwards to form a broad crescent-shaped band at the nape;

vertex and occiput brownish grey; back brownish grey; scapularies dark chestnut; rump and upper tail coverts light chestnut. Under Surface—Throat white, followed by a crescent-shaped band of black, with a triangular-shaped lower border; rest of under surface white. Tail—Two outer feathers white, second pair white, with a broad irregular band of dull black near the point, which is white; third and fourth pairs dull black, tipped with white; centre feathers dull black, tipped with light brown. Wing—Primaries black; secondaries brown with a large patch of white on the inner webs, becoming larger to the last, which is all white; wing coverts brown-edged and tipped with white; axillaries and under wing coverts white. Iris—Dark brown. Legs—Pale brown, nails and tips of toes black. Bill—Dull orange at base; tip black. Length (in the flesh), 15 cm. Weight, 26.3 grams.

Distribution.—Australia generally, including Tasmania.

Habitat.—The banks of rivers, creeks, and waterholes.

Habits.—It is essentially an inland bird; for, although it is occasionally found close to the sea, when suitable conditions exist, it does not frequent the beaches, nor is it anywhere partial to salt water; on the other hand, almost every piece of fresh water in the interior, however small, has its attendant pair. They are usually seen in pairs, occasionally in threes or fours, but never in large flocks. They are quiet, confiding birds, and are easily approached for observation, as they feed along the edges of water. They do not migrate; a pair may be found at the same pool or reach of a creek year after year.

Flight.—Straight and rapid.

Call.—They are very silent birds; only occasionally they utter a weak "chet-chet" like the Red-capped Dotterel.

Food.—Insects and tiny molluscs.

Nesting Season.—September and October; though odd pairs may continue to breed until December, I do not know of more than one brood being reared in a season.

Nest.—None is made. The eggs are either laid in bare sand or perhaps more often on a pebbly bank of a stream. As a rule the bird leaves the eggs quietly, and goes right away, but if come upon suddenly it can do the wounded-bird antics to perfection.

Eggs.—Three are laid. They are pointed oval in shape, with a rough and lustreless shell. Some specimens are much more rounded in shape than is usual with this family. The ground colour is stone grey, uniformly flecked and streaked

with minute black markings. Average size of seven eggs, 2.90 cm. x 2.15 cm. Largest egg, 3.15 cm. x 2.20 cm. Smallest egg, 2.65 cm. x 2.15 cm.

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