Red-capped Plover - *Charadrius ruficapillus*

The Red-capped Plover - *Charadrius ruficapillus* - is a small bird (14 to 16 centimetres long). Bright rufous crown with black front edge and black eye stripe. Black bill and legs. White forehead, upper parts brown. Females are similar with duller crown and less distinct black markings.

Busy, fast moving bird. Runs in short spurts along the water's edge and across nearby flats. Usually seen individually or in pairs, forming flocks in non-breeding periods. Flocks fly fast and erratically, displaying dark then light surfaces as they turn and wheel.

The Red-capped Plover is a surface feeder but seldom walks into the water. It locates prey by sight and feeds on a variety of foods including beetles, seeds, amphipod crustacea and molluscs. Tends to feed away from the edge of the water and may be seen long distances from water.

Lives on sheltered estuaries and beaches as well as coastal and inland lakes. Some of the largest concentrations are on inland salt lakes; it is also found on salty edges of waterways and on claypans. Found all over Australia in suitable habitats and is very adaptable. Red-capped Plovers in coastal habitats do not usually undertake long-distance movements, those living inland may move long distances between wetlands and coastal locations in response to rainfall and wetlands drying out.

Breeding habits vary with location. In coastal southern Australia breeding takes place between July and March, mostly between September and December. In Darwin breeding takes place between March and July. Inland sites record breeding year round in response to local rainfall and flooding. Coastal breeding is usually by isolated pairs while loose colonies may form inland. The usual clutch of two eggs is laid in a scrape in sand, gravel or shingle; occasionally in short grass, sometimes with one or two pieces of twig, grass or stone at the edge. At inland nesting sites, on damp substrate, nests are made of vegetation.

Common; found all around Australia in suitable habitats.
Also known as the Red-capped Dotterel, Red-necked Plover, Sandlark or Sandpiper.