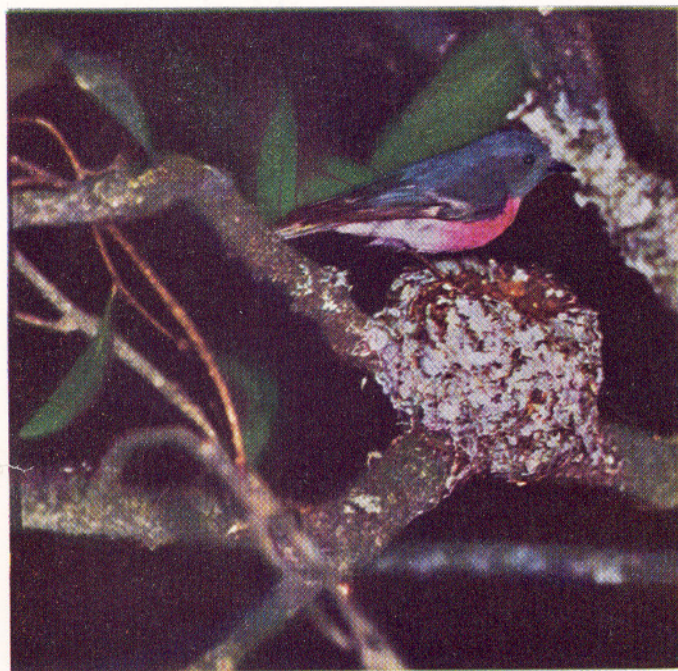


ROBINS



Rose Robin
Scarlet Robin

*The colour illustrations are from photos by N. Chaffer,
except the Scarlet Robin by E. McNamara.*

Flame Robin
Red-capped Robin



• Scarlet Robin (adult male)

Photo: A. J. Elliott

Males of the genus *Petroica* are reasonably well illustrated in Cayley's *What Bird is That?* (four of the five species in colour here). However the 'brown' birds, except for the distinctive female Scarlet Robin, are not easily separated; ways of doing this are described in this 'Bird in the Hand'. The main diagnostic character is the amount of white on the outer tail feathers. First year or 'brown' males cannot yet be reliably separated from first year or adult females on plumage characters alone, both may have some colour on the underparts. It is not yet known when a 'brown' male attains full adult body plumage. At the moment, immature 'brown' males can only be definitely distinguished if they

have enlarged cloacal protuberances during the breeding season (Disney 1967).

The Hooded Robin, formerly *Melanodryas cucullata*, is now included in the genus *Petroica* but has been omitted from this 'Bird in the Hand' because it is a larger bird and does not present the same problems of identification.

Reference

Disney, H. J. de S. (1967), 'Sexing Passerines by Cloaca Examination', *Aust. Bird Bander* 5: 36-37.

Drawings by B. Crew

Scarlet Robin *Petroica multicolor*

Wing length: 70-78 mm, usually 74-75 mm (25 measured).

Tail length: 50-58 mm, usually 54-56 mm (25 measured).

Forehead: Well marked white spot.

Upper parts: Brown to greyish brown.

Throat: Whitish grey.

Breast: Red.

Wing

Lesser coverts: Brown like the back.

Median coverts: With well marked buff, sometimes whitish, tips.

Secondary coverts: Dark brown, sometimes with well marked white tips and edges.

Primaries and secondaries: The first wing bar extends from the base of the secondaries to primary No. 6 or No. 8 depending on wear. The second bar extends from the tertials to primary No. 6. Both bars are buffy white to white.

Tail: Dark brown.

Upper side: Outer tail feathers—TYPE A: No. 6 all white except for some brown on the outer edge of the inner web. No. 5 white from the tip forming a narrow wedge of varying length on the inner web towards the base. TYPE B: No. 6 mostly white. No. 5 little white at the tip and only a narrow edge of white on the outer web.

No. 6 (outermost feather) is invariably shorter than No. 5 and usually shorter than Nos. 4, 3 and 2. It is never longer than No. 1 (centre feather).

DIAGNOSTIC CHARACTER

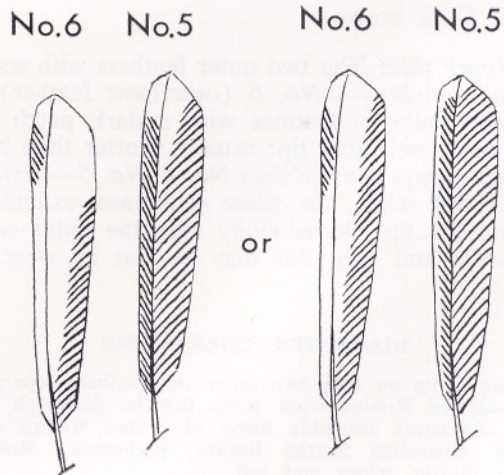
'Brown' plumaged Scarlet Robins may be distinguished from all other members of the genus by the red breast, similar to the adult female.



• Scarlet Robin (female) at nest.

Photo: N. Chaffer

TAIL FEATHERS



Red-capped Robin *Petroica goodenovii*

Wing length: 60-65 mm, usually 61-63 mm (30 measured).

Tail length: 43-48 mm, usually 44-46 mm (30 measured).

Forehead: Usually light to dark red and extending on to crown, but may be same colour as crown.

Upper parts: Grey brown.

Throat: Brownish buff or greyish white.

Breast: Dark brownish buff, sometimes whiter, with traces of pink in both males and females.

Wing

Lesser and median coverts: Blackish brown with or without well marked buff edges, depending on wear.

Secondary coverts: Blackish brown with well marked buff edges when feathers new.

Primaries and secondaries: With two wing bars, the first extending from the base of the secondaries to primary No. 6. The second consists of the white or buff edges of the tertials and secondaries only. The amount of white on the primaries and secondaries depends on wear.

Tail: Dark brown.

Upper side: The two outer feathers with some white as follows—No. 6 (outermost feather)—mostly white, sometimes with a dark patch on the outer web near tip; usually shorter than No. 5 and always shorter than No. 4. No. 5—narrow outer web white, the white sometimes extending round the tip. Occasionally only the outer edge is white and even this may be lost by wear.

DIAGNOSTIC CHARACTERS

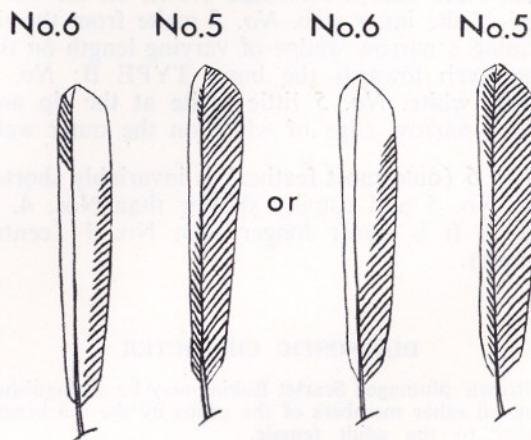
The white on only two outer tail feathers separates Red-capped Robins from Rose Robins. Although the tail characters resemble those of Flame Robins and some Australian Scarlet Robins, Red-capped Robins have shorter wings and tail.



• Red-capped Robin (female) at nest.

Photo: N. Chaffer

TAIL FEATHERS



Flame Robin *Petroica phoenicea*

Wing length: 72-78 mm, usually 74-77 mm (32 measured).

Tail length: 52-56 mm, usually 54-56 mm (32 measured).

Forehead: Variable, no spot to small dirty buff or well marked white spot.

Upper parts: Varying from greyish to sandy or rufous brown.

Throat: Brownish grey buff, sometimes with some yellow-orange to orange feathers.

Breast: Similar to throat, but darker and sometimes with yellow-orange to orange feathers in both males and females.

Wing

Lesser coverts: Dark blackish brown.

Median coverts: Blackish brown with well marked buff tips.

Secondary coverts: Blackish brown with deep buff to white tips.

Primaries and secondaries: A bar of buffy white to white from the base of the secondaries to primary No. 7. The second bar ill-defined, formed by the dark buff or white edges of the tertials, secondaries and primaries to No. 5; the extent of white on the primaries and secondaries is affected by wear.

Tail: Dark brown.

Upper side: Outer tail feathers—No. 6 mostly white on the outside, or at least the outer diagonal half. No. 5 has a very narrow white edge to the outer web.

No. 6 is usually equal, or nearly equal in length to No. 5 but never less than No. 1 (centre), which is the shortest.

DIAGNOSTIC CHARACTER

The length of the wing and tail immediately separates this species from the Red-capped Robin, with which it might be confused.



• Flame Robin (female) at nest.

Photo: N. Chaffer

TAIL FEATHERS

No.6

No.5



Pink Robin *Petroica rodinogaster*

Wing length: 63-67 mm (8 measured).

Tail length: 48-56 mm, usually 55 mm (8 measured).

Forehead: Variable, with small white spot well marked to absent.

Upper parts: Dark brown with reddish brown tinge, giving a dark appearance.

Throat: Brownish buff.

Breast: Brownish buff, sometimes slightly marked with pink.

Wing

Lesser and median coverts: Dark brown.

Secondary coverts: Brown, sometimes with deep buff edges.

Primaries and secondaries: With two well marked deep buff bars, the first extending from the bases of the secondaries usually to No. 5 primary and the second from the buff-edged tertials to No. 5 primary.

NOTE: Adult males have no wing bars.

Tail: Dark brown.

Upper side: The outer tail feathers are pale brown, NOT white.

DIAGNOSTIC CHARACTERS

The lack of white on the tail separates Pink Robins of all ages and sexes from any other Australian member of this genus.



• Pink Robin (female) at nest.

Photo: G. S. Chapman

TAIL FEATHERS

No.6

No.5



Rose Robin *Petroica rosea*

Wing length: 62-64 mm, usually 62-63 mm (11 measured).

Tail length: 54-59 mm, usually 55-56 mm (11 measured).

Forehead: Small white spot.

Upper parts: Greyish brown.

Throat: Greyish white.

Breast: Grey, sometimes slightly to well marked with pink.

Wing

Lesser and median coverts: Grey brown.

Secondary coverts: Grey brown, the inner ones sometimes tipped whitish.

Primaries and secondaries: With two well marked whitish bars, the first extending from the bases of the secondaries usually to No. 5 primary and the second from the whitish edged tertials to No. 5 primary. The markings on the primaries may be almost lost through wear.

NOTE: Adult males have no wing bars.

Tail: Dark brown.

Upper side: Three outer tail feathers partly white as follows—No. 6 (outermost feather)—much shorter than No. 5 and mostly white. No. 5—inner web half white. No. 4—large white spot at tip.

DIAGNOSTIC CHARACTER

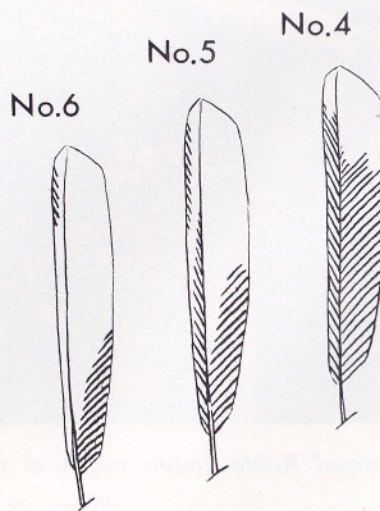
The large white spot on tail feather No. 4 separates Rose Robins in 'brown' plumage from all other members of the genus.



• *Rose Robin (female) at nest.*

Photo: N. Chaffer

TAIL FEATHERS





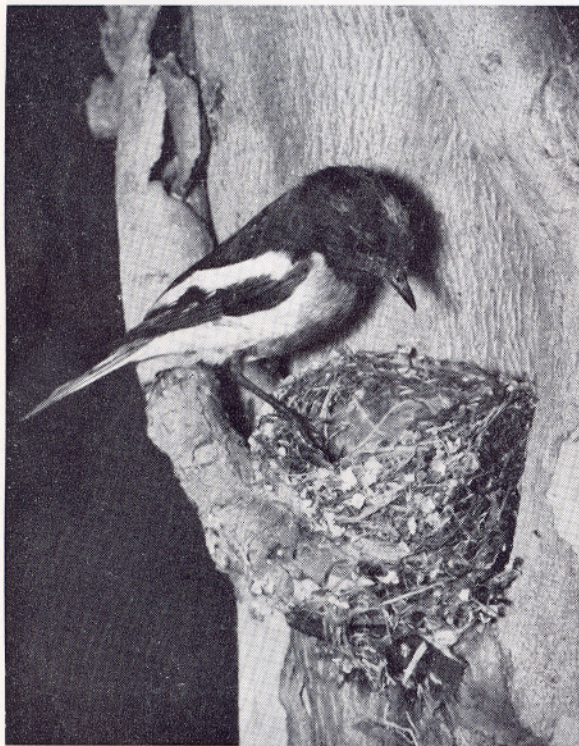
• *Pink Robin (adult male).*

Photo: Anon.



• *Rose Robin (adult male) at nest.*

Photo: N. Chaffer



• *Red-capped Robin (adult male) at nest.*

Photo: N. Chaffer



• *Flame Robin (adult male) at nest.*

Photo: R. P. Cooper