

## Tropic Birds – Phaethontidae

**Red-tailed Tropic Bird** *Phaethon rubricauda* **LCN** (RV to main islands)

L 46cm Tail 40cm WS 1.12m Wt 800g

Elegant, largely white diving seabird with impressively long red tail streamers. *Head and upperparts all white* or occasionally light pink, apart from *black crescent before and above eye*, black shafts to the primaries, some black may also show on tertiaries, flanks and tail. Underparts all white or light pink. *Very long red tail* streamers are lost in moult. *Bill coral red, long, strong and pointed*. Immature lacks tail streamers, has dark bill, becoming yellow, then orange, and barred black and white upperparts. Flight more leisurely than other tropic birds. **VOICE/CALL** Harsh scream, sometimes more of a rattle, hence common name of Bosun Bird after bosun's whistle. **BREEDING** Kermadecs on ledge or cliff face. Single egg laid December–January, hatching February, fledging April–May. **FEEDING** Fish and squid, by plunge-diving, often from considerable height. **P&R** 32,000. Tropical Indian and Pacific oceans, very pelagic. **T&M** No known threats, though vulnerable to introduced pest predators. **BV** Kermadecs, but small numbers in northeastern waters as far south as Bay of Plenty.

**White-tailed Tropic Bird** *Phaethon lepturus* **LCV**

L 38cm Tail 40cm WS 92cm Wt 300g

Elegant, black and white diving seabird with immensely long tail streamers. Similar to Red-tailed but has *black wing-tips, diagonal black bar on innerwing, chrome-yellow bill and white tail streamers*. Immature lacks streamers and black barring on back. **VOICE/CALL** Similar to Red-tailed. **FEEDING** As with Red-tailed. **P&R** 50,000. Tropical and subtropical zones, all 3 oceans, occasional sightings in NZ waters. **T&M** No known threats. **BV** Chance viewing, most likely northeast coast.

## Frigatebirds – Fregatidae

**Lesser Frigatebird** *Fregata ariel* **LCV**

L 80cm WS 2.3m Wt 1.0kg

Very large, long-winged, long-tailed, acrobatic seabird. Male (A) plumage all black, often with purple metallic sheen on back, apart from *pale whitish patches on flanks* under the wings. Female (B) similar but with *broad white band across breast and upper belly*. Male has *red gular pouch*, especially in breeding season. *Tail very long and deeply forked*. Bill long, dark and *distinctly hooked*. Feet reddish brown. Immature (C) as female but with *buff head* and neck. In flight 'W' shape of wings and long, deeply forked tail are diagnostic. **FEEDING** Flying fish and squid taken on the wing, also kleptoparasitises other seabirds, especially boobies and tropic birds, forcing them to disgorge catch. **P&R** 200,000. Pan-tropical, occasional sightings in northern waters. **T&M** No known threats. **BV** Chance sightings, Kermadecs, NE of NZ after cyclone.

**Greater Frigatebird** *Fregata minor* **LCV**

L 1.1m WS 2.3m Wt 1.5kg

**A B** Very large, black seabird with long, deeply forked tail. Very similar to Lesser but larger, *male (A) all black* apart from gular pouch and *green rather than purple sheen* to back feathers. Female (B) with *black with white chest and throat and red ring around eye*. Both sexes have brownish band across secondaries, visible in flight. Bill long and hooked, male's dark, female's reddish. Feet reddish. Immature as female but with *buff head*. **FEEDING** As for Lesser. **P&R** 350,000–1 million. Pan-tropical. **T&M** No known threats. **BV** As for Lesser.

