

FROM FIELD AND STUDY

Unusual Behavior of a White-tailed Tropic-bird in California.—On June 20, 1964, a White-tailed Tropic-bird (*Phaethon lepturus*) was sighted at Newport Bay, Orange County, California. The bird was attracted to the area by model gliders that were flown from the bluffs overlooking the bay. The tropic-bird was evidently a male, for it continually displayed to the gliders throughout its stay and appeared ready to mate with them. The gliders were silent radio controlled models, having wingspans ranging from about three to six feet, and were colored red, yellow or white. They were flown over the bluffs and were never more than one hundred yards from the controller.

When the tropic-bird first arrived it started flying alongside one of the model gliders and consistently gave a *keek* call. After a short time the bird started flying directly above the glider of his choice, and when it was a little above and behind the glider it would throw back its head and drop its tail, assuming an angle of about forty-five degrees with the ground (fig. 1). The bird would hold this position for as long as ten or fifteen seconds, during which time it would give an excited *keek-keek-keek* call. The bird was often so close to the glider that it was able to drag its tail along the top of the glider while in the forty-five degree position. Several times the bird came into the forty-five degree position directly above one of the gliders that was still in the hands of the owner; in these instances the bird was able to remain motionless in the air by backpaddling with his wings, still holding the forty-five degree position, with the end of his tail touching the glider.

After the tropic-bird had been displaying to the gliders for about an hour it apparently was attracted to a small yellow glider on the ground. The bird made several approaches from behind the glider, coming into the forty-five degree position above it, then gliding off to make another run from behind. Eventually the bird landed and then proceeded to mount the glider, attempting to copulate with it. The glider tilted when the bird mounted it and apparently frightened him, but he returned and landed on five occasions and each time attempted copulation. Before the tropic-bird mounted the glider he would land beside it, snuggle close to it, and run his head

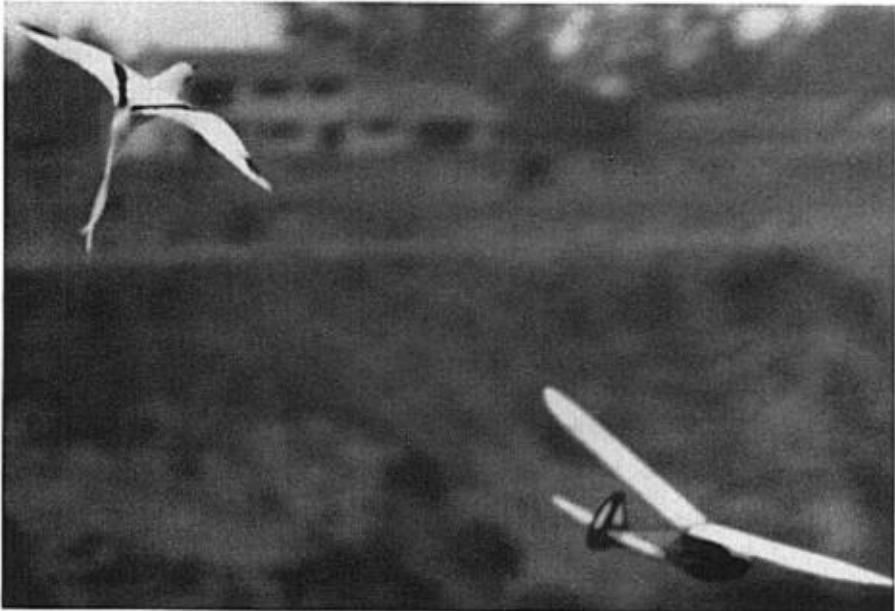


Fig. 1. White-tailed Tropic-bird displaying to a model glider.

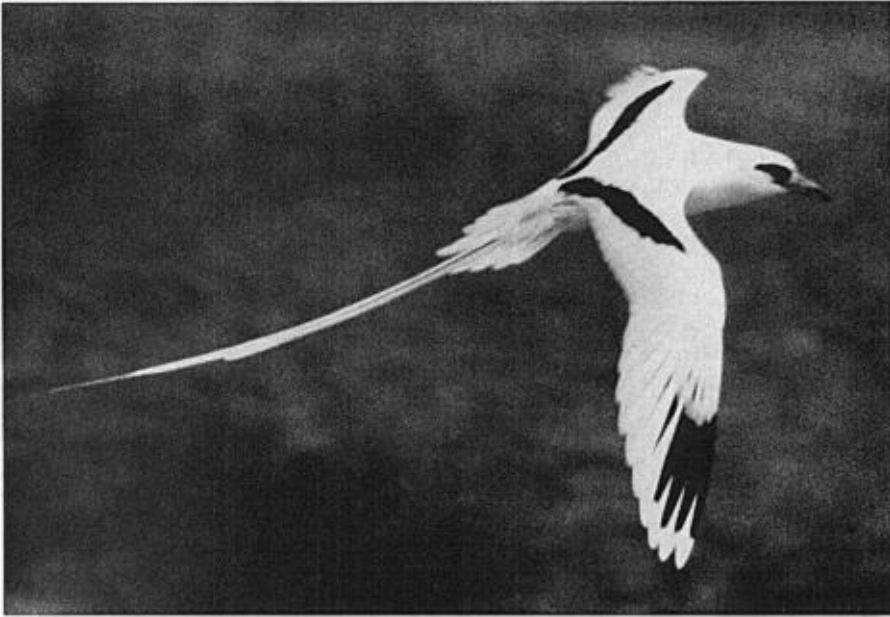


Fig. 2. A White-tailed Tropic-bird at Newport Beach, California, June 20, 1964.

and neck along the fuselage. When the glider was finally removed, the bird flew off directly toward the open ocean.

According to the members of the Harbor Slope Soaring Society, who were flying the gliders, the bird was first seen on May 24, when it was somewhat wary and only flew with the gliders well up in the air. The bird became less wary each week, and by June 20 it actually allowed such close approach that McCaskie was able to touch it. The bird was last seen flying with the gliders on June 23.

The main distinguishing marks of the White-tailed Tropic-bird are well shown in figure 2. The bird had a definite rosy wash on the underparts, and the tail appeared quite pink in the field. The bill was yellowish-green merging to black at the tip; the tarsus was blue-gray, and the feet were black.

This appears to be the first recorded occurrence of the White-tailed Tropic-bird in the Eastern Pacific Ocean (Palmer, Handbook of North American Birds, 1961:262), and it is certainly the first recorded occurrence in California. The closest to California that the species had been noted previously was in the Hawaiian Islands where it breeds. It is known to wander widely over the tropical waters of the world, however, and it certainly is capable of reaching the west shore of North America without the aid of man. Now that the White-tailed Tropic-bird has been proved capable of reaching the waters around southern California, observers are cautioned to take extra care in distinguishing it from the Red-billed Tropic-bird (*P. aethereus*), which occasionally wanders to these waters, for the immatures of both species look very much alike.—WES HETRICK, *Santa Ana, California*, and GUY MCCASKIE, *Tahoe City, California, July 26, 1964*.

Longevity Record of a Black-footed Albatross.—On September 5, 1945, I placed a Fish and Wildlife Service band no. 44-711603 on a Black-footed Albatross (*Diomedea nigripes*) at latitude 43° 29' N, longitude 136° 30' W, a location about 515 nautical miles west of the closest land at Point Blanco, Oregon. On February 27, 1963, this albatross was recovered at Pearl and Hermes Reef, Southeast Islands, Hawaii. The old band, which required acid etching to be read, was replaced with band no. 737-31376. This bird was at least 18 years old when recovered.