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## THE YELLOW-BILLED TROPIC-BIRD.

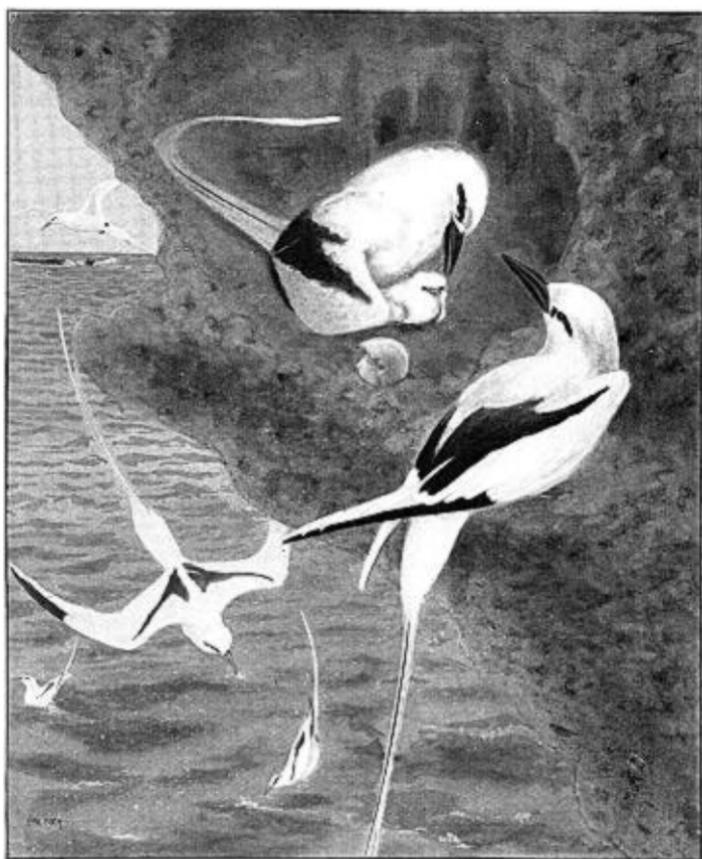
(*Phaethon americana*.)

BY KARL PLATH, CHICAGO, ILL.

To observe this bird of elegant form and plumage, Bermuda offers the ideal locality. It breeds there abundantly and is much in evidence from February to October. Locally it is known as "Bo'sun bird" or "long-tail."

The Bermudas are the most northern breeding ranges of these birds and it is a common sight to see small flocks of them gracefully wheeling in the air, uttering their cries of "tik-tik," or "click-et-click-et." Occasionally, one will drop in a spiral to the water, where it rests with tail erect, bobbing like a cork.

Their nesting sites may be found in varied localities from Somerset Island, along the South Shore up to Castle Harbor and also on the islands in Great Sound. They may be in holes in the faces of cliffs, on flat ledges of rock, in the deep grass which grows on some of the outer islands, in fissures or under cedar-bushes. In fact, it may be said, that the Tropic-Bird has more varied nesting places than any other bird. Some writers claim that it also breeds in hollow trees, but this does not apply to the Bermuda Tropic-Birds. The nests have no lining and the one egg, which is about  $1\frac{1}{2} \times 2\frac{1}{4}$  inches, is alternately brooded by both parents, incubation lasting 28 days.



Yellow-billed Tropic Bird

The breeding season is from April to August and some pairs rear two broods in that time. They are fearless while on their nests and may be handled without any attempt at escape. It must not be gathered from this, that they are meek in disposition; they are not, and as soon as an intruder is discovered, they set up a harsh, peevish cry and peck viciously with their powerful bills, which can inflict considerable injury.

The young birds are covered with a fine white down, with dark skin between the eyes. They are fed on partly digested food regurgitated by the parents, consisting of small minnows, flying fish, squids, etc. After the young bird is a few weeks old, the parents leave it to itself, visiting it only at feeding time. It remains in the nest until strong enough to fly, a period of about two months.

The air is truly the proper environment of the Tropic-Bird, where it is a marvel of grace and beauty; the long tail feathers adding much to the effect. On land it is very awkward, and owing to the very small feet and the fact that they are placed so far back, it is unable to walk or stand. It usually crawls on its breast aided by its wings, and as flight from a flat surface is impossible, it gains a suitable elevation before launching in the air.

There are only two other American species of these birds, the Red-billed Tropic-Bird (*Phaëthon aethereous*) found in the West Indies and the Red-Tailed Tropic-Bird (*Phaëthon rubricauda*) of the western coast of Tropical America, both considerably larger than the Yellow-billed. The former has fourteen tail feathers and the latter sixteen, the two central feathers being very much attenuated and of a rich crimson color.

The Tropic-Birds inhabit the warm seas of both Hemispheres and are often seen hundreds of miles from any land.

DESCRIPTION—SEXES SIMILAR.

General color—snowy white. A crescent-shaped black mark in front of and passing through the eye, extending

about one inch beyond. First six primaries of wing, black with inner edge and tips white.

Tertials, black, with tips—white. A narrow black line extending from them forward to bend of wing.

Several grayish streaks on flanks.

Larger quills of wings and tail—black with white tips.

The two central feathers of the twelve forming the tail are very much elongated and usually are tinted with salmon pink, except at the tip where the color fades into white.

Bill may be either yellow or orange-red. In the latter case the plumage is (strongly) tinted with a beautiful salmon pink—this tint is strongest on sides of neck and breast and on the two central tail feathers. In birds having the yellow bill, the pink is confined to the tail and is sometimes wanting there. The red billed birds are fully adult in plumage, though breeding pairs may consist of both varieties.

Legs—pale bluish-flesh, this color extending almost to first joint of toes. The four toes are connected in one web and these and the webs are black.

Eyes—bluish or brownish-black.

Egg—purplish brown with blotches of darker brown, thickest at larger end.

#### DIMENSIONS.

Total length—31 inches.

Long tail feathers averaging 18 inches, sometimes 22 inches.

Wing— $11\frac{1}{4}$  inches, extent 38 inches.

Bill—along ridge, 2 inches; tip to gape,  $2\frac{1}{2}$  inches.

Tarsus—1 inch, middle toe  $1\frac{5}{8}$  inches.

#### A BREWER BLACKBIRD ROOST IN REDLANDS.

BY FLORENCE MERRIAM BAILEY.

The Brewer Blackbird is a handsome bird, with glossy, greenish black body, of purplish black head and neck, and strikingly pale yellow eyes. He moves with a dove-like motion of the head and the sideways swing of a strong, habitual