
An observation of Red-tailed Tropicbird *Phaethon rubricauda* in Tacna, Peru

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Este artículo describe la primera observación de *Phaethon rubricauda* en el Perú. El ave se observó en Boca del Río ubicado en el Departamento de Tacna, el 10 de junio 1996. El autor en esta oportunidad visitó este pueblo con la finalidad de ver aves marinas. El ave fue observada volando a pocos metros de la orilla; su larga cola roja se pudo ver bien. El ave tenía una máscara negra, y su dorso era blanco, algo que distingue el ave de *Phaethon aethereus*. Las plumas en la punta del ala tenían bordes negros igual que las secundarias de más adentro del ala. Los dibujos en el ala describían patrones menos extensos que los de *Phaethon lepturus*.

During recent years I have spent a significant amount of time watching seabirds from Boca del Río, dpto. Tacna, Peru. The village is c. 55 km west-south-west of Tacna. The most important observation is that of an adult Red-tailed Tropicbird *Phaethon rubricauda* on 10 June 1996.

The observation was made at c.10h00 in overcast conditions (thus the observation was unimpeded by bright reflective light). The bird flew south, relatively close in shore, c.5 m above the sea. The bird's underparts appeared all-white. Because of its flight, I first thought that the bird was a Rock Dove *Columba livia* and was about to direct my attention elsewhere, when I saw the long, thin tail. At that point I realised I had a tropicbird (*Phaethon* spp.). Using 10 x 42 binoculars, I noticed that the tail was red and observed the black mask around the eye. As the bird drew level I was able to see its back and wing patterns, which were white with some black edgings to the inner secondaries and primaries. I did not see the colour of the bill very well, but the distinguishing features described above separate it from other *Phaethon*^{1,2}, especially Red-billed Tropicbird *P. aethereus*, which has black markings on its back and more extensive black on the primaries. White-tailed Tropicbird *P. lepturus* also has more extensive black markings on the wings and, importantly, white tail streamers.

The nearest known breeding site for *Phaethon rubricauda* is the distant Isla Sala-y-Gómez (Chile) where a few pairs nest (R. S. Ridgely pers. comm.) and it probably also breeds on Easter Island³. This is the first published record for Peru and possibly one of the very few records from coastal South America.

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References

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