

General Field Notes

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An Additional Red-billed Tropicbird Sighted in North Carolina Offshore Waters

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On 27 August 1983, during a trip on the headboat *Captain Stacey* out of Morehead City, N.C., we observed an immature Red-billed Tropicbird (*Phaethon aethereus*). The bird was sighted approximately 40 miles SE of Morehead City and was flying at a height of about 40 feet in a northeasterly direction. We studied the bird through 10X and 7X binoculars as it circled once about 100 yards off the stern of the boat and then continued out of sight. The time of observation was about 0900, and light conditions were excellent, with the sun at our backs. Wind was light, out of the northeast, and seas were only 1 to 2 feet, thereby making for ideal viewing conditions even though the boat was moving at a high rate of speed.

The bird was in view for about 1 minute, and the following field marks were noted. Size was similar to a Royal Tern (*Sterna maxima*), and the bird flew with full, sweeping wingbeats, faster than a large tern's. There were prominent black areas on the basal half of the primaries and adjacent portions of the primary coverts. The mantle color appeared gray. The tail was white, wedge-shaped, and without elongated central feathers. The bill was orange, and the white head had a black stripe extending through the eye and back to the nape, almost encircling the head.

Articles on tropicbirds by Lee, Wingate, and Kale (Amer. Birds 35:887-890) and Lee and Irvin (Chat 47:1-13) were consulted, as was the new *Seabirds, An Identification Guide* by Peter Harrison (Houghton Mifflin Co., Boston, 1983). We are convinced the bird was an immature Red-billed Tropicbird.

This represents the fifth record of the Red-billed Tropicbird from the Carolinas and the second of an individual in immature plumage. Like the others, this sighting did not appear to be storm related. Of the four previous records, three are from May and one is from early September. The August record reported here partly bridges the hiatus between these

months and further suggests that some of the previously published nondescriptive reports of White-tailed Tropicbirds may have been *P. aethereus*.

Expansion of White Ibis Nesting in North Carolina

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Since the first nesting by the White Ibis (*Eudocimus albus*) in the Carolinas was recorded in 1922 at Fairlawn Plantation, Charleston County, S.C. (Sprunt and Chamberlain 1949), the ibis breeding population has increased and spread northward. The species was first recorded as a breeding bird in North Carolina in 1950 when 1200 White Ibis nested at Lennons Marsh, Robeson County (Stephans 1950). However, a permanent colony was not established at this site (Potter et al. 1980). In 1963, an estimated six pairs of White Ibis nested at Battery Island, Brunswick County (Adams 1963). The breeding population at Battery Island has increased over the past two decades to 3737 pairs in 1983

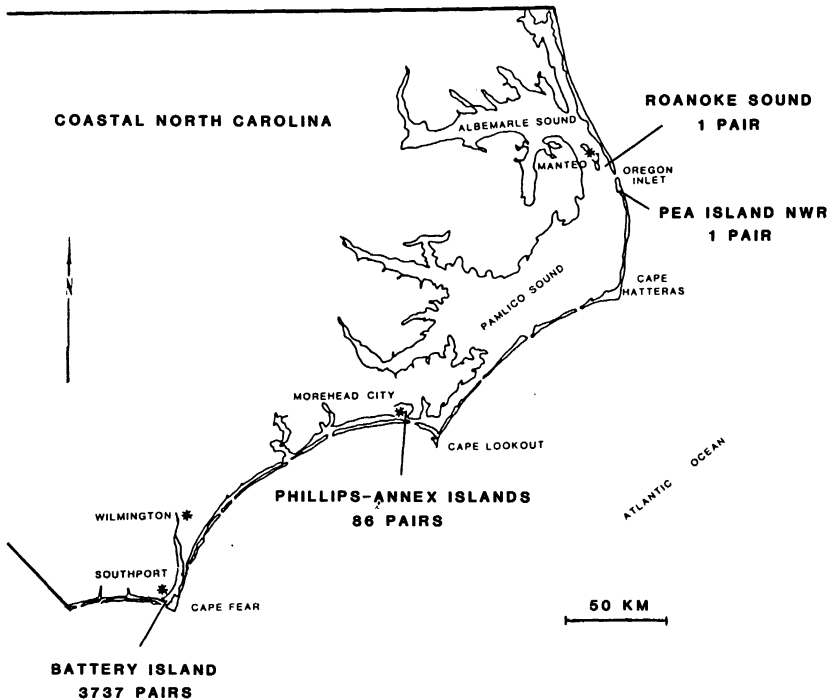


Fig. 1. Distribution of White Ibis breeding population in North Carolina, 1983.