

New Records from the Northern Territory

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McKean and Gray (1973) recorded some unusual sea-birds that appeared along the coast of the Northern Territory after cyclonic conditions with sustained rough seas during late January and early February, 1973.

Similar windy conditions and rough seas prevailed during most of January 1974 in association with a southward movement of the north-western monsoonal trough, and unusual numbers of seabirds, in particular, Frigatebirds, *Fregata ariel* and *F. minor*, Brown Gannets, *Sula leucogaster*, and Sooty Terns, *Sterna fuscata*, were recorded. Some Wedge-tailed Shearwaters, *Puffinus pacificus*, Common Noddies, *Anous stolidus*, and Bridled Terns, *Sterna anaetheta*, were also recorded.

Three species previously unreported from the Northern Territory were recorded; one species, the Christmas Island Frigatebird, *F. andrewsi*, has not previously been reported from Australia.

Phalaropus lobatus, Red-necked Phalarope.

On January 20, 1974, several similar waders were seen flying along the shore at Lee Point, near Darwin. One bird left the flock, flew in and alighted at the edge of a shallow pool in the near vicinity of Dr. and Mrs. C. M. Perrins, who readily identified it as *P. lobatus*. The bird was extremely tame and a series of photographs taken of it confirm the record.

On January 23, 1974, Dr. M. C. Bartlett saw a phalarope feeding along a small creek near Mindil Beach, Darwin. His field notes show the species to be another example of *P. lobatus*. Photographs taken of this bird substantiate the record.

On January 27, 1974, Mr. H. A. F. Thompson found an exhausted *P. lobatus* at East Point near Darwin, N.T. The bird later died and was prepared as a study skin (CSIRO Division Wildlife Research Collections Reg. No. DL.20264).

A single bird was seen by J. L. McKean and H. A. F. Thompson at the Sanderson Sewerage Works, near Darwin, on March 9, 1974, and again on March 23 and 24, 1974, at the same locality by Messrs. J. L. McKean, H. A. F. Thompson, A. J. Estbergs and D. A. Stewart. The bird was quite tame and at times allowed approach to within 10 metres. It was identified as *P. lobatus* on the basis of its swimming behaviour, the presence of a conspicuous black eye smudge extending back beyond the ear coverts, and its thin black bill which was slightly longer than the length of its head. In flight, always low over the water, it showed a clear white wing-bar and two white patches on either side of an otherwise blackish tail. The hind neck and back half of the crown were sooty grey, much darker than the grey of the mantle, while the forehead and breast were white. We did not see the bird at any stage on land and as a consequence did not manage to note leg colouration.

Sula sula, Red-footed Gannet.

Mr. D. Beaton found an injured and emaciated immature bird near the Darwin River Dam, 45 km south of Darwin, on January



Plate 9

Christmas Island Frigatebird over Darwin.

Photo by M. C. Bar

23, 1974. It died shortly afterwards and was prepared as a study skin (CSIRO Reg. No. DL.20263).

Fregata andrewsi, Christmas Island Frigatebird.

On January 21, 1974, J. L. McKean saw an adult female *F. andrewsi* among a mixed flock of *F. ariel* and *F. minor* gliding low over Nakara, Darwin. The black throat and white belly and abdomen as illustrated in Smythies (1960) and Slater (1970) were clearly noted. In view of the lack of previous Australian records, McKean at the time considered the record required confirmation.

On January 25, 1974, M. C. and Mrs. Bartlett saw and photographed a male *F. andrewsi* at Mindil Beach (Plate 9). Dr. G. F. Van Tets, who knows the species at its nesting ground, confirmed our identification of the bird as a male *F. andrewsi* from the photograph.

On January 27, 1974, M. C. Bartlett, at East Point near Darwin, saw a male and an immature female *F. andrewsi* which he also photographed for confirmation. His photographs of these birds clearly show the diagnostic characters of *F. andrewsi*. Large numbers of *F. ariel* and *F. minor* were also present on this occasion.

REFERENCES

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