

C. B. Kepler (1967) has recorded rat predation on nesting Laysan Albatrosses at Kure Atoll, the only place where Polynesian Rats and albatrosses are sympatric. Injured, dying and dead adult albatrosses found with large gaping wounds in their backs led to observation at night. Rats approach sitting albatrosses, climb up over the tail and up their backs, first clipping off rump feathers, and then opening a hole in the skin to feed on exposed flesh and subcutaneous fat (Fig. 1). Many rats scampered off an albatross back when disturbed by torchlight, and over 20 fed on one bird. The albatross may turn and seize a rat, throwing it aside, but others take its place. The wounds are enlarged to 5 or 7 inches diameter, often exposing the thoracic cavity, ribs or lungs, and may become fly-blown. The bird probes in its wound, staining its bill with blood. Immobilisation and death follow in a day or so. 50 adults so killed were found in a population of about 5000, of which about 1000 pairs breed. Thus, the annual mortality from rat predation is of the order of 1% to 2½%.

The rats' behaviour described at Kure Atoll may have been recently and locally acquired, like the habit of opening milk bottles by British tits, but if so it could have happened at other times and places. Obviously Polynesian Rats are potential predators on large sluggish birds nesting on the ground, and cannot be neglected as factors in the reduction or extermination of moas and ground-nesting carinates such as *Aptornis*, *Notornis* and *Cnemidornis*.

REFERENCES

- FLEMING, C. A., 1951: *Notornis* 5: 7-10.
———, 1962: *Notornis* 10: 113-7.
KEPLER, C. B., 1967: *Auk* 84: 427-30



SHORT NOTE

BANDING RECOVERY — RED-TAILED TROPIC BIRD

Whilst J.J. was on passage from Trincomali to Penang on 7/5/65, a Red-tailed Tropic Bird (*Phaethon rubricauda*) landed aboard the M.V. Wairimu. The bird was immature when caught, having a dark bill and with the rachis and tip of the primaries black. The tail streamers were only 1½ inches longer than the other tail feathers, and wholly white, showing none of the adult red colouration. During a stay on board of 4½ hours the bird regurgitated a partially digested flying fish about 3 inches long.

Following banding the bird was released offshore in a South force 5 wind some 24 miles N.E. of Sumatra (6° 19'N; 94° 40'E).

This bird was subsequently recovered at Gunners Quoin Island (19° 57'S; 57° 37'E) North of Mauritius on 20/9/68. This is a distance of 2,700 miles and an elapsed time of 3 years 4 months 13 days.

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