

RED-TAILED TROPICBIRDS

Tropicbirds, a familiar sight to sailors in tropical regions, are a rare occurrence in the Southern Indian Ocean.

Earlier this year Mr. Norman K. Swarbrick, of Emu Point, Albany, was reconnoitred by five Red-tailed Tropicbirds whilst fishing south of Taylor Inlet, Nanarup.

Unlike storm petrels or albatrosses they do not follow ships but investigate boats which cross their path.



The Red-tailed Tropicbird, *Phaethon rubricauda*

Commenting on the sighting, Dr. Dom Serventy said that a colony was known to exist on Sugar Loaf Rock (near Cape Naturaliste) and that the birds may have been exploring new areas to extend their breeding distribution.

The red-tailed tropicbird is the largest of the three species ranging up to 40 inches in length. The plumage is almost pure white or pink except for the black eye-stripes and the red tail streamers which, incidentally, make up about half the length of the bird.