Tropicbirds are medium-sized, white, rather tern-like seabirds mostly confined to the tropics. Distinguished from terns by their wedge-shaped tail. Sexes alike. Adults have 2 long central tail-streamers. Juveniles have black banding above and lack tail streamers. Their flight is distinctive; direct with strong steady wingbeats about 30 m above the sea. Over land, they ride the updrafts along cliffs and hills. At sea, they plunge-dive for fish and squid.

**RED-TAILED TROPICBIRD** (Amsterdamia) Phaethon rubricauda

- Rare tropical native
- 46 cm (1 up to 60 cm for tail streamers), 300 g. Adult white with red-tipped plumes on primaries, tertials and tail. Black mark through eye. Tern-like bright red bill; tail streamers are often difficult to see. Juvenile lack tail streamers. Is barred black above and has black or dark red bill. Habitat: Tropical sea, in NZ region; breeds at Kermadec.

** Lesbians**

**Phaethontidae**

- Often far from land. They are usually solitary or in pairs, flying strongly well above the surface, approaching ships with a steady flight and gracefully escorting them. Tropicbirds feed on fish and squid by plunge-diving. They breed on the ground, solidly or in loose colonies, the density depending on available nest sites rather than social need.

**TROPICBIRDS**

- 3 species; 2 in the New Zealand region, including 1 species breeding at the Kermade Islands.

- Sailors called tropicbirds 'beau' birds' because the projecting middle tail feathers resembled the marlin spike of the boatswain and their call is like his whistle. These white seabirds are confined to tropical and subtropical seas.

**85. RED-TAILED TROPICBIRD**

- Other name: Amakura
- Size: 46 cm, plus up to 40 cm for tail streamers, 300 g.

- Geographical variation: A single species but with a gradual increase in size and of the pink manifestation on the white plumage from the northern Pacific to the Kermadec.

- Distribution: This species is found in the tropical Indian and Pacific Oceans, including Lord Howe Island and the Kermadec Islands. They remain at sea when not breeding, although a few are seen near the Kermadec Islands in winter.

- Breeding: Laying is in December-April, mostly December-January. They lay 2-3 white eggs, and nest in rocky cliffs. (Other information available on population trends.)

**Conservation:** Protected native. No information available on population trends.

**Feeding:** Fish and squid are caught by plunge-diving from both high and low altitudes.

In the hand: Much larger than White-tailed Tropicbird (50-55 cm in total length) and adult plumage is very different. Juvenile upperparts being is similar to the bill tends to be all blackish or blackish-grey with red base, whereas the bill of juvenile White-tailed Tropicbird tends to be yellowish with a blackish tip.