

## RECOVERY OUTLINE

# White-tailed Tropicbird (Christmas Island)

|   |                     |  |
|---|---------------------|--|
| 1 | Family              | Phaethontidae                                |
| 2 | Scientific name     | <i>Phaethon lepturus fulvus</i> Brandt, 1840 |
| 3 | Common name         | White-tailed Tropicbird (Christmas Island)   |
| 4 | Conservation status | Critically Endangered: A2ce                  |

### 5 Reasons for listing

A decrease in population size of at least 80% is likely over the next three generations (30 years; Endangered: A2) as a result of a decline in habitat quality (c) and the effects of introduced taxa (e).

|                        | Estimate            | Reliability |
|------------------------|---------------------|-------------|
| Extent of occurrence   | 137 km <sup>2</sup> | high        |
| trend                  | stable              | high        |
| Area of occupancy      | 100 km <sup>2</sup> | high        |
| trend                  | decreasing          | medium      |
| No. of breeding birds  | 20,000              | medium      |
| trend                  | decreasing          | low         |
| No. of sub-populations | 1                   | high        |
| Generation time        | 10 years            | low         |

### 6 Intraspecific taxa

*P. l. lepturus*, Endangered in Australian territory, breeds on Cocos-Keeling and Ashmore Reefs as well as elsewhere in northern Indian Ocean, where it is Least Concern. *P. l. dorotheae* (Pacific Ocean) is a non-breeding visitor to eastern Australian waters. There are also two other subspecies in the Atlantic Ocean and one on Europa I., Mozambique Channel (Le Corre and Jouventin, 1999). Species status is Least Concern.

### 7 Past range and abundance

Endemic to Christmas I. (Le Corre and Jouventin, 1999).

### 8 Present range and abundance

As above, though numbers have probably been reduced as a result of human settlement and mining (Stokes, 1998).

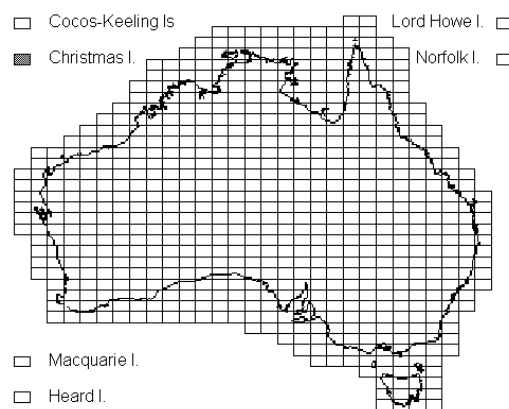
### 9 Ecology

The White-tailed Tropicbird breeds both in tree hollows in rainforest and rock crevices on the terraces (Stokes, 1988). It forages in warm waters, feeding on fish and cephalopods (Marchant and Higgins, 1990).

### 10 Threats

Some nesting habitat has been lost to mining. Clearance has now ceased, but all native Christmas Island species are threatened by the Yellow Crazy Ant *Anoplolepis gracilipes*, which is thought to occupy 15-18% of the island (D. Slip) and may still be

spreading rapidly. These ants are likely to kill nestlings and may alter the whole ecology of the island by killing the Red Crab *Gecaroidea natalis*, which is fundamental to ecological processes on the island, and by farming scale insects, which damage the trees (O'Dowd *et al.*, 1999).



### 11 Information required

11.1 Refine techniques for controlling Yellow Crazy Ants.

### 12 Recovery objectives

12.1 Maintain existing population.

12.2 Control Yellow Crazy Ant.

### 13 Actions completed or under way

13.1 A three year research program has been initiated and staff have been dedicated to ant control.

### 14 Management actions required

14.1 Control the abundance and spread of the Yellow Crazy Ant.

### 15 Organisations responsible for conservation

Environment Australia (including Wildlife Australia Branch; Parks Australia North; Christmas Island Rainforest Rehabilitation Program).

### 16 Other organisations involved

Birds Australia, Christmas Island Phosphates Pty. Ltd., Christmas Island Shire Council, Monash University.

