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SHORT CONTRIBUTION

A RECORD OF FIRST-YEAR DISPERSAL FOR A BLACK NODDY *Anous minutus*

The Black Noddy *Anous minutus* is widely distributed throughout the tropics of the Pacific and Atlantic Oceans (Harrison 1983). Australian breeding colonies occur off the Queensland coast between Torres Strait and the Capricorn-Bunker Group at the southern extremity of the Great Barrier Reef, and in the Coral Sea (Serventy *et al.* 1971, Blakers *et al.* 1984).

On the Capricorn-Bunker islands, breeding takes place between October and early March. Ashmole (1962) and Cullen and Ashmole (1963) have described in detail the reproductive biology for Ascension Island noddies but no equivalent breeding data are available for any Pacific Ocean location.

The Black Noddy has been considered to be a predominantly sedentary species feeding within a 30 km radius of island roosts (Serventy *et al.* 1971, Hulsman 1977). However, McClure (1974) has recorded the migration of a bird 640 km to the west of where it was banded in the Hawaiian Islands.

Heron Island (23°26'S., 151°55'E.) is situated in the Capricorn-Bunker Group of islands and was inhabited by an estimated 87 000 adult Black Noddies during the 1983-84 summer breeding season (Hulsman, pers. comm.). In February 1985, 133 adults and 75 juveniles were banded at three study sites (comprising 11 trees). Nests of banded birds were marked to determine site attachment in subsequent nesting seasons.

On 19 May 1985, one of these banded juveniles was sighted on Michaelmas Cay (16°35'S., 146°02'E.), 976 km from the breeding site, 320 degrees to the north (advice from the Australian Bird and Bat Banding Schemes). This bird was banded as a pullus between 6 and 9 February 1985, with a red darvic band on its left leg and a metal band on its right leg. It could not have been older than 21 weeks at the time it was sighted. The bird was not captured, consequently precise details relating to that bird cannot be provided. Four or five other juvenile Black Noddies were present at the time of sighting (J. McKean, pers. comm.).

Michaelmas Cay is a major breeding island for Sooty Terns *Sterna fuscata* and Brown Noddies *Anous stolidus*. There are no trees or shrubs on the island, and it is thus considered an unfavourable roosting site for large numbers of Black Noddies. The presence of a juvenile Black Noddy at this location probably constitutes a temporary stop-over, possibly on a longer northern migration.

No birds banded as juveniles during the 1984–85 breeding season were seen on Heron Island during a 24 day observation period in the 1985–86 breeding season and a seven day observation period during the 1986–87 season.

Nelson (1980) referred to the difficulty in distinguishing between migration, dispersal and nomadism in some seabird species. He claimed that first-year birds were the most nomadic and cited migrations in the order of 6 000 km for boobies and frigate birds. Robertson (1969) distinguished between long distance juvenile migrations and local adult dispersal in a banding study of the Sooty Tern in North America, where juveniles migrated as far as 11 300 km during a period of 107 days. Elsewhere, Lane (1967) recorded the recovery in the Philippines of a Sooty Tern which was banded four years earlier on Lord Howe Island (31°33'S., 159°05'E.), off the east coast of Australia, a movement of 5 824 km.

The present Black Noddy record suggests that long-distance dispersal of first-year birds may occur shortly after the chicks have fledged. It is not known what proportion, if any, of these birds return to their natal colonies. It is hoped that the present banding programme on the islands of the Capricorn-Bunker Group will help elucidate whether or not such dispersal is limited to first-year birds and whether such long distance dispersal is frequent.

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OBITUARY NOTICE

Allen Sefton OA, BEM, died on 2 May 1989. I first met Allen when he and Doug Gibson joined Robert Carriek and myself to band Silver Gulls and Crested Terns at the Five Islands, Port Kembla, New South Wales in 1955. His enlightened and genuine concern over the changes that were occurring in the Illawarra district were soon apparent, as were his inquiring mind and depth of knowledge of the region. Initially he was a little suspicious of catching and banding birds but he soon realized that it enabled some of the answers to his many questions to be obtained. He then became an enthusiast and a foundation member of our Association.

With age he became more and more concerned with broader environmental problems, and became much respected in the local community as a watchdog, advisor and fighter of causes. Such was the high regard in which he was held that he was awarded the British Empire Medal, the Order of Australia, and the Australian Natural History Medal. He was to have been awarded an Honorary Doctorate of Philosophy by the University of Wollongong on his 68th birthday but died shortly beforehand after a short illness. He was quite a remarkable person whose value was fortunately recognized during his lifetime. He will be sadly missed by many.

M. D. M.