

FORAGING RANGE, MARINE HABITAT AND DIET OF BRIDLED TERNS BREEDING IN WESTERN AUSTRALIA

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Bridled Terns breeding in Western Australia foraged over mid and outer continental shelf waters within about 70 km of their colonies. The diet of birds breeding on Penguin Island in south-western Australia consisted of a variety of small marine organisms including fishes, crustacea and cephalopods and also winged terrestrial insects. The most important marine prey were mullid (goatfish) larvae, shoaling clupeids and Columbus Crab megalopae.

The dietary information collected from this and other studies indicate that Bridled Terns forage over rafts of *Sargassum* and other flotsam particularly in the latter stages of the breeding season. This habit may distinguish the foraging ecology of Bridled Terns from that of other sympatric species. The availability of *Sargassum* rafts and flotsam in the marine environment may be a key factor influencing the Bridled Terns' breeding and wintering distribution.