

MOVEMENT OF LEAST FRIGATEBIRDS FROM THE PACIFIC TO THE INDIAN OCEAN

TONY STOKES¹ and KEVIN DUNN²

¹Australian National Parks and Wildlife Service, G.P. Box 636, Canberra, A.C.T. 2600, Australia.

²Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service, Australian Embassy, Brussels, Belgium.

Received 27 June, 1988

On 5 July 1983 a Least Frigatebird *Fregata ariel* was shot on Home Island in the Cocos (Keeling) Islands of the central Indian Ocean (12°07'S., 96°54'E.). The bird had been banded as a chick near Enderbury Island in the central Pacific Ocean (3°08'S., 171°05'W.), on 11 November 1964 with United States Fish and Wildlife Service number 747-66358. This 19 year old bird had travelled a minimum distance of 10 165 km between the two islands (Fig. 1).

A second Least Frigatebird chick was banded (Australian Bird-Banding Scheme Number 210-04492) at North-East Cay, in the Herald Cays of the Coral Sea (16°57'S., 149°11'E.), on 13 June 1986. It was recovered at Fak Fak, Irian Jaya, Indonesia (2°55'S., 132°18'E.), on 29 August 1987, and had probably moved through the Torres Strait.

Dunlop (1988) and Dunlop *et al.* (1988) discuss the movement of Pacific-breeding seabirds into the Eastern Indian Ocean, and Sibley and Clapp (1967) speculate that the Central Pacific populations of the Least Frigatebird follow an arc in dispersing from their breeding colonies to Papua New Guinea, the Philippines and Japan.

The movements noted in this paper indicate that some, and probably many, frigatebirds from populations in the two oceans intermix through the Torres Strait and Indo-Malay Archipelago. It would be interesting to know whether the movement is migratory and if chicks return to their natal areas to breed.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We appreciate the assistance of the Australian Bird and Bat Banding Schemes in providing details of the movements of the bird from the Coral Sea and a calculation of the distance between Enderbury and Home Islands.

REFERENCES

- Dunlop, J. D. (1988). The status and biology of the Golden Bosunbird *Phaethon lepturus fulvus*. Unpubl. report to the Australian National Parks and Wildlife Service.
- Dunlop, J. D., Woolner, R. D. and Cheshire, N. G. (1988). Distribution and abundance of marine birds in the Eastern Indian Ocean. *Aust. J. Mar. Freshwater Res.* 39: 661-669.
- Sibley, F. C. and Clapp, R. B. (1967). Distribution and dispersal of Central Pacific Lesser Frigatebirds *Fregata ariel*. *Ibis* 109: 328-337.



Figure 1. Movement of two Least Frigatebirds from the Pacific to the Indian Ocean.