

HIGHLAND RECORDS OF TWO SEABIRDS IN COSTA RICA

LUIS SANDOVAL¹, JULIO SÁNCHEZ² & PABLO ELIZONDO³

¹*Escuela de Biología, Universidad de Costa Rica, San Pedro Montes de Oca, Costa Rica
(biosandoval@hotmail.com)*

²*Museo Nacional de Costa Rica, San José, Costa Rica*

³*Partners in Flight, Costa Rica*

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The avifauna of Costa Rica is better known than that of other Neotropical countries (Stiles & Smith 1980, Sanchez *et al.* 1998), although much less information is available for seabirds than for terrestrial species (Stiles & Smith 1977, Steinkamp & Schlatter 2006). The pelagic and nomadic behavior of species such as storm-petrels (Hydrobatidae), shearwaters (Procellariidae) and tropicbirds (Phaethontidae) makes information difficult and expensive to obtain (Harrison 1985, Spear *et al.* 1995). Information on Costa Rican pelagic species is primarily from sightings and museum collections made off the Pacific coast in the 1970s and 1980s (Stiles & Smith 1977, 1980; Stiles & Skutch 1989) and recent records from Cocos Island (Montoya 2003a, 2003b; Montoya & Pascal 2004; Dean & Montoya 2005; Obando *et al.* 2007). Additional information is obtained when vagrants are observed close to the coast, especially in response to strong weather offshore (Stiles & Smith 1980), but such behaviour is not well-documented (Jehl 1974). Here, we report on two pelagic species recorded from Costa Rican inland sites.

Red-billed Tropicbird *Phaethon aethereus*

We found two juvenile Red-billed Tropicbirds, both with pale bills, on the highest mountain slopes of Costa Rica. The first bird was a male [Museo Nacional de Costa Rica (MNCR) 27024] collected in Barva-Heredia (10°03' N, 84°07' W), at 1500 m, on 5 February 2004. The bird weighed 540 g and had little body fat. The right testis measured 13×6 mm, suggesting a subadult bird. Primary tips and half the rectrices were badly damaged. We collected the second, unsexed bird [Museo Zoología Universidad de Costa Rica (UCR) 4155] on 4 March 2007 in an open area at 1450 m, approximately 1 km north of the Altamira ranger station, La Amistad International Park, Buenos Aires (09°01' N, 83°01' W). The bird weighed 276 g, and the neck and breast were partially eaten, probably by a mammal. Outside the breeding season, this pelagic species is highly nomadic within tropical oceans (Harrison 1985). Red-billed Tropicbirds have been observed only in the Pacific Ocean in Costa Rica, although they are expected in the Caribbean as well, because they nest in Cayo Swan, Bocas del Toro, Panamá (Wetmore 1981). We hypothesize that these vagrant juveniles were crossing this high mountain range because it is located in the narrowest portion of the continent apart from Panamá. Another possible scenario is that the tropicbirds were pushed over the high country by strong oceanic winds and died before navigating back to the ocean.

Pomarine Jaeger *Stercorarius pomarinus*

An adult male Pomarine Jaeger (MNCR 27026) was found exhausted and moribund in a cattle pasture at 2600 m, San Gerardo, Irazú-Cartago (9°55' N, 83°50' W), on 18 April 2004 by C. Quiros. The bird weighed 650 g, had heavy fat, an empty stomach, and a left testis measuring 12×6 mm. This species is widely distributed in the oceans of the world (Harrison 1985) and is a common visitor off both Costa Rican coasts, mostly well offshore (Stiles & Skutch 1989). This jaeger was likely pushed inland by bad weather affecting the Caribbean coast the previous day (JS pers. obs.).

All three records occurred at the height of the dry season, when trade winds often blow strongly in from the Caribbean, especially during bad weather conditions. Thus it seems likely that all of these birds came from the Caribbean; the jaeger was found on the Caribbean slope, one of the tropicbirds on the Pacific slope just down from a major pass. There are other inland records of pelagic species (Sooty Tern *Onychoprion fuscatus*, April 1983; Pomarine Jaeger, March 1986) reported in Stiles & Skutch (1989) also on the Caribbean side, in the Sarapiquí lowlands during the dry season.

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