



Nota breve | Short note

## First breeding record of white-tailed tropicbird *Phaethon lepturus* in Cabo Verde

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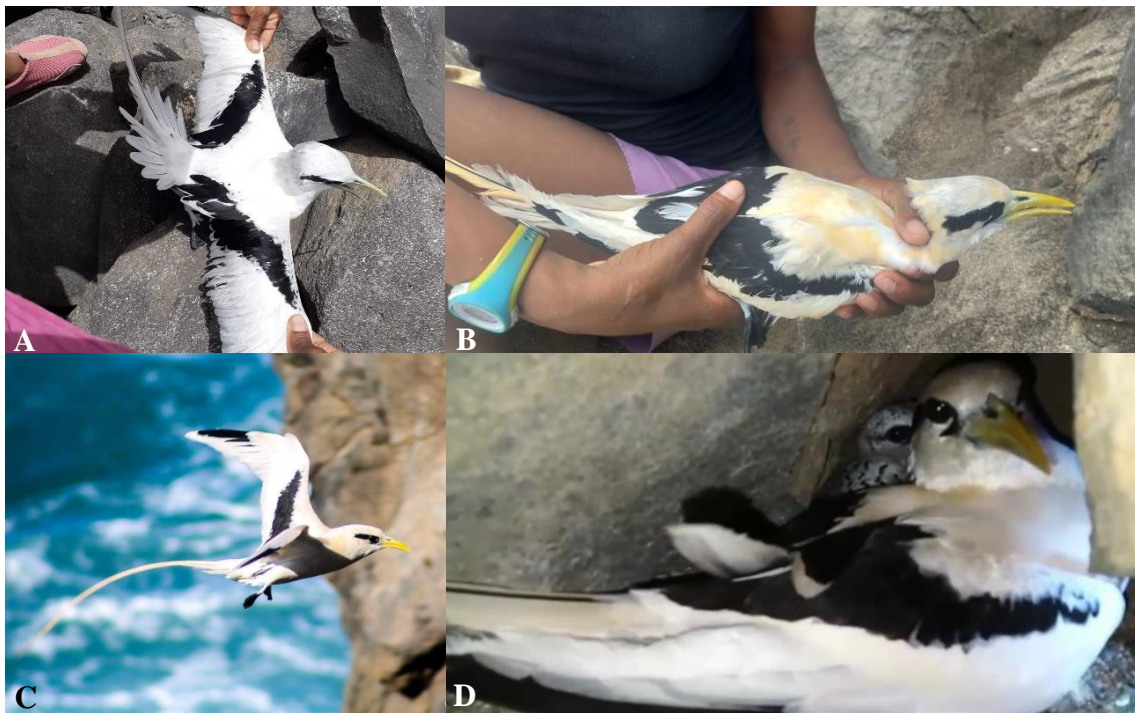
**Keywords:** Atlantic breeding, protected area, Rombo Islets, seabirds

Cima is a small islet located approximately five nautical miles northeast of the island of Brava in Cabo Verde and is part of the Rombo's Natural Integral Reserve (Anonymous 2003). The Rombo islets are an Important Bird Area with currently five regular breeding seabird species, including red-billed tropicbird *Phaethon aethereus* L., 1758 (Hazevoet 2001, Semedo *et al.* 2020, Lopes *et al.* 2021). So far, there were only two records of (non-breeding) white-tailed tropicbirds *P. lepturus* (Daudin, 1802) in Cabo Verde, i.e. on the islands of Boavista in 1999 and Santiago in 2011 (Hazevoet 1999; Hazevoet 2012). Earlier, because of a number of pelagic records not far from Cabo Verde, Hazevoet (1995) had pointed out the potential vagrancy of white-tailed tropicbird to the islands.

Adult white-tailed tropicbird has an overall white plumage with long white tail-streamers, a black diagonal stripe on the inner wings, black outer primaries, white head and underparts with a black outer eye-line from lore to ear-coverts, a bright orange-yellow pointed bill, dark brown eyes, and dark grey feet and legs (Del Hoyo 1992; Lee & Walsh-McGee 2020). Six subspecies are currently recognized, of which two breed across the Atlantic: *P. lepturus ascensionis* on Fernando de Noronha, Ascension, and the Gulf of Guinea islands, and *P. lepturus catesbyi*, in Bermuda, the West Indies, Gulf of Mexico and U.S.A. (Lee & Walsh-McGee 2020). In both subspecies, the predominant morph is white, but white birds with golden streamers and birds with golden morphs also occur (Le Corre & Jouventin 1999).

A team of 2-3 technicians of Projecto Vitó first observed a white-tailed tropicbird with a golden coloration on Cima Islet in July 2020 (Fig. 1A) during the regular monitoring of the red-billed tropicbird. The white-tailed tropicbirds were flying over the same area. On August 4, 2020, we found two adults with an egg in a burrow, but it was abandoned before hatching. Before the hatching failure, we ringed one adult (7502929) and measured both (Fig. 1B). In January 2021, November 2022, and May 2023, we regularly observed the species at the same place (Fig. 1C), flying over

the nest-site and attempting to land on the ground. On February 13, 2024, we found a nest with an adult (Fig. 1D) and a chick which, in addition to down, had covering feathers, both on the head and body, and growing primary and secondary feathers. To minimize disturbance, only videos and photos were taken for species identification and study of plumage variability. On March 2, 2024, we ringed the two adults (6500001, 6500002) and on March 4, we ringed the chick (6500003), which fledged two days later.



**Fig. 1.** Sighting and capture of white-tailed tropicbirds *Phaethon lepturus* on Cima Islet. **A)** Capture of a white morph on July 6, 2020 (photo by João Pinto). **B)** Capture of a golden morph on August 4, 2020 (photo by Gilson Montrond). **C)** Sighting of a light golden morph on January 25, 2021 (photo by Jorge Lopes). **D)** Capture of a light golden morph on February 13, 2024 (photo by Cleiton Alves).

Based on the rings and differences in plumage colouration, we concluded that four adults were involved (Fig. 1). The white tips of the primaries (Fig. 1A and 1D) and general plumage colour indicated the subspecies

*P. l. ascensionis* (Lee & Walsh-McGee 2020). This finding highlights the importance of the Rombo's Natural Integral Reserve as a key site for seabirds, as well as emphasizing the need to monitor and protect the area.

#### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We thank J. Pinto Barbosa, G. Montrond, D. Montrond, K. Piening, J. Lopes, A. Leal and

C. Alves for field assistance and pictures.

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Received 02 Mai 2024

Accepted 29 June 2024