

Frigatebirds are large dark seabirds with very long thin pointed wings, long deeply forked tail and long hooked bill. The sexes differ in the amount of white on their underparts; males are mostly black and have a dark bill, whereas females have a prominent white chest and a pale bill. Immatures are hard to separate, having gingery heads and white chests like females. Usually seen soaring high over tropical seas or pursuing other birds, particularly boobies and terns, forcing them to drop their food, which they catch in midair. They feed entirely on the wing, snatching flying fish and picking fish and squid from the surface of the sea.

**GREATER FRIGATEBIRD** *Fregata minor*

Rare tropical vagrant

95 cm, 1500 g. Largest frigatebird. Adult male *all dark*. Adult female and juveniles have white of chest and flanks *extending up to chin and throat* and *not* onto underwing. Juveniles have a gingery head, blotched white when worn. **Habitat:** Tropical seas. [Sp 104]

RED-TAILED TROPICBIRD

WHITE-TAILED TROPICBIRD



**104. GREATER FRIGATEBIRD**

*Fregata minor*

Plate 21

**Other name:** Great Frigatebird

**Size:** 95 cm; 1500 g

**Distribution:** Breed on islands in the Indian and Pacific Oceans, and a few nest in the southwestern Atlantic Ocean. The nearest breeding places to New Zealand are New Caledonia, Fiji and probably Tonga. At least

12 New Zealand records since 1861, between the Kermadec Islands and Westport, mostly on the east coast of the North Island or inland at lakes.

**Reading:** Jenkins, J.A.F. 1980. *Notornis* 27: 205-234.