

# Longtails



The **White-tailed Tropicbird** *Phaethon lepturus* is commonly called ‘Longtail’. As Bermuda’s traditional harbingers of spring, Longtails have often stolen the limelight from our official national bird, the Cahow. Returning in March, they remain conspicuous throughout the summer as they search the coastline for nestholes and perform their “tail-touching” aerial courtship. The Bermuda population of Longtails is believed to be the largest in the Atlantic, making it vitally important for the continued survival of the species.

## Threats to Longtails

- Predation from dogs, cats, rats and crows
- Nest site competition from feral pigeons
- Destruction of nest sites by human housing development on the coastline
- Blockage or burial of nest sites by the dumping of rubble, trash and horticultural waste over cliffs
- Overgrowth of nest sites by invasive plants

## Housing Crisis

Recent hurricane events caused major erosion of the south shore coastal cliffs, destroying 40 percent of the Longtail nests there. The combination of all these factors has caused a major “housing crisis” for Longtails. Artificial nests have been shown to be readily acceptable replacements for natural cliff holes lost to erosion or habitat destruction.

## Igloo Nests

Lightweight and portable, the Longtail igloo is fitted to an appropriate site with cement and shaded with natural rock. They can be located on cliff tops beyond reach of sea flooding, or on man made terraces and sea-walls. Longtails are happy nesting close to habitation so long as they are safe from predators.



Longtail Egg



Downy Chick



Fledgling



Adult



Igloo Workshop



Installed Igloo Nest

