Anous stolidus (Brown Noddy or Common Noddy)

Family: Laridae (Gulls and Terns)
Order: Charadriiformes (Shorebirds and Waders)
Class: Aves (Birds)

TRAITS. The brown noddy is recognized from other terns (sea birds) as a dark coloured bird with a distinct white colour on its head and a straight tail (Fig. 1), compared to other terns that are white with a black cap and a forked tail (Ffrench, 1991). The brown noddy has an average size of approximately 38cm at adulthood (Ffrench, 2012). This species is sexually dimorphic as the males and females are different; the male is considerably larger than the female in all aspects of the body (Chardine and Morris, 1989).

DISTRIBUTION. The brown noddy is a tropical bird that has a geographic range throughout the regions of the world (Fig. 2). It can be found in many including the Caribbean Sea (IUCN, 2017).

HABITAT AND ACTIVITY. Anous stolidus is found on coastal and oceanic islands during the breeding season (Bouglouan, 2017) or along coasts. When foraging, they fly close to the sea in order to catch their prey (Audubon, 2017). The noddy can be found on coastal rocks located on the steep side of a cliff where they normally form nests. The nests generally consist of pieces of sticks strung together with seaweed and are commonly lined with rocks and coral from the shore.
These birds can also be seen perching on thick branches or rocks just above sea level (Fig. 3). Outside of the breeding season however, they can be found roosting on the water, rocks, ships and islets (Bouglouan, 2017).

**FOOD AND FEEDING.** Noddies feeds on fish like sardines and anchovy as well as other small fish (Ffrench, 2012), however they are not limited to only small fish and are also known to feed on other organisms such as squid, mollusces, aquatic insects as well as fruit, mostly the screw pine fruit. This species is typically diurnal and feeds during the day however it is common that under the cover of light from a full moon these birds forage for prey (Department of the Environment, 2017). They can obtain their food by diving or skimming the surface of the water when the larger aquatic predators force the smaller fish to the top, they also plunge into the water to obtain their prey. Unlike other terns who dive into the water to a greater depth the brown noddie plunges to shallower depths (Audubon, 2017).

**POPULATION ECOLOGY.** The common noddie is an abundant species and occupies a large geographic range. They are often in groups or colonies of different sizes (Figs 4 and 5) usually for protection (GoGalapagos, 2017). Brown noddies however, are in pairs when it comes to breeding and are monogamous animals (Bouglouan, 2017). The oldest banded brown noddie to be recorded was 25 years old and was seen breeding (Nellis, 2001).

**REPRODUCTION.** The breeding season does not have a set time period and varies according to the range, as does the nest structure (Bouglouan, 2017). The nest is usually made from seaweed and twigs and are weakly built, however if on a tree it would be made more sturdy. The female lays one pastel-coloured egg covered with red-brown and light purple spots. Both parents incubate the egg for approximately 35-36 days (Audubon, 2017). Upon hatching the chick would remain in the nest where the parents would feed it by regurgitation until the young is capable of flight at about two months after hatching (Bouglouan, 2017).

**BEHAVIOUR.** The downy young remains in the nest until it has the capability of flight in order to roam and gather food. Until that occurs the parents of the baby noddie care for it and provide it food (Ffrench, 2012). Both sexes can be territorial and squabbles can occur with neighbours or intruders. The mating ritual or courtship of *Anous stolidus* comprises of the bird’s head movement in a nodding or bowing fashion, as well as taking flight in pairs after they have attracted their mate (Audubon, 2017). These birds have similar calls to a young crow as they have low pitched, guttural calls such as an “eye-ak” and “arrowk” (Bouglouan, 2017).

**APPLIED ECOLOGY.** The brown noddie is listed as of Least Concern since the species is known to be common through a wide range of regions as well as in modified habitats (IUCN, 2017). However, these birds can be threatened by the introduction of predators such as rats and cats into the habitat during breeding season (Bouglouan, 2017).

**REFERENCES**


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Fig. 2. Distribution range of the brown noddy.
Fig. 3. *Anous stolidus* perching on coastal rocks. [http://www.costaricagateway.com/wp-content/uploads/2010/01/brown-noddy-web-jh1.jpg, downloaded 3 March 2017]

Fig. 4. Group of brown noddies resting on rocky area. [http://www.oiseaux-birds.com/card-brown-noddy.html, downloaded 3 March 2017]
**Fig. 5.** Group of brown noddies on the shoreline of an island.

[https://www.gogalapagos.com/animal-specie/brown-noddy, downloaded 8 March 2017]

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