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Cover: A Southern Rockhopper Penguin *Eudyptes chrysocome* stands on Tussock Grass on Westpoint Island. Painted in poster colors, this artwork is a reproduction of a photograph by Phillip Colla. Thanks to the photographer for the original image. © Pooja Patil.



Lesser Noddy *Anous tenuirostris* breeding in the Adam's Bridge Islands, India – a rectification

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Adam's Bridge Islands, also known as Rama's Bridge or Ram Setu, are a group of sandy shoals forming a chain of isles from the tip of Mannar Island, Sri Lanka to Rameshwaram Island, India. These have been noted as an important marine habitat and over the Sri Lankan side, the Adam's Bridge islands have been granted protection by declaring them as Sri Lanka's first Marine National Park (DWC 2025). Several *Laridae* are among the regular breeding species of Adam's Bridge Islands on the Sri Lankan side. These include Great Crested Tern *Thalasseus bergii*, Roseate Tern *Sterna dougallii*, Little Tern *Sternula albifrons*, Saunders's Tern *S. saundersi*, Sooty Tern *Onychoprion fuscatus*, Bridled Tern *O. anaethetus*, and Brown Noddy *Anous stolidus* (Rasmussen & Anderton 2012; Warakagoda et al. 2012; Seneviratne et al. 2015). In addition, there are claims of Caspian Tern *Hydroprogne caspia*, Gull-billed Tern *Gelochelidon nilotica*, Common Tern *Sterna Hirundo*, and Lesser Noddy *Anous tenuirostris* also breeding in these islands (Weerakoon & Dayananda 2021), but these claims are not confirmed through proper documentation or reporting.

A recent article by Byju et al. (2025) notes a nesting record of Brown Noddy on the sand island VII from the Indian section. Interestingly, the photographs of the birds provided in Byju et al. (2025) are that of Lesser Noddy rather than Brown Noddy. Byju et al.

(2025) mention “darker chocolate-brown plumage and contrasting pale forehead & crown, black lores that contrast with its pale grey forehead, and a relatively shorter bill” as identification criteria used to identify the birds observed. But, Image 2 of Byju et al. (2025) shows 13 noddies, of which nine birds show pale grey lores and long slender bills, unlike Brown Noddy, which should have dark lores and relatively shorter, broader bills. The pale lores and thin longer bills indicate that these are actually Lesser Noddy (Rasmussen & Anderton 2012; Harrison et al. 2021). Size comparison among the birds of the group suggests that the noddies which do not clearly show these features, should also be Lesser Noddy, as Brown Noddy will stand noticeably larger, being longer, and heavier (Rasmussen & Anderton 2012; Harrison et al. 2021). Similarly, in Image 2. of Byju et al. (2025), three out of the four Noddies show pale grey lores and long slender bills, suggesting them also to be Lesser Noddy rather than Brown. The remaining bird should also belong to the same species, considering the size. The identification of the two species is not always straightforward especially at a distance, but at close range such as the birds in Byju et al. (2025), the pale grey lores together with the relatively long slender bill is quite adequate to eliminate the two similar looking species, i.e., Brown Noddy and Black Noddy (Rasmussen & Anderton 2012; Harrison et al. 2021).

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Lesser Noddy is currently known to breed in tropical islands in the Indian Ocean, particularly in coral atolls, and mangrove islets (Gochfeld et al. 2020; Harrison et al. 2021), and the closest currently known breeding location to India is Chagos Archipelago (Carr 2015). Although there are unconfirmed historical claims of it breeding in the Maldives (Gadow & Gardiner 1903), no breeding has been observed recently (Anderson & Shimal 2020). In addition, no confirmed records of it breeding exist from India or anywhere else in the subcontinent (Rasmussen & Anderton 2012; Praveen 2025). Therefore, this is the first confirmed record of Lesser Noddy breeding in the Indian sub-continent and the nesting data provided in Byju et al. (2025) provides important insights on the breeding behavior of Lesser Noddy, as a lesser known species in the region. The presence of this species along the coasts of southern India and Sri Lanka, especially along the Adam's Bridge Islands throughout the year (eBird 2025) was a good indication that it is a potential breeding species. In addition, Lesser Noddy breeding in the Adam's Bridge Islands further conveys the importance of this delicate ecosystem and stress the need for a more thorough conservation program for the habitats and species, ideally as a joint effort from both Indian and Sri Lankan authorities.

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