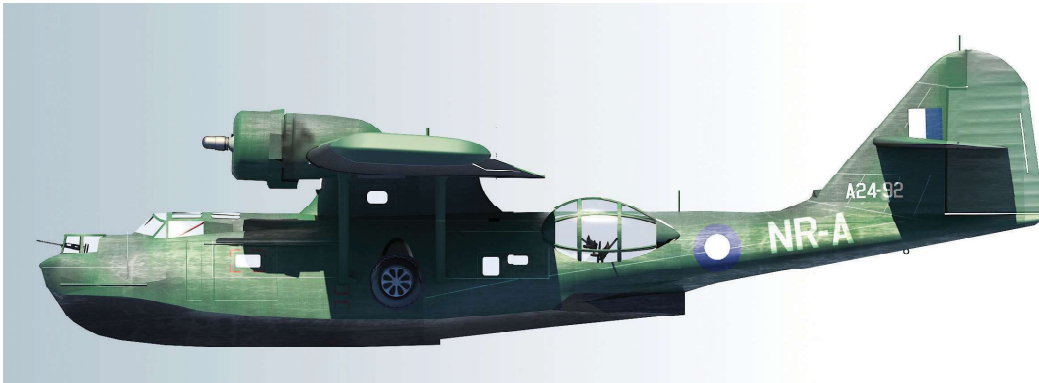


THE CATALINA FLYING BOAT



Catalinas used in the air-sea rescue role did not have the all-black paint scheme. This No. 113 ASRF PBV-5A (A24-92, NR-A) is painted in overall Foliage Green.

crewman reported that to recover survivors of shot-down crews from the water as quickly as possible:

From 2 November 1943 ... we kept two Catalinas patrolling between Kiriwana and Moresby and this was really the start of our air-sea rescue work. We picked up two B-25 crews in this period when we were operating from Oro Bay. We carried this on for three days using two aircraft at a time.

This operation provided a template for the active deployment of ASR Catalinas to support Allied air attacks. This role became an important task for the Darwin-based No. 43 Squadron from June 1944 and for No. 20 Squadron after its move to Darwin in September 1944. The Catalinas provided ASR services to support an expanding Allied air offensive against Japanese targets throughout the Netherlands East Indies.

Bombers based in northern Australia faced long flights over water during this offensive. The presence of ASR Catalinas must have been reassuring for the crews. The usual procedure was for the ASR Catalina to fly to a point on the bombers' return path while the bombers were returning from the target and then to orbit at this location for a specified time. The Catalina was thus well placed to quickly recover shot down aircrew from the water.

Fortunately, Japanese opposition was largely ineffective by this time and most of these ASR missions were uneventful. They were laconically recorded by the RAAF in terms such as "Mission completed. A/C not required to carry out Air-Sea Rescue".

As well as these planned ASR missions, the Northern Territory based Catalinas continued to respond to reports of Allied crews needing rescue. Some of these incidents involved mine-laying Catalinas. No. 42 Squadron's A24-94 (Flying Officer John Kane) developed engine trouble on a mission to mine Tiworo Strait on 23 September 1944. Kane landed his stricken aircraft near islands east of Timor. The next day the crew was located and rescued by No. 43 Squadron's A24-91 (Flight Lieutenant "Nobby" Clark). Kane's aircraft was stranded near Japanese-held territory, so it was strafed and destroyed by A24-91. Kane recorded in a note:

Our everlasting gratitude to old Knobby Clark and his boys for a rattling good rescue show.