

ERRONEOUS IDENTIFICATION OF A LONG ISLAND GANNET

It is a highly embarrassing experience for an ornithologist to inspect a bird on the ground at close range, to name it, and later to see a photograph of the same bird and to realize that his first identification had been wrong!

This became my sad situation on January 26, 1966, when I first saw the photographed head of an immature Gannet on the cover of EBBA News, Vol. 28, No. 6, 1965.

In September 1965, Mr. LeRoy Wilcox telephoned me that a Masked, or Blue-faced Booby (Sula dactylatra) had been captured at Quogue. I drove there at once, watched the bird for some time in an enclosure of the Wildfowl Refuge, and endeavored to photograph it through the wire. It generally resembled one of the youthful stages of the Masked Booby, of which I had seen countless examples and collected several. Unfortunately, I neglected to tip up the bill of the captive so as to examine its chin.

The avenging photograph profile, referred to above, startled me into my senses, because the forward-pointing feathering on the gular pouch was unlike that of Sula dactylatra and of every other booby. Published measurements in the same journal completed, alas, the rout of a "new record." The lengths of the wing, tail, and bill are far above the maxima shown by a series of specimens of dactylatra, which is the biggest of all the boobies. But they match normal dimensions of the Gannet.

My heartfelt apologies to Mr. Wilcox and to readers.

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