

## First Record of Masked Booby (*Sula dactylatra*) in Maryland

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On 21 August 2016, a *See Life Paulagics* trip, aboard the *Thelma Dale IV*, was off the continental shelf, east-southeast of Ocean City, Maryland. At 0621 hours, as we were moving in a southwest direction, a sulid was noted moving from the south to the northeast on the port side. The bird was seen well and photographed until 0622, at which point the distance and lighting conditions prevented further physical documentation. The bird was observed during our chum drift (chum and fish oils were liberally dispersed to attract tubenoses and other birds shortly after the vessel's arrival to deep water), though it did not change direction to investigate the chum or commotion of the other birds therein and continued on its course with purpose. The bird was in more or less direct flight the entire time of observation.

Immediately upon sighting the bird, the striking white and black plumage was evident and finer details were noted as the bird passed closer by the observers. The black primaries and secondaries, black rectrices, and dark facial skin were evident; the latter was particularly striking and was apparent in many of the photos. Review of the photos confirmed that the black in the wing extended into the tertials (Figure 1). From underneath, the black of the primaries, secondaries, and tertials formed a strongly demarcated line with the white wing lining (Figure 2). The trailing edge of the upperwing was extensively dark owing to the bird's black primaries, primary coverts, secondaries, and secondary coverts (Figure 1) with a strong demarcation between that and the white forewing. The plumage indicated an adult, or near adult Masked Booby (*Sula dactylatra*). Black-tailed, white morph Red-footed Booby (*S. sula*) was ruled out by the bird's dark tertials (Red-footed have white tertials) and by the presence of dark facial skin. No plumage of subadult Northern Gannet (*Morus bassanus*) shows the combination of black primaries and secondaries with dark facial skin. The separation of Nazca Booby (*S. granti*) from Masked Booby is very difficult, however, no vibrant orange coloration (indicative of Nazca) was noted in the bill. Nazca Booby is a Pacific Ocean species and there are no records of it ever having occurred in the North Atlantic Ocean (eBird 2018).

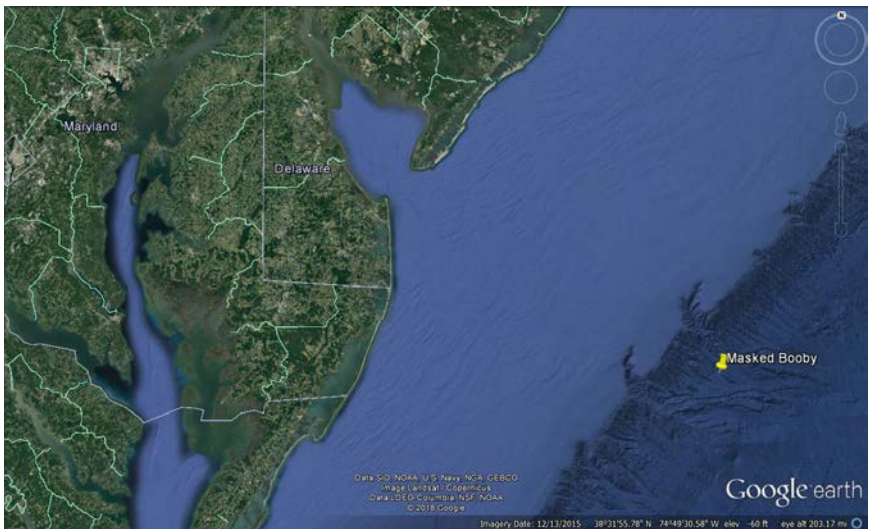


**Figure 1. Masked Booby, *Sula dactylatra*.** Note the extensively dark trailing edge of the upperwing owing to the bird's black primaries, primary coverts, secondaries, secondary coverts, and extending into the tertials. Also note the strongly contrasting demarcation with the white forewing. Photographed on 21 August 2016 by Thomas Ford-Hutchinson.



**Figure 2. Masked Booby.** Note the black of the primaries, secondaries, and tertials on the underside of the wing form a strongly demarcated line with the white wing lining. Photographed on 21 August 2016 by Lutmerding.

The location was approximately 38° 09' 09.9" N, 73° 24' 35.6" W (Figure 3). This location is 147.3 km (91.5 mi) from Ocean City and approximately 24.9 km (15.5 mi) off the continental shelf edge at a depth of just over 1000 fathoms (6,000 ft) of water. Beginning in 2012, overnight trips, run by *See Life Paulagics*, have been visiting this area. Prior to 2012, most Maryland pelagic trips focused on Baltimore Canyon at the immediate shelf edge. Once the trips began venturing off the shelf edge and spending more time farther out in deeper water, Band-rumped Storm-Petrels (*Oceanodroma castro*) became regular, often common (personal observations). These trips have also recorded multiple Black-capped Petrels (*Pterodroma hasitata*) and a Trindade Petrel (*Pterodroma arminjoniana*) (personal observations). Clearly, birds more typical of the Gulf Stream are regular in the area.



**Figure 3. Location of Maryland’s first Masked Booby.** Map adapted from Data SIO, NOAA, U.S. Navy, NGA, GEBCO; Image Landsat / Copernicus; Data LDEO-Columbia, NSF, NOAA (Google 2018).

Masked Booby is a regular visitor in pelagic waters north to North Carolina (eBird 2018). It is seen almost annually on Gulf Stream pelagic trips off North Carolina, with occasional coastal sightings. Sightings range from April to October, but most occur in July and August (LeGrand 2018). More northern sightings are rare, with the Maryland record representing only the fourth record of Masked Booby north of North Carolina (Table 1). A fifth was reported in September 2017 when an injured juvenile was rescued on Cape Cod,

Massachusetts; this bird perished during rehabilitation (Marshall J. Iliiff, in litt. 9 February 2018).

**Table 1: East Coast Masked Booby records north of North Carolina.** Listing is north to south.

State	Date	Location	Source
Massachusetts	26 SEP 2017	Cape Cod, Barnstable County	Iliiff, in litt. 2018
Massachusetts	10 SEP 2015	Atlantis Canyon (pelagic), Dukes County	MARC 2018, eBird 2018
New Jersey	24 AUG 2001	Island Beach State Park, Ocean County	NJBRC 2017, eBird 2018
New Jersey	15 OCT 2015	7th Street Seawall (Avalon Seawatch), Cape May County	NJBRC 2017, eBird 2018
Maryland	21 AUG 2016 (this record)	(pelagic) Worcester County	MD/DCRC 2018, eBird 2018

In 2009, many of Maryland’s top birders voted on a “Next 10” list, in an attempt to guess the next species to be added to the state list (Hafner and Hubick 2009). At that time, there was only one record of Masked Booby north of North Carolina, so it was not a popular choice and only received two votes out of 39, placing it forty-second on the overall list. The 21 August 2016 Masked Booby sighting (MD/2016-038) was added to the official list of Maryland birds in 2017.

Given the regularity of Gulf Stream birds on these recent pelagic trips, it is interesting to consider what other first records for Maryland may be found. Gulf Stream trips out of the Outer Banks, North Carolina, have seen Red-billed Tropicbird (*Phaethon aethereus*), Fea’s Petrel (*Pterodroma feae*), Bermuda Petrel (*Pterodroma cahow*), Black-bellied Storm-Petrel (*Fregatta tropica*), and Swinhoe’s Storm-Petrel (*Oceanodroma monorhis*) (Carolina Bird Club 2017). Deep water trips off Cape Cod, Massachusetts, which also see numerous Gulf Stream birds, have added Barolo Shearwater (*Puffinus baroli*) to that list (MARC 2018). With continued late summer pelagic trips to the deep water off Maryland, we are sure to add more species to the state list.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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