

# FIRST ATLANTIC RECORDS OF THE RED-FOOTED BOOBY *SULA SULA* AND BROWN BOOBY *S. LEUCOGASTER* IN SOUTHERN AFRICA

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*Received 31 August 2000, accepted 18 April 2002*

The Red-footed Booby *Sula sula* and the Brown Booby *S. leucogaster* occur in most tropical seas (Harrison 1983). Both species have been recorded previously in the southern African region (Maclean 1993, Hockey *et al.* 1992, 1996). Three additional records are reported here for the Red-footed Booby and one (the third) for the Brown Booby in southern Africa, all from the Atlantic coast.

## RED-FOOTED BOOBY

A white-morph Red-footed Booby was observed at Ichaboe Island (26°17'S, 14°56'E) by Y.C., *c.* 30 km north of Lüderitz, Namibia on 16 January 1990. It was found asleep on the sea-wall which surrounds the island. The most diagnostic feature was its bright red feet. In flight its plumage looked worn and it had a white tail. A second white-morph Red-footed Booby was photographed by Y.C. at Mercury Island (25°43'S, 14°50'E), *c.* 60 km north of Lüderitz on 12 December 1994, perched on top of a rundown jetty. The nearest Atlantic Ocean breeding colony of Red-footed Boobies is at Ascension Island (7°55'S, 14°50'E) (Stonehouse 1960, Ashmole *et al.* 1994).

A juvenile Red-footed Booby was found alive at Observatory (33°57'S, 18°28'E), Cape Town, South Africa on 28 February 1993 (Fig. 1), some three kilometres from the nearest sea. It is the first record of the species ashore in South Africa. The booby was



**Fig. 1.** Red-footed Booby *Sula sula*, Observatory, South Africa, 28 February 1993. (Photo: B. Greeff)

taken to the Southern African Foundation for the Conservation of Coastal Birds (SANCCOB) rescue station for treatment, but died three days later. The corpse was then sent for necropsy to the Regional Veterinary Laboratory, Stellenbosch. *Enterobacter coli* and other Enterobacteriae were identified but were considered unlikely to have caused death. The stomach was empty. The specimen (the first for South Africa) is in the South African Museum (SAM ZO58494). Morphometric details are culmen 79.9 mm, tarsus 237.5 mm, wing 372 mm, and tail 192 mm.

The three records published here are the first for the Atlantic coast of southern Africa although several records exist for the eastern coast, all from Mozambique (Hockey *et al.* 1992, 1996). It would be of interest in future reports for observers to record the colour morphs of the boobies seen.



**Fig. 2.** Brown Booby *Sula leucogaster*, Mercury Island, Namibia, 12 January 1993. (Photo: Y. Chesselet)

## BROWN BOOBY

A juvenile Brown Booby was photographed by Y.C. at Mercury Island on 12 January 1993 (Fig. 2). It was seen at the edge of the largest Cape Gannet *Morus capensis* colony on the island. It remained in the area for two consecutive days, and was seen again on 16 January 1993. Its plumage differed from published accounts of juvenile Brown Boobies (Nelson 1978, Harrison 1983). There was a noticeable contrast in the shade of the brown showing as a line across the breast. The belly region was a paler brown than the upper region. The lighter brown on the belly presumably moults into the white plumage of adults. The nearest breeding colonies of this species to southern Africa are at St Helena Island (15°75'S, 5°43'W) to the west in the Atlantic Ocean (Rowlands *et al.* 1998, and the Seychelles (3°48'–6°35'S, 53°57'–57°10'E) to the east in the Indian Ocean (Harrison 1983).

A beached bird at Beira, Mozambique in 1954 and an observation off Durban, South Africa in 1985 are the only previous records for southern Africa (Harrison 1983, Maclean 1993). The record published here is therefore the first southern African record for the species from the Atlantic coast.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We are grateful to the late R.K. Brooke for commenting on an earlier draft of this note.

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