

FURTHER RECORDS OF THE MASKED BOOBY FROM BAJA CALIFORNIA

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The pantropical Masked Booby (*Sula dactylatra*) is one of the most pelagic of the Pelecaniformes. Off the Pacific coast of Mexico, the Masked Booby breeds on Isla Clarión and Isla San Benedicto in the Revillagigedo group (Everett and Anderson 1991) and on Clipperton Atoll (A. O. U. 1983). It has been reported breeding at Las Rocas Alijos (24° 57' N, 115° 45' W) since 1925 (Hanna 1926, McLellan 1926) with a current breeding population of about 50 pairs (Pitman 1985). Only three sighting reports exist for the Pacific coast of Baja California, of one juvenile on 23 April 1988 at Islas Los Coronados, Baja California (Everett and Teresa 1988), and single adults on 18 December 1968 and 30 November 1980, both at Cabo San Lucas, Baja California Sur (Wilbur 1987).

Here we report five additional records, including one for the Gulf of California, three for the Pacific coast of Baja California, and one for Isla Guadalupe. Amador and Palacios saw an adult Masked Booby loafing with a few Magnificent Frigatebirds (*Fregata magnificens*) at Punta Diablo, Bahía de La Paz, southwestern Gulf of California, on 11 June 1986. The bird was wearing adult plumage, with an all-white head, extensive black facial skin, black tail, black tips to the longer scapulars, and more extensive black on the secondaries. The bill was yellow, but at the time we did not note whether it was greenish yellow (subspecies *californica*) or more pinkish orange (subspecies *granti*) (Patten and Erickson 1994). We eliminated an adult Red-footed Booby (*Sula sula*) by the bird's large size, grayish feet, and black scapulars. The only two previous reports of Masked Boobies inside the Gulf of California are from the central portion of the Gulf [May 1991, one 48 km west of Isla Lobos, no further details (Gallo 1994); June 1992, one *granti*, D. Breese and B. Tershy in Howell and Webb (1995)].

On 13 May 1985 and 12 November 1986 L. Moreno (pers. comm.) observed single adult Masked Boobies at Punta Lengua (24° 22' 58" N, 111° 41' 30" W), an important Brown Pelican (*Pelecanus occidentalis*) and Double-crested Cormorant (*Phalacrocorax auritus*) roosting site near the southern end of Isla Santa Margarita. The bird sighted in 1986 and closely photographed by Moreno at Isla Santa Margarita was wearing incomplete adult plumage, with an all-white head, black tips to longer scapulars, black tail, and black secondaries, but the rump was still brown. The Masked Booby gradually acquires adult plumage over two years, the rump staying brown longest. The bill of this bird was decidedly greenish yellow, implying the Mexican coastal subspecies *S. d. californica* (Patten and Erickson 1994).

On 4 February 1994, Amador observed an adult Masked Booby in flight approximately 2 km southwest of Isla Santa Margarita (24° 25' N, 111° 25' W). The black scapulars and lack of carpal patch on the underwing could be noted, but the exact bill color could not be discerned.

On 20 January 1994, Guillén saw an adult on Isla Guadalupe (29° N, 118° 17' W) with an all-white head, black tips to longer scapulars and more extensive black in secondaries, black tail, grayish feet, and greenish-yellow bill. The bird rested on a small fishing boat on Campamento Oeste and walked and perched around the fishermen's

NOTES

camp. According to the local inhabitants this individual arrived in early December and remained there at least until 12 February 1994, when our activities there ceased. Presumably the same bird was still present on 9 April 1994, when Pyle et al. (1994) reported it. From the bill color and plumage characters, these authors identified the bird as *S. d. californica*.

Currently, there are five accepted records of the Masked Booby for Alta California: (1) one adult sighted 35 km southwest of San Clemente Island, on 10 January 1977 (Lewis and Tyler 1978); (2) an immature photographed 2 miles west of Point Lobos, Monterey County, on 5 April 1990 (Patten and Erickson 1994); (3) an adult photographed at the mouth of the Salinas River, Monterey County, 18–22 June 1992; (4) one at Point Mugu, Ventura County, on 20 June 1992; and (5) one at Newport Beach, Orange County, on 30 June 1992 (M. A. Patten pers. comm.).

Interestingly, all the sightings north of Las Rocas Alijos, except that in 1990, have been made during northern protrusions of warm water during periods of El Niño Southern Oscillation (ENSO) (*sensu* Quinn 1978). It is well known that the distributions of seabirds shift with movements of their preferred water types (see Ainley et al. 1986). The dispersals of the Masked Booby to Isla Guadalupe and to Alta California might be related to the 1991–93 ENSO. ENSO events likely expand the distribution of this otherwise more tropical seabird.

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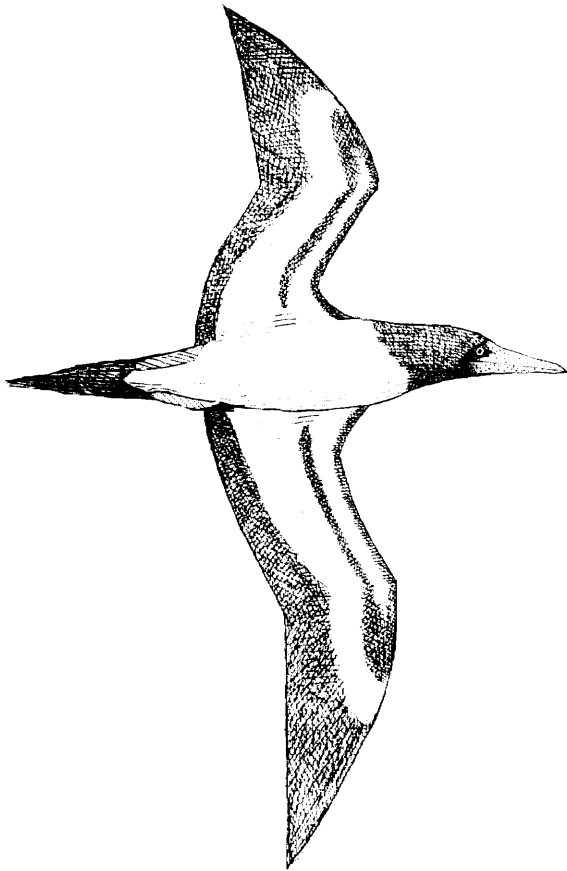
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NOTES

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Masked Booby

Sketch by Sophie Webb