

MASKED BOOBY

Sula dactylatra

Other: Blue-faced Booby (<1983), 'A

S.d. personata

breeding visitor, indigenous

Masked Boobies breed worldwide on tropical and subtropical islands including, in the Pacific, from Japan and Australia to Mexico and Chile, including Johnston and Wake atolls (Amerson and Shelton 1976, Rauzon et al. 2008), and range at sea generally in the vicinity of breeding grounds (King 1967, Harrison 1983, Marchant and Higgins 1990, AOU 1998, CBRC 2007; see account for [Nazca Booby](#), recently split from Masked Booby). They remain at the breeding islands year-round but can disperse far to sea when not breeding. They are a relatively uncommon breeder in the Hawaiian Islands and are not frequently encountered in surrounding waters. See Nelson (1978) and Anderson (1993) for information on the natural history of Masked Booby.

An estimated 2,215 pairs of Masked Boobies bred during the 1980-2000s in the *Northwestern Hawaiian Islands* ([Table](#)). The largest totals were found on *French Frigate* and *Laysan*, followed in decreasing order by *Lisianski*, *Necker* and *Nihoa*, *Pearl and Hermes*, *Gardener Pinnacles*, *Kure*, and *Midway* ([Table](#)). Historical information (e.g., Rothschild 1900) indicates that populations were similar in the late 1800s, except perhaps on Lisianski and Laysan, where feather hunting may have reduced populations at that time (Fefer et al. 1987). Information on the history of the species and data on breeding phenology for each Northwestern Island, compiled as part of the POBSP, can be found in the Atoll Research Bulletins for each breeding locality (see [Seabird Page](#)).

In the *Southeastern Hawaiian Islands* breeding during the 1980-2000s has only been confirmed at two locations, Kaula Rock SW of *Ni'ihau*, where 200-400 pairs breed, and Mokumanu islet off NE *O'ahu*, where a small population was increasing during the 2000s ([Table](#)), although this increase is not reflected by data from Dec recorded on the Honolulu [Christmas Bird Count](#). Masked Boobies formerly bred on Lehua Islet NW of Ni'ihau (Caum 1936) although no breeding has been found since (e.g., *E* 23:43-45, VanderWerf et al. 2007). On Mokumanu no Masked Boobies were found during 14 visits in 1946-1948 (Richardson and Fisher 1950) but a few pairs began nesting there since at least 1958 (*E* 19:10, 29:48-49, 39:61, Harrison 1990); more recently, breeding was recorded 25 Jul 1990 (12 active nests), 3 Aug 2000 (14 nests), 13 Nov 2000 (10 nests), and 28 Feb 2006 (33 nests; HDFW 2006; [Table](#)). Observers viewing Mokumanu from Ulupau Head since 1958 have reported up to 8 roosting birds (rarely to 17). In late May 1976 an observer circling the islet in a small boat reported at least 30 Masked Boobies mostly on the seaward side not visible from Ulupau Head (*E* 37:45). An estimate of about 40 pairs there in 1967 (Nelson 1978) may have pertained to Red-footed Boobies.

Masked Boobies are occasionally seen flying around or roosting elsewhere in the Southeastern Islands, e.g. *Kaua'i* (sporadically on Mokuāeae islet off Kilauea Point in 1975-1977 and 1999-2000; e.g., Byrd and Zeillemaker 1981, [HRBP](#) 1249); *O'ahu* (Manana islet 3 Apr 1989); *Moloka'i* (4 sighted from a helicopter on Okala islet E of Kalaupapa Peninsula 20 Aug 1996); *Maui* (1 at Kanaha Pond 26 Jan 1998); and *Hawai'i* (a juvenile at South Point in October 1986 and one seen there 20 Oct 1997). Five

Masked Boobies have been found stranded on O'ahu in 1991-2002 and turned into the SLP rehabilitation facility.

Masked Boobies are observed uncommonly in offshore waters, most frequently around Kaua'i and O'ahu. Since 2000 up to 4 birds have been sighted on trips in Kaula Kahi Channel between Kaua'i and Lehua islet (e.g., [HRBP](#) 1309). Around O'ahu they have been seen a few times from shore near Kahuku, Laie, Makapu'u Point, Hawaii Kai, Honolulu, and Hickam Air Force Base. A report of 15 birds flying past Makapu'u Point in April 1958 (*E* 19:5) likely pertained to Red-footed Boobies. Around Hawai'i, one bird was observed from a boat 10 miles off Kailua-Kona 12 Oct 1986 (*E* 47:29), a juvenile was seen sitting on a buoy at Milolii in early October 1994, and an individual was photographed off Kona 8 Jul 2008, 10 Dec 2008, and 4 May 2009. There are as yet no records on or offshore Lana'i or Kaho'olawe. *At sea*, Rowlett (2002) observed them on only 15 of 58 observing days in Northwestern waters and on only one of 35 days in Southeastern Island waters (28 Oct, S of Lana'i) during an extensive survey in Aug-Nov 2002. King (1970) recorded only 40 birds during monthly surveys of waters E and S of the Southeastern Islands in Mar 1964-Jun 1965; most monthly high counts (> 4) were for Mar-May of both years. Spear et al. (1999) recorded none in 144 hrs of transect surveys S and SE of Hawai'i I.

[Acronyms and Abbreviations](#)

[Literature cited](#)

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