



COMMONWEALTH of the
NORTHERN MARIANAS ISLANDS

- Farallon de Pajaros (Uracas)
- Maug
- Asuncion

Red-footed Boobies

- Agrihan
- Pagan
- Alamagan
- Guguan
- Sarigan
- Anatahan
- Farallon de Medinilla

- Saipan
- Tinian
- Aguiguan

- Rota

Masked Booby

Sula dactylatra

Major nesting colonies

★ All

★ Brown & Red-Footed



PHOTOS BY TIM SUTTERFIELD and DFW



RESIDENT SEABIRDS BOOBIES of the CNMI

Lu'ao (talisai) Amwo
Chamorro *Carolinian*

IDENTIFICATION

The Brown booby (*Sula leucogaster*) is the most common booby in the CNMI. It has a wingspan of about four and a half feet. Adult Brown boobies have white breasts. Females have a yellowish bill and males have a grayish green bill. The Red-footed booby (*Sula sula*) is the smallest of all the boobies with a wingspan of about three feet. In the CNMI, adult Red-footed boobies are mostly white with brown wings. They have pale blue bills and red legs and feet. The Masked booby (*Sula dactylatra*) is the largest of all the boobies with a wingspan over five feet. It is white with a brown or black edge on the wing feathers and a yellow bill.

HABITAT and FEEDING

Boobies are found the world over, primarily in the tropics. Boobies are pelagic seabirds that come to the shores of the CNMI to nest and roost. Boobies feed on fish and squid by diving into the water. They like to feed near



PHOTO BY PETER L. FOURMETTE

Brown Booby, Mating Pair

schools of tuna because tuna force small fish to the surface of the sea. Boobies often follow tuna as they share the same prey.

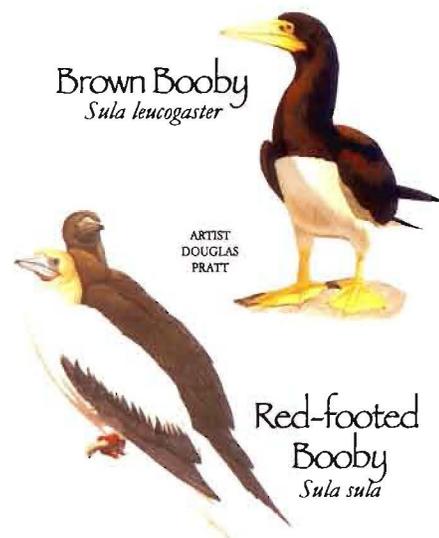
REPRODUCTION

The Brown booby and Masked booby lay their eggs in a shallow nest depression in the ground. The Red-footed booby builds its nest on top of shrubs and lays a single egg. Booby parents share incubation duties by incubating the eggs with their feet. The booby chicks beg for regurgitated meals from their parents.

THREATS and CONSERVATION

Commercial and recreational fisheries are threats to boobies. Many boobies are caught while trying to steal bait off long lines of hooks. Others are trapped inside of trawl nets, gillnets and by offshore trollers. Over-fishing impacts seabird populations, as they must fly further from shore to search for food. Predators and habitat alteration are other threats to boobies. Rats, cats, dogs and pigs feed on the adults, chicks and eggs of boobies. On Rota, the Red-footed booby is illegally poached. Gunfire and rock-throwing disturb its nesting area. Habitats may be altered due to development, pollution, and military operations.

The commercial fishing industry is developing methods to help reduce seabirds as bycatch (non-target species). Preventing the Brown treesnake (*Boiga irregularis*) from establishing in the CNMI will promote seabird conservation. Boobies are protected by federal law under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act.



Brown Booby
Sula leucogaster

Red-footed Booby
Sula sula

ARTIST DOUGLAS FRAIT

CROSSEYED BOOBY

When boobies face you square-on they look crosseyed. The Spanish word "bobo" means clown and the British seaman's slang term "booby" means stupid.

FACTOID!



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