

Seabirds 'A or Red-footed Booby

Sula sula

SPECIES STATUS:

State recognized as indigenous

High Concern – NAWCP

Hawai'i Natural Heritage Ranking G5-Secure

SPECIES INFORMATION:

The Red-footed Booby is a seabird, with red legs and webbed feet and a conical bill, that is found in a variety of color morphs. Three subspecies are generally recognized, of which one, *S. s. rubripes*, is located in Hawai'i. Breeding season in the Hawaiian Islands is between the months of February and November, when it typically lays only one egg. Like other species, the Red-footed Booby is a long-lived seabird, with the oldest known bird at 22 years. The Red-footed Booby's flight pattern is strong flapping flight interspersed with gliding. When not breeding, the Red-footed Booby goes out to sea, but some return to the colony at night to roost. The species sits on water to bathe, preen and rest, but is not known to swim. The Red-footed Booby catches its food by diving into the water, eating mainly fish and squid. Boobies in general have been observed being harassed by Great Frigatebirds to disgorge their catch (which is then caught and eaten by the Great Frigatebird).

DISTRIBUTION:

Breeds in the Main Hawaiian Islands, including on Kaua'i near Kilauea Lighthouse, on O'ahu at the Marine Corps Base Honolulu – Kaneohe Bay, and on offshore islets including Moku Manu, and in the NWHI, including Kure Atoll, Midway Atoll, Pearl and Hermes Reef, Laysan, Lisianski, Gardner Pinnacles, French Frigate Shoals, Necker, and Nihoa. Worldwide, the Red-footed Booby breeds in the tropical waters of the Pacific, Indian and Atlantic Oceans, in the Caribbean Sea, and in the seas north of Australia. Little is known about the movements of the Red-footed Booby outside nesting season, but birds in Hawai'i appear to disperse eastward and move between islands.

ABUNDANCE:

Worldwide population estimated at less than 300,000 pairs, with the majority of these birds located in the eastern Pacific. The population in the Hawaiian Archipelago is estimated at between 7,000 and 10,500 pairs, with more than 1,200 pairs found on Lehua.

LOCATION and CONDITION OF KEY HABITAT:

Terrestrial: Nests in bushes or trees, including beach magnolia (*Scaevola sericea*) and beach heliotrope (*Tournefortia argentea*). Will occasionally nest in deserted man-made structures, on bare ground, or on low piles of vegetation. Builds nest of twigs, grass and other vegetation.

Marine: pelagic.

THREATS:

- Habitat destruction and disturbance;

- Habitat altering invasive species (scale insects);
- Introduced predators;
- Feral ungulates

CONSERVATION ACTIONS:

- Eradication and control of introduced predators at current and potential nesting sites;
- Control of feral ungulates where they impact habitat;
- Eradication of rabbits at Lehua;
- Eradication and control of habitat altering invasive species;
- Continued protection and management of existing wildlife sanctuaries and refuges

MONITORING:

RESEARCH PRIORITIES:

- At sea data on the birds

References:

Division of Forestry and Wildlife. Undated. Fact Sheet on Red Footed Booby. Available by request from the Department of Land and Natural Resources Division of Forestry and Wildlife, Honolulu, HI.

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NatureServe. 2003. Downloadable animal data sets. NatureServe Central Databases. Available from <http://www.natureserve.org/getData/vertinvertdata.jsp> (March 10, 2005).

Schreiber, E.A., R.W. Schreiber, and G.A. Schenk. 1996. Red-Footed Booby (*Sula sula*). In The Birds of North America, No. 241 (A. Poole and F. Gill, eds.). The Academy of Natural Sciences, Philadelphia, PA, and The American Ornithologists' Union, Washington, D.C.

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