

Brown Booby *Sula leucogaster*

Of the boobies (and other tropical ocean birds) whose occurrences in California accelerated with the ocean warming of the late 20th century, none accelerated more than the Brown Booby. There was only one record along the California coast before 1983; since then, over 40 records have accumulated. In northwestern Baja California, the Brown Booby has been seen repeatedly on Todos Santos Islands off Ensenada, with a male carrying sticks and displaying in 2000 (Palacios and Mellink 2000), and on Los Coronados Islands off Tijuana, with up to six individuals in 1999 and 2002 and two pairs apparently nesting in the latter year (NAB 56:489, 2002).

Migration: In San Diego County, the Brown Booby is known from eight records, five accepted by the California Bird Records Committee. An adult male injured by a fish hook was picked up at Imperial Beach (V10) 2 April 1990 (SDNHM 46566). An immature was on the ocean 2 miles southeast of the entrance to San Diego Bay 14 December 1991 (D. W. Povey; Patten et al. 1995b). An immature at Point Loma (S7) 27–29 September 1997 was captured for rehabilitation (M. F. Platter-Rieger; Rogers and Jaramillo 2002). Adults were 10 miles southwest of Point Loma 11 September 1999 (M. B. Mulrooney; Rogers and Jaramillo 2002) and at Point Loma 8 April 2001 (R. E. Webster; Cole and McCaskie 2004). A Brown Booby at Shelter Island (R8) 17 November 1997 was afflicted with bumblefoot, leading the records committee to question whether the bird had



Photo by Anthony Mercieca

been kept in captivity for an extended period (Erickson and Hamilton 2001). Reports of an adult male at La Jolla (P7) 4 February 1998 and presumably the same bird at Point Loma three days later have not been assessed by the committee (P. Lonsdale, R. B. Riggan; FN 52:256, 1998).

Taxonomy: It is fortunate that the specimen from Imperial Beach is an adult male, because geographic variation in the Brown Booby is expressed in adult males only. It is *S. l. brewsteri* Goss, 1888, breeding on islands in the Gulf of California and farther south along the west coast of Mexico. In *brewsteri* males have the head whitish but not as pale as in *S. l. nesiotetes* Heller and Snodgrass, 1901, of Clipperton Atoll.