

## BOOBIES — FAMILY SULIDAE

### Masked Booby *Sula dactylatra*

Three species of boobies once absent along the coast of southern California became rare visitors there during the last two decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Increasing ocean temperatures then favored tropical ocean birds wandering north. A Masked Booby on the coast of San Diego County in winter 2001–2002 remained 12 days, to be seen and photographed by crowds of birders.

**Winter:** A subadult Masked Booby rested with pelicans and cormorants on the rocks at La Jolla Cove (P7) 30 December 2001–10 January 2002 (M. Burcham, Garrett and Wilson 2003). The bird then evidently moved north to Corona del Mar, Orange County, where it was caught on 12 January 2002 (Cole and McCaskie 2004). The nearest pelagic record is of one 22 miles southwest of the south end of San Clemente Island 10 January 1977, the first record for California waters (Lewis and Tyler 1978). A Masked Booby reported from San Elijo Lagoon (L7) 14 November 1987 was not accepted by the California Bird Records Committee because of uncertainty over whether the bird was actually a Red-footed Booby (Patten and Erickson 1994).



Photo by Anthony Mercieca

**Taxonomy:** The bill color of the bird at La Jolla was close enough to that of an adult to identify it as a Masked Booby rather than the more orange-billed Nazca Booby (*S. granti*), confirmed to be a species distinct from the Masked Booby by Pitman and Jehl (1998). No specimen of the Masked Booby has been collected in California. *Sula d. californica* Rothschild, 1915, breeds in the eastern tropical Pacific; *S. d. personata* Gould, 1846, breeds in the central Pacific.