

# Brown Booby

*Sula leucogaster*

Found in tropical oceans around the world, the Brown Booby is a dashing seabird—both in plumage, a natty brown-and-white (with bright yellow feet) and in flight style, which involves swift aerial maneuvers and deft dives. Brown Boobies do not nest on the United States mainland but often visit waters off Florida or California. They occasionally stray as far north as Canada, and sometimes well inland. Like most seabirds that nest on islands, Brown Boobies are very vulnerable to introduced predators such as rats, mice, and cats.

## Keys to Identification

### Size and Shape

A large seabird with a fairly long neck, heavy pointed bill, long wings, and a rather long, pointed tail. It has stout, short legs with large webbed feet.

### Color Pattern

Adults are rich chocolate brown with starkly contrasting white bellies and central underwings. They have pale bills and bright yellow feet. Juveniles are dark-billed and mostly brown overall. Subadults are intermediate between juveniles and adults, with dirty white bellies and underwings.

### Behavior

Forages by flying over the water to search for fish, then dropping swiftly to capture prey in a dive. Pairs perform stylized courtship displays at the nest, famous for their captivating (even comical) quality. Nests, rests, and forages in groups.

### Habitat

Nests on beaches, cliffs, and hillsides on small tropical islands. Forages at sea, usually within 50 miles of land.



## Cool Facts

- Like many seabirds, Brown Boobies have a serrated, comblike toenail on their middle toe called a “preen-claw.” Boobies use it, along with their bill, to spread waterproofing oil from a gland in the tail throughout the feathers when preening.

## Measurements

Both Sexes

- Length - 25.2 - 33.5 inches
- Wingspan - 52.0 - 61.0 inches
- Weight - 33.5 - 63.5 ounces