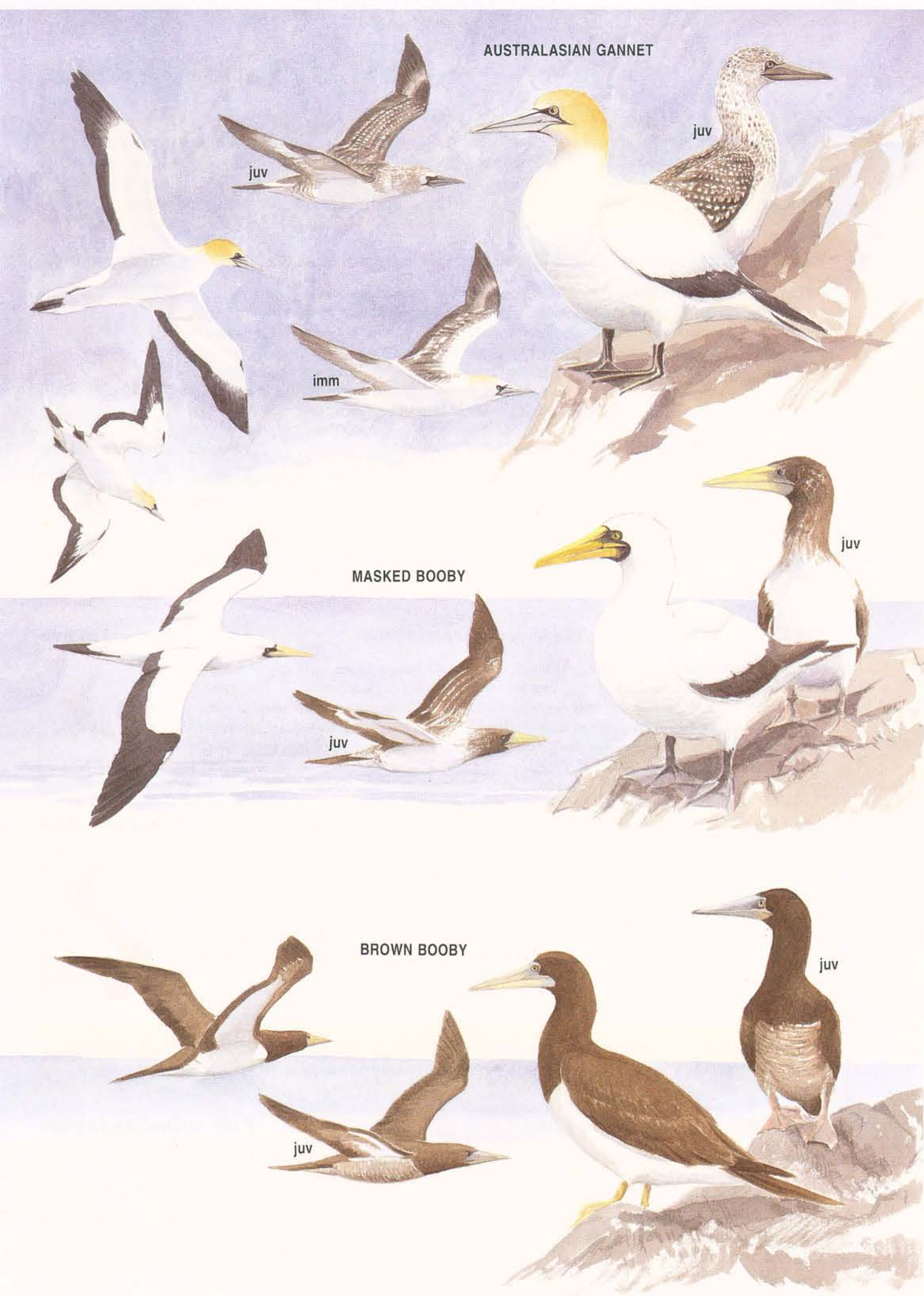
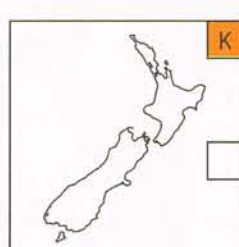


Large mainly black and white or brown and white seabirds. Streamlined body with long narrow wings and a long tapering tail. Conical bill, bare facial skin; fully webbed feet. Sexes alike. Juveniles and immatures darker than adults, taking several years to attain full adult plumage. Flight steady and direct; short periods of deliberate flapping and long glides. Feed on fish and squid caught by spectacularly diving into the sea, often from a considerable height. Often sit on the surface between feeding bouts. Gannets favour temperate and subtropical seas, whereas boobies favour tropical and subtropical seas. Gannets nest on the ground in large dense colonies; boobies nest on the ground or in trees singly or in loose colonies. Lay 1-4 plain pale eggs.

**MASKED BOOBY** *Sula dactylatra*

Locally uncommon native

80 cm, 1700 g. Adult resembles adult Australasian Gannet but has *white head, orange-yellow or pink bill, black face mask* with yellow eye. Black trailing edge of upperwing includes tertials and so extends to body; tail all dark. Feet purplish grey. Juvenile has mottled brown upperwings, paler back, heavily streaked (almost brown) head and neck grading to white on the collar and lower neck, and a pale yellowish bill. **Habitat:** Tropical and subtropical seas; in NZ region, breeds at Kermadecs. **Breeding:** Aug-Apr. [Sp 90]



**GANNETS and BOOBIES**

Sulidae

9 species: 2 breed in the New Zealand region and 1 is a visitor to New Zealand waters.

Gannets and boobies are marine birds, mainly feeding close to shore rather than in open oceans. All plunge-dive – gannets for fish, boobies for flying fish. Whereas gannets are typical of temperate seas, boobies are typical

of tropical and subtropical seas. Breeding adults tend to stay permanently around their colony and in local seas, whereas non-breeders and young disperse widely.

Their bill is sturdy and cone-shaped, with its cutting edges serrated for seizing fish. The forehead is flattened, and much of the face is covered with bare skin. Three webbed toes,

sometimes with all or some skin brightly coloured. The sexes are alike, but juveniles take two to four years to gain fully adult plumage. They breed in colonies, and gan-

netries are particularly dense, mostly on islands and typically on the ground.

**Reading:** Nelson, J.B. 1978. *The Sulidae: Gannets and Boobies*. Oxford: OUP.

**90. MASKED BOOBY** *Sula dactylatra*

Plate 22

**Other name:** Blue-faced Booby

**Size:** 80 cm, 1700 g

**Geographical variation:** Four subspecies; the only one recorded from New Zealand is *personata* of Australia and the western and central Pacific Ocean, including Lord Howe, Norfolk and the Kermadec Islands. Sometimes the birds breeding in the Tasman Sea and at the Kermadecs (which have dark brown eyes, not yellow, and longer wings) are separated as a distinct subspecies, *fullagari*.

**Distribution:** Breed in tropical and subtropical seas in the Pacific, Indian and Atlantic Oceans, and in the Caribbean Sea. In the New Zealand region, they breed on the Kermadec Islands (Meyer, Dayrell, South Chanter, Macauley, and Curtis Islands). They are a rare vagrant to the northern North Island, with only five records: Gannet Island (1883), west of North Cape (1964), Firth of Thames (two between October 1977 and March 1978), Hamilton (July 1983), Dargaville (May 1988).

**Population:** Kermadec Islands, 100+ pairs, mainly on Curtis Island (70 pairs in 1989).

**Conservation:** Protected native. The numbers of Masked Boobies breeding at the Kermadecs has increased in recent decades, partially owing to an influx of birds from colonies at Norfolk Island.

**Breeding:** At the Kermadecs, they breed almost all year, with the peak of laying in late August to November. They lay 1-2 dull white eggs (66 x 46 mm, 75 g) on the ground, often in a site exposed to the wind. Both sexes incubate under the webs of their feet for c. 44 days, starting after the laying of the second egg. Hatching is not synchronous and, although both sexes brood chicks at first and feed them, usually only one is raised. It leaves the nest at c. 120 days old. The young may breed as early as 2 years old. Birds banded in Australia have lived over 18 years.

**Behaviour:** Masked Boobies fly high and fast, soaring and circling. Like Brown Boobies, they often perch on buoys and posts marking

channels. They are silent at sea but noisy at breeding colonies.

**Feeding:** Mostly flying fish; also other fish

and some squid, taken by plunging from high above, usually in deep oceanic water far from land.