

Text and images extracted from Heather, B.D. & Robertson, H.A. (2005) *The Field Guide to the Birds of New Zealand*. Penguin Books, Auckland. Pages 237, 238, 424, 425.

## 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

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.

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,

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

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

## ADDENDUM

Since 1996, the following 11 species were accepted by the Rare Birds Committee of the Ornithological Society of New Zealand as having been reliably recorded for the first time in the New Zealand region. All appeared as single vagrants or stragglers, and none of the species has settled to breed.

### CAPE GANNET *Morus capensis*

**Size:** 90 cm, 2.6 kg

**Description:** Very similar to Australasian Gannet, but at close quarters it can be seen that its gular (throat) stripe is 3–4 times as long, running from the base of the bill to the foreneck rather than to the chin, the eye is a paler pearly white, and the black face mask is slightly larger. At sea, the tail is usually completely black, but about 10% have white outer tail feathers, like Australasian Gannet. Juveniles and immatures have a great variety of black, brown and white mottled plumages

and are indistinguishable from Australasian Gannets at sea.

**Distribution:** Breeds mainly on islands off South Africa and Namibia, and disperses to coastal waters of southern Africa from the Gulf of Guinea to Mozambique. A few reach islands in the Indian Ocean and off Australia, but since the early 1980s a few have nested with Australasian Gannets in Bass Strait. One New Zealand record, a bird at the Australasian Gannet colony at Cape Kidnappers, Hawke's Bay, between 1997 and 2002.