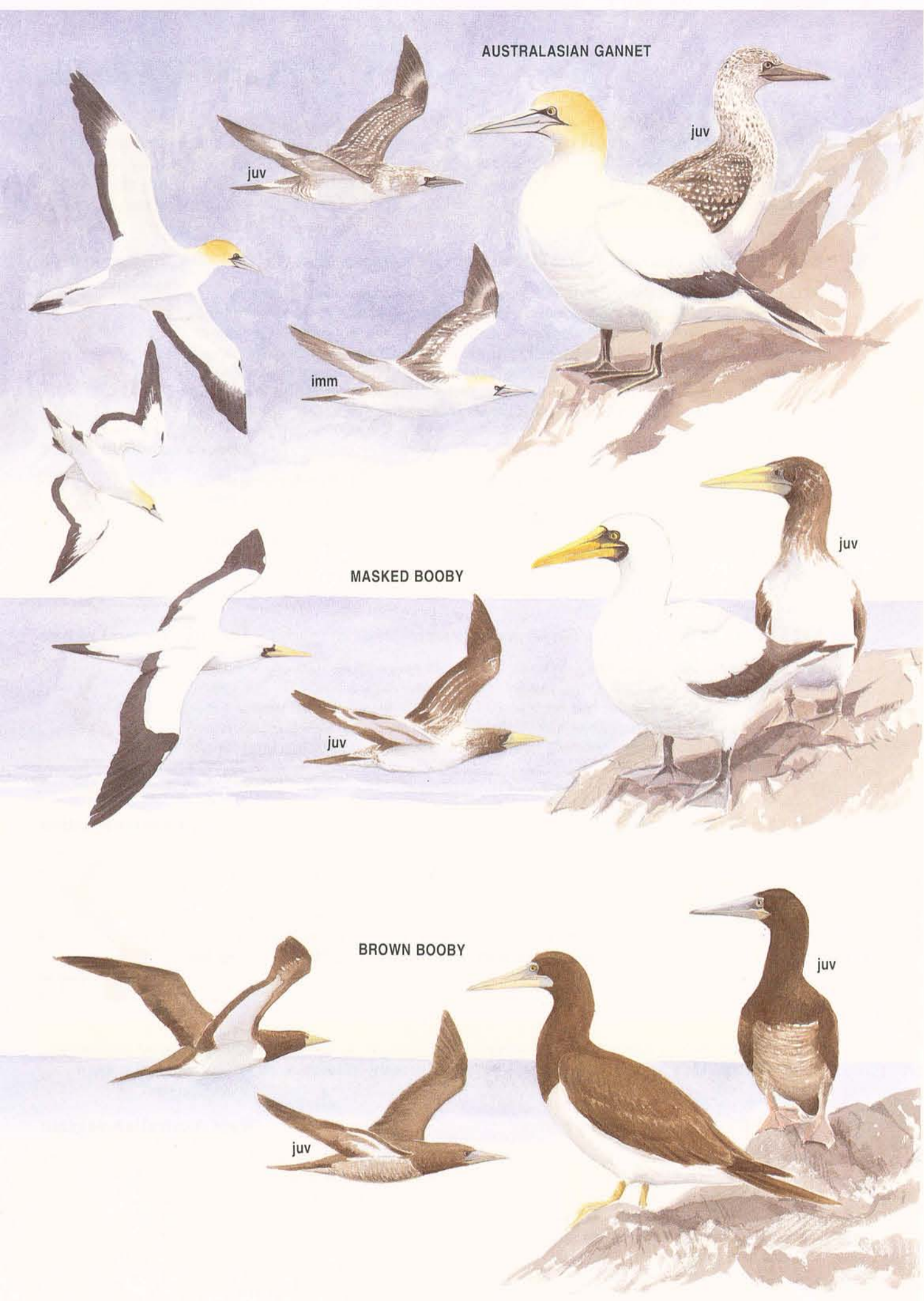


Large mainly black and white or brown and white seabirds. Streamlined body with long narrow wings and a long tapering tail. Conical bill, bare facial skin; fully webbed feet. Sexes alike. Juveniles and immatures darker than adults, taking several years to attain full adult plumage. Flight steady and 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.

BROWN BOOBY *Sula leucogaster*

Rare tropical vagrant

70 cm, 1200 g. Dark chocolate brown, sharply cut off at mid-breast from white undersurface of body; centre of underwing white. Legs yellow or greenish yellow. Male has blue facial skin and yellowish-grey bill; female has yellow facial skin and base of bill. Juvenile like adult, but brown parts paler, white parts mottled grey-brown, and less white on underwing. Bill and facial skin blue-grey; legs flesh-grey. **Habitat:** Tropical seas. [Sp 89]



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.

89. BROWN BOOBY *Sula leucogaster*

Plate 22

Size: 70 cm, 1200 g
Geographical variation: Four subspecies; the only one recorded in New Zealand is *plotus* of eastern Africa, islands of the Indian Ocean, Indonesia, Micronesia, northern Australia, New Guinea and much of the Pacific Ocean.
Distribution: Breed in tropical seas. The nearest breeding sites to New Zealand are on many of the islands and cays off the Queensland coast. Occasionally seen off the

Kermadec Islands, and a few reach the New Zealand mainland in most summers. They are seen mostly as singles in Northland and in the Bay of Plenty, but have been recorded as far south as Canterbury.
Feeding: They feed by vertical plunging, but from a lower height than Australasian Gannets. Flying fish are the main prey in the tropics, but they take other fish and some squid.