

Recovery of a Red-footed Booby *Sula sula* from the Maharashtra coast, India

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On 05 June 2016, AL received a message from Sachin Marti, a birdwatcher from Vasai, about a bird perched on the rocky beach of Bhuigaon near Vasai, Palghar District, Maharashtra. He immediately went to the beach and found that the bird in question did not fly even when approached. He knew that many exhausted seabirds land on beaches and are killed and eaten by stray dogs roaming the beach. Such birds mostly die, or recover if taken proper care of. He therefore collected the bird. He had never seen such a bird before, as it looked like a duck (with webbed feet), but had a stout conical beak with serrations inside both the mandibles. Though the bird did

not fly, it was active, and snapped at AL while he was trying to hold it, otherwise it wasn't moving. He shared photos of the bird with senior birdwatchers. All confirmed that the bird was a Red-footed Booby *Sula sula*. The bird had red, duck-like, fully webbed feet, and a beak that was light blue in colour. The naked facial skin was blue; the throat was black. The overall plumage was white with a shade of buff. Its primaries were dark brown (XX1). Unfortunately, no measurements were taken. The bird matched the description of a Red-footed Booby in Ali & Ripley (1983).

As the bird did not take the fish offered to it at AL's place, it was taken to the beach again, placed near a small pool of seawater, and offered fresh fish, which it ate. It was kept at AL's place for the evening, as it did not fly.

Next day, the authors took the bird again to the beach to feed it like the previous day, as it did not accept fish offered at AL's place. But it refused to eat. They tried force-feeding but the bird ejected the fish and did not swallow. They decided to take it to a veterinary hospital, but it died on the way. In all likelihood, the bird was blown onshore by the strong monsoon winds.

Prasad (2004) has mentioned of a possible record from US Club, Colaba, Mumbai, seen on 15 August 2001, by Nitin Jamdar who saw three to four birds there. He collected this information from an Internet birding group (<https://groups.yahoo.com/neo/groups/birdsofbombay/conversations/messages/1476>).

There are only two photographic records of the species from India. The first one is of an adult that was recovered alive, and photographed in New Digha, West Bengal (21°37'N, 87°29'E) on 11



XX1. Red-footed Booby. Photo: Raju Kasambe

May 2011, but died later (Karmakar *et al.* 2011). Gandhe (2014) took the second one in April 2014, 20 nautical miles off the Goa coast.

Praveen *et al.* (2013) discussed the various specimen and records of the species from India. They mentioned that the specimen of Red-footed Booby in British Museum, mentioned by Ali & Ripley (1983), could not be found by researchers. It seems that the only reliable records of the species from within the present geographical boundaries of India were by Karmakar *et al.* (2011), on the eastern coast, and by Gandhe (2014) on the western coast. Hence, the present record of this rarely sighted pelagic vagrant, from the western coast of India, is important.

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