



Red-footed Booby Pair guarding their nest. PC: Karen Bryan 2020

Beautiful Red-footed Booby Birds by Karen Bryan

MCBH hosts a very unique colony of seabirds called Red-footed Boobies (*Sula sula rubripes*). The Boobies are comfortably embraced by Ulupa'u Crater at the Kaneohe Bay Range Training Facility (RTF) on the eastern side of Mokapu Peninsula. In general, the Booby bird species were named from the Spanish slang word "bobo" which means "stupid." It was a reference to how easily they could be captured by Spanish sailors in the 18th century, but the seabirds are much more wary now. Some people say their awkward behavior on land is the reason for their name. The Red-footed Boobies are, of course, named for their red feet.

Our Booby colony is one of only two populations in the main Hawaiian Islands. The other population of Red-Footed Boobies resides at Kilauea Point National Wildlife Refuge on the island of Kauai. Although these are the smallest of the Booby species, the adults have a wingspan of about 40 inches. The male Booby has a tinge of green on his beak, whereas the female has a blue beak. They live in the trees at Ulupa'u Crater year-round. This species is the only booby that nests in trees. Nesting occurs from January through September. It takes about

six weeks for an egg to hatch, and at least one parent stays with the fluffy white hatchling at all times until the chick is ready to fly in 13 to 14 weeks. Juvenile Boobies are brown and won't achieve the beautiful adult plumage, blue beaks, and striking red feet for three to four years. Seabirds forage in the ocean in search of flying fish and squid.

The Boobies living at Ulupa'u Crater are monitored and studied by MCBH Environmental Compliance & Protection Division (ECPD) Natural Resources. Studies have shown that the Boobies may have lived in Ulupa'u Crater for 400 years or more. Like other species of birds at MCBH, they are federally protected by the Migratory Bird Treaty Act established in 1918 to protect the worldwide habitat of migratory birds. The intentional harassing or harming of a seabird is punishable by up to a year in jail and a \$10,000 fine per bird.

Mālama i ka 'āina—care for and live in harmony with the land. Celebrate Earth Day every day.

Activity: Which bird in the photo is the male? What do they build their nest with? **Bonus:** What species of tree are they nesting in? Comment below. Random drawings for prizes will be held when social distancing measures have been lifted.