

A Red-footed Booby *Sula sula* on the Kalpeni Island, Lakshadweep, India

During a coastal walk on the Kalpeni Island in the Lakshadweep archipelago (10.071°N, 73.648°E) on 02 June 2025, MJKK encountered an unfamiliar seabird resting quietly on a mooring buoy near the shore of the leeward side of the atoll. The bird appeared calm and alert, showing no signs of distress or exhaustion. He observed it for approximately two hours as it occasionally preened and balanced itself against the light breeze, before eventually taking flight toward the southwest over the lagoon. Based on visual assessment and subsequent photographic confirmation, the bird was identified as an immature Red-footed Booby *Sula sula* a rarely recorded seabird in Indian waters [123]. Notable identification features included a pale blue bill with a darker base, bare blue facial skin with a blackish throat patch, vivid red webbed feet, and predominantly dirty white plumage with contrasting dark brown primaries, which aligned with field descriptions by Harrison et al. (2021).



Photo: Mohammed Jabir, K. K

123. Red-footed Booby *Sula sula* observed in Kalpeni Island, Lakshadweep, India, in June 2025.

The Red-footed Booby is a widely distributed seabird that breeds on remote tropical islands across the world's oceans (Schreiber et al. 2020). Within Indian waters, however, sightings are rare. Reports are generally of at-sea observations or of individuals that have been driven ashore during storms. Until 2013, there was only one confirmed record of the Red-footed Booby from India, of a grounded individual from New Digha, West Bengal (Praveen et al. 2013). By 2020, there were six records from India, five of them being from the west coast, and four of them being beached birds (Rodrigues & Roshnath 2020). Since then, there have been four more reports from the west coast, of which three of them were rescued birds from land while

one was at sea (eBird 2026). In the Lakshadweep Sea, the Red-footed Booby has previously been reported between Bangaram Island and Minicoy Island, with a flying encounter recorded near Bangaram Island (Vishnualal et al. 2025). That constituted the first record for the archipelago (Raju et al. 2021) though there have been historical claims without adequate documentation (see Praveen et al. 2013). Also, our observation documents the first confirmed record of a Red-footed Booby spotted on land in the Lakshadweep Archipelago. The individual, a healthy bird, was observed walking and resting on the island rather than flying over nearby waters. In fact, this would be the first report a healthy Red-footed Booby from the land, from anywhere in India – all previous reports were of beached or exhausted birds (seven) or at-sea observations (four).

Remote islands such as Kalpeni may serve as occasional resting or stopover sites for such species traversing the Arabian Sea, considering its proximity to the breeding colonies in the Chagos Archipelago (Votier et al. 2024), located c.1,825 km south of Kalpeni Island.

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