

DOCUMENTATION OF COCOS BOOBY

2025-023

OBSERVER INFORMATION

Reporter: Joey Kellner 9500 S. Estes Way, LITTLETON, CO 80127-8512

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Other Observers: Multiple; Steve Stachowiak, Norm Erthal, Mark Peterson, Rachel Kolokoff Hopper, Steve Larson, Glenn Walbek, Brandon Percival, Dave Leatherman, Tyler Wilson, Alicia Arnold, Darth Aves, Janeal W. Thompson, Scott Shaum, Josh Bruening

SPECIES, DATE, TIME AND LOCATION INFORMATION

Species: Cocos Booby

First Date/Time: 6/16/2025 8:40:00 PM

Last Date/Time: 6/17/2025 6:35:00 AM

Duration (total time in view): 1.25 hours

County: Baca

Specific Location: Burchfield State Wildlife Area

Number: 1

Age: Immature

Sex: Unknown

Plumage: Other/Unknown

HABITAT

A small patch of elms (alive and some dead) in the middle of the open prairie (Comanche National Grasslands)

VIEWING CONDITIONS

Optics: Zeiss 8x42, Leica Televid 77mm scope with 32x wideangle eyepiece

Distance: varied 25-300 feet

Light: dusk the night prior and full sun (after sunrise)

DESCRIPTION OF THE BIRD

Mark Peterson found this bird the prior day. He described the bird as a Brown Booby and said it had flown several times, circling and setting down in the leafed out trees. I arrived at almost dark (could see the bird, barely. I decided to stay in Springfield and return the next morning on the hopes that the bird would not fly off (leave) in the dark of night. Good call on my part! Mark Peterson mentioned Steve Mlodinow thought the bird might be a Cocos Booby.

For description, see photos. One or more pictures are worth MUCH more than the words I could provide.

Brandon Percival, Norm Erthal, and Steve Stachowiak met me at the location at about 5-5:15am.

At 5:27am the bird flew from the eastern most leafed-out elm and circled several times. It then landed, briefly on a wooden utility pole to the east of the small grove. Shortly after landing, the bird rose up and circled a number of times and eventually perched on a very short dead tree in the middle of the grove. We all got photos, then Brandon, Norm and Steve left to chase a Cactus Wren in Otero County. The bird continued to perch in the tree about 30 minutes, and I moved around to the east of the trees near the utility poles for better light, keeping my distance to about 50 yards or so. A pair of Swainson's Hawks started harrassing the Booby and it took flight and circled a few times, all the while being harrassed by the Swainson's Hawks. The bird flew to the east of me and set down on the GROUND near a utility pole...only about 30 feet away from me!! We looked at each other and I starting taking photos into the sunlight. I moved (in a weird "crouching position") around the other side of the bird, keeping my distance to the bird roughly the same, so-as to have better light (kept my distance to 30-50 feet from the bird). The bird just looked around and occasionally at me during the remainder of my observation. It looked healthy when flying around and was alert while on the ground. I kept a low profile and retreated back to my vehicle. I updated my eBird checklist in the car and then I drove along the road to the east to the top of

a rise. Looking back, I could see the Cocos Booby, STILL on the ground next to the utility pole (see final photo uploaded. Zoom in to see the bird to the right of the pole). I then left. No one else arrived during my observation. I even waited an additional 20 minutes at the intersection of Hwy 160 and Baca County Road 2, hoping to share the location of the bird (now on the ground) with other birders, but no one arrived during my wait.

Per email on July 1, 2025 from Rachel Kolokoff Hopper to Peter Gent, it appears that the most knowledgeable people on the topic of Brown Booby vs Cocos Booby are leaning towards identification as a Cocos Booby:

"Waiting for the ID paper to be published in WFO. The 3 heaviest hitters say Cocos. Steve Mlodinow (wrote BOW series on both species), Peter Pyle, and Eric VanderWerf who wrote the paper that split them."

SIMILAR SPECIES DISCUSSION

The only other Booby species that resembles Cocos Booby in immature plumage is Brown Booby. I am certainly not an expert on the separation of these two species, but photos are out for review (as previously mentioned the "big hitters": Steve Mlodinow (wrote BOW series on both species), Peter Pyle, and Eric VanderWerf who wrote the paper that split them are currently leaning towards Cocos Booby.

PREVIOUS EXPERIENCE

Only have experience with immature Blue-footed Booby. No experience with Brown Booby, nor Cocos Booby.

NOTES

Notes made AFTER observation

MATERIALS AVAILABLE

Photographer: , , , , Joey M. Kellner, Joey M. Kellner, Joey M. Kellner, Joey M. Kellner, Joey M. Kellner, Joey M. Kellner, Joey M. Kellner, Joey M. Kellner

Photos |

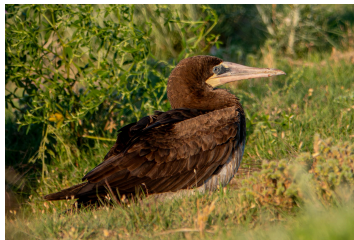
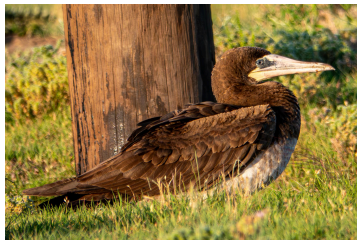
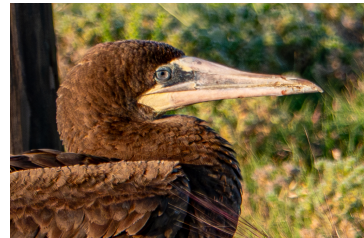
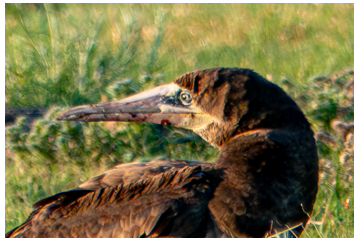
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DATE DOCUMENTATION SUBMITTED

7/6/2025 12:40:00 PM

Click left or right edges of photos to move through all; click outside image to close





LOCATION MAP

The marker on the map shows an approximation of the location of this report. The marker is generated using a prioritized Logic base:

- 1) If the observer has entered coordinates, they will be shown.
- 2) No specific coordinates are available but the location is mappable.