

DOCUMENTATION OF COCOS BOOBY

2025-023

OBSERVER INFORMATION

Reporter: Rachel Hopper 1721 Cottonwood Point Dr., FORT COLLINS, CO 80524-1746

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Other Observers: Mark Peterson, Josh Bruning, Glenn Walbek, Dave Leatherman, Janeal Thompson, Joey Kellner, Norm Erthal, Steve Stachowiak, Brandon Percival, Scott Shaum, Steve Larson, Chris Wilkins, Tyler Wilson, Alicia Arnold.

SPECIES, DATE, TIME AND LOCATION INFORMATION

Species: Cocos Booby

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

Last Date/Time: 6/16/2025 6:30:00 PM

Duration (total time in view): 30 minutes

County: Baca

Specific Location: 37.34101, -103.03138

Number: 1

Age: Immature

Sex: Female

Plumage: Non-breeding

HABITAT

Prairie. Trees in prairie dog town.

VIEWING CONDITIONS

Optics: Leica Scope

Distance: maybe 50 yards

Light: Clear & sunny

DESCRIPTION OF THE BIRD

Mark Peterson found this bird. When I saw the bird, it was in a Siberian Elm perched on some outer branches. The head, neck and part of the torso were visible. I did not get photos because the bird was difficult to find and I was holding it in my scope waiting for others to come out to the field to see it. However, Joey Kellner's excellent photos were submitted to Eric Vanderwerf for his opinion about the bird. Eric wrote the paper that justified the split of these two species. Based on the photos he says:

- It is a female, based on the dark loreal spot.
- It is a subadult, and probably a second cycle bird. The adult bill color and facial skin color are starting to appear, and this is useful for species identification. The facial skin is yellow and the bill is pink. These characters are shared by female leucogaster (Atlantic) Brown Booby and female Cocos Booby. In Atlantic Brown Booby the bill is bright pink, in female Cocos Booby the bill is darker pink-brown. The bill of the Colorado bird is not bright pink, more of a darker pink, which fits better with Cocos.
- Iris color. Adult Cocos Boobies usually do have a dark iris but there is some variation in female Cocos. The eye color of this bird is intermediate in my estimation. However, iris color of immature birds is variable in both species from what I could see during my analyses, and is not useful for identification.
- The bill appears fairly concave, more in the range of Cocos than Brown. This is the only other character (in addition to bill color) that I think is useful for identification of this bird, and it suggests Cocos. (The bill was measured, see attached PDF for graph).
- The underwing coverts are not useful in birds of this age.
- Location. The location of the observation should not be used for identification. The location seems equally unlikely for both species to me. Maybe its closer to the Gulf of Mexico, but weather patterns seem more likely to carry a bird from the southwest.

Eric measured the bill. The culmen curve is not useful for ID however the mandible curve fits Cocos Booby and is outside the range for Brown. He says that the bill color and mandible curve fit Cocos and are the two useful characteristics for identifying this bird as it is an immature. Here are his comments regarding the bill curvature:

"Bill curvature. I measured the curvature of the culmen and mandible using photos from one of the observers. The mandible (lower bill) curvature was 13 degrees, which is right in the range of Cocos but almost entirely outside the range of Brown. The culmen curvature was 20 degrees, which fits with all of the taxa except plotus Brown Booby, and thus is not helpful in this case. This is the only other character (in addition to bill color) that I think is useful for identification of this bird, and it suggests Cocos."

See attached PDF for graph.

SIMILAR SPECIES DISCUSSION

Brown Booby vs Cocos Booby. There were differing opinions on ID Frontiers but based on the expert opinion of the following this is a Cocos Booby.

Eric Vanderwerf

Peter Pyle

Steve Mlodinow

Joseph Morlan

See attached PDF for all comments from ID Frontiers and personal communication.

PREVIOUS EXPERIENCE

I have seen many Brown and Cocos Boobies in their respective locations but do not have experience with identifying a wayward immature bird since the split.

NOTES

Notes made AFTER observation

MATERIALS AVAILABLE

Photographer: Multiple, Multiple, Rachel Hopper

Photos | PDF

[15991_bill_curvature.pdf](#)

[15991_birdwg01_colorado_booby_id_complete_1.pdf](#)

[15991_co_cocos_booby.jpg](#)

DATE DOCUMENTATION SUBMITTED

8/11/2025 6:38:00 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.
- 3) A generic location with no specific coordinates is mapped to the center of the reported county.