

## Brown Noddy Sighted in Gulfport, Mississippi

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At 1700 on 15 August 1985 my husband, Donald, and I saw a Brown Noddy (Anous stolidus) on Gulfport beach, Harrison County, Mississippi. We watched it for 20 minutes through 7 x 35 binoculars and 8-17 x 40 zoom binoculars. Conditions were as follows: 80 degrees F, windy, and cloudy, with good light from the west and the Brown Noddy to the east.

After minimal Hurricane Danny had gone inland in Louisiana, we were checking an area known for its gathering of gulls. There was a large group of Black Skimmers (Rynchops niger) and Laughing Gulls (Larus atricilla), and checking it from left to right, I noted first two Least Terns (Sterna antillarum) next to one Black Tern (Chlidonias niger). Their small size was evident next to the 50 Black Skimmers. Next were the perhaps 60 Laughing Gulls, and at the very tip of the gathering next to the shore were one Laughing Gull with the immature Brown Noddy in front and slightly forward. I had commented on the small size of the Black Tern in comparison to the Black Skimmers. Upon seeing the Brown Noddy, its large size compared to the Laughing Gull made us instantly aware of an unusual visitor. We noted the overall chocolate-brown color, with white forehead and gray forecrown indicating an immature bird. The delicate head shape, wedge-shaped tail, slender black bill, and brown legs were all evident. I was able to approach within 5 m, and observed the dark brown iris and white crescents above and below the eye. The bird was about the size of a Laughing Gull. I made no attempt to make the bird fly as I wanted to contact other observers, but when we returned, the bird could not be relocated.

This is the fourth record of Brown Noddy in Mississippi. Two carcasses have been recovered from coastal beaches: on 20 September 1957 at Gulfport (Gandy and Turcotte 1970); and on 5 July 1979 on Horn Island, Jackson County (Jackson and Cooley 1980). Judith Toups (pers. comm.) saw three Brown Noddies on 1 August 1974 during an extended tropical depression which

persisted in the Gulf of Mexico. The birds circled overhead and landed on a sandbar at Clermont Harbor, Hancock County, when Touts and her husband Jay noted all pertinent field marks. Thus, our sighting represents the second observation of living Brown Noddies in Mississippi.

#### Literature Cited

- Gandy, B.E., and W.H. Turcotte. 1970. Catalog of Mississippi Bird Records. State Wildlife Museum, Jackson, Mississippi.
- Jackson, J.A., and C.D. Cooley. 1980. A Noddy Tern from Horn Island, Mississippi. Mississippi Kite 10:4-5.