

Blue-faced Booby in North Carolina

Ricky Davis and Robert Needham

ON JUNE 23, 1981, WHILE banding juvenile Brown Pelicans (*Pelecanus occidentalis*) in the Cape Fear River, south of Wilmington, North Carolina; the authors and Alice Allen-Grimes and Lawrence Rosas found a large white bird on the island and immediately thought it was a Sulid. The observers were without binoculars, scopes, or cameras and decided to approach the bird to afford the best possible view of the field marks. Size of the bird was clearly larger than the Royal Terns (*Sterna maxima*) that were present, but smaller than a Gannet (*Morus bassanus*). The bill was yellowish and the eyes were yellow. There was a dark mask surrounding the bill and eyes. Leg color was a grayish-green. We approached within about 50 ft when the bird flew. We could then see the white head, neck, back, breast, and belly. The primaries and rear edge of the secondaries were solid black. There were a few black feathers on the white rump and the white tail had black outer feathers. We then left the island and checked the literature. After referring to the book on the Sulidae by J. Bryan Nelson (1978), we agreed it was an adult Blue-faced (Masked) Booby (*Sula dactylatra*).

The next morning, the authors returned to the island and photographed the bird which was observed defending an area located within a large Royal Tern colony on the dome of the island.

Here the bird deposited sticks in a random manner and kept neighboring terns out of the area. Apparently all of the surrounding nesting activity had influenced the bird's behavior to some extent, but this random placement of sticks failed to resemble a nest.

The bird usually stayed near the nesting Royal Terns. Once the Royal Tern nesting was finished it remained alone in a grassy depression, but would often walk down to the beach and then return to the grassy depression.

The bird's walk was clumsy with the whole body moving from side to side. The flight consisted of several flaps and a long glide on outstretched wings. The bird could circle the island in a very short time, making it easy to lose sight of him. We never heard any vocalizations.

After the first month, the bird left the island for longer periods; and by late August, it left the island in the morning, stayed away all day, and returned to roost in the early evening. When returning, the bird flew straight in from the ocean, less than a mile away.

The booby was seen off and on at fairly regular intervals (except for a 2-week period in early August).

There was no unusual weather pattern prior to or during the initial sighting to explain the appearance of this bird in southeastern North Carolina. It is felt

ALASKAN BIRDING

One of Alaska's only lodges where you join a year-round resident family. Sincere, informal hospitality in a cradle of spectacular sea and mountain panoramas. Gateway to the Kenai Fjords, this roadless area with McKinley and the Problofs is the place in Alaska for birders, naturalists, photographers and wilderness enthusiasts. The world's 2nd largest tides, prolific sea bird and marine productivity set this area apart from all others. Smoking volcanoes, blue ice glaciers, nesting eagles, sea otter, seal and sea lion, whales. Untracked beaches, forest trails, help pull crab pots, catch salmon, trout, visit our remote brown bear photographic camp near McNeil River Sanctuary (world's largest concentration) or mountain lake fly-in camp. An in-depth experience with Mike McBride Reg. Guide, Naturalist. Bush plane fly-in 5 days with guide \$1,500.

KACHEMAK BAY WILDERNESS LODGE

China Poot Bay via Homer Alaska 99603
Radio/Phone Contact 907-235-8910

Considered by our guests, one of Alaska's most worthwhile experiences
National and International References

Once a River

Bird Life and Habitat Changes On the Middle Gila

by Amadeo M. Rea



Environmental abuse has turned a thriving river into a dry bed in Arizona; yet a mere two centuries ago, Indians fished from the banks of the Gila and numerous birds frequented its marshes.

Amadeo Rea, curator of birds at San Diego's Museum of Natural History, documents the disappearance of avian habitats along the Gila in this startling book. Drawing on ethnohistorical sources, skeletal remains, and his own extensive fieldwork, he reveals changes in migration patterns that accompanied habitat deterioration; suggests a link between Sonoran Desert subspecies and those of Baja California and the lower Rio Grande; and even offers a new look at traditional taxonomy.

Also included are unpublished notes of biologist M. French Gilman, who worked on the middle Gila from 1907 to 1915.

270 pp., illustd. \$24.50 clothbound. April 1983.

BIRDER'S LIFE LIST



New and updated checklist covers continental U.S., Alaska and Canada. Copies now available for \$5.00 ppd. from Godwit Press, 426 W. 23rd St. (8), New York, N.Y. 10011

 University of Arizona Press
1615 E. Speedway, Tucson, AZ 85719



Adult Blue-faced (masked) Booby, Cape Fear, North Carolina, June-August, 1981. Photo: Robert Needham.

that the bird may have chosen this island as a summer residence because of the presence of a large number of colonial nesters which included about 5000 pairs of Royal and Sandwich terns (*Sterna sandvicensis*), 320 pairs of Brown Pelicans and 500 pairs of Laughing Gulls (*Larus atricilla*).

It is a mystery as to why this bird stayed so far north of its normal range.

The A.O.U. Checklist (1957) states that the normal range for Blue-faced Booby is the Dry Tortugas, Florida and throughout the Caribbean Sea; but casually ranging to the coast of South Carolina and the northern Gulf of Mexico. Duncan and Harvard (1980) state that Blue-faced Booby can be found regularly during the warmer months off the Gulf states, especially Alabama. In North Carolina there are two hypothetical occurrences recorded. One reports two immatures after tropical storm *Alma* off the Bogue Banks June 7, 1966 (*Chat* 30:107), and the other has sightings of 1-2 (adults?) off Oregon Inlet and near Diamond Shoals July 7 and 11, 1979 (*Chat* 43:80). This last instance was reported by David Lee of the N.C. State Museum of Natural History, who has been making systematic pelagic trips off North Carolina during the past 2 years. The present record seems all the more unusual when the numerous trips by Lee (and others) have failed to produce any positive evidence of the bird's occurrence in North Carolina waters.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

From the very first sighting, the authors felt that a general alert to the bird-watching world would be highly detrimental to the nesting Brown Pelicans. Birders were notified as soon as the young pelicans reached an adequate size, and the authors express their appreciation to all those who understood and followed our voluntary restrictions on access to the island. We also wish to thank Dr. J.F. Parnell of the Biology Department, UNC-Wilmington for his guidance in preparing this report. Banding of the Brown Pelican was conducted under research supported by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

LITERATURE CITED

- AMERICAN ORNITHOLOGISTS UNION (A.O.U.). 1957. Check-list of North American birds. Fifth ed. American Ornithologists' Union, Baltimore, Md.
- DUNCAN, CHARLES D. and RALPH W. HAVARD. 1980. Pelagic birds of the northern Gulf of Mexico. *Am. Birds* 34:122-132.
- HOLMES, R.P. 1966. Atlantic Blue-faced Booby off Bogue Banks, North Carolina. *Chat* 30:107.
- LEE, DAVID S. and STEVEN P. PLATANIA. 1979. Unverified sight records of seabirds in North Carolina waters. *Chat* 43:79-81.
- NELSON, J. BRYAN. 1978. The Sulidae, Gannets and Boobies. Aberdeen Univ. Studies Series No. 154. Oxford Univ. Press. 1012 pp.

—126 Duncansby Ct.,
Cary, NC 27511.



Questers for 1983

Travel with a purpose. Learn and discover. Search out plants and animals, birds and flowers. Explore rain forests, mountains and tundra, seashores, lakes and swamps. With Questers you will have ample time to photograph, absorb and reflect. Naturalist guides, small tour parties, first-class accommodations.

Worldwide Nature Tours 1983 Departures

The Americas

Okefenokee Swamp: 12 days, 4/17 • Everglades: 11 days, 4/7, 11/3 • Hawaii: 15 days, 2/10, 3/24, 10/20, 12/22 • Alaska: 17 days, 6/24, 7/12 & 30 • Pacific Northwest: 12 days, 6/20, 8/8 • Superior Forest Canoe Trip: 9 days, 7/9, 8/13 • Canyonlands: 11 days, 5/6, 10/7 • Northwest Canada: 16 days, 7/1 • Manitoba (Churchill): 12 days, 6/20 • Newfoundland: 16 days, 6/12 • Southern Mexico: 14 days, 2/13, 12/18 • Panama & Costa Rica: 14 days, 2/14, 3/21, 12/19 • The Amazon: 17 days, 1/9, 5/8, 7/3 & 31, 10/2, 11/13 • Ecuador & Galapagos: 16 days, 2/9, 4/13, 7/6 & 27, 10/19, 12/21 • Peru: 17 days, 7/17, 11/6 • Patagonia: 22 days, 1/10, 11/7 • Trinidad & Tobago: 11 days, 3/7 & 21, 11/7 & 21.

Europe

Iceland: 16 days, 6/17, 7/8, 8/5 • Islands/Highlands of Scotland: 21 days, 6/2, 7/14 • Switzerland: 17 days, 7/15, 8/12 • Greece: 19 days, 3/28, 9/19 • Spain: 20 days, 4/15, 9/16.

Asia and Africa

Japan: 23 days, 6/3 • Sri Lanka: 18 days, 2/18, 11/18 • Walking in Foothills of Western Himalayas: 19 days, 4/14 • Himalayas: Nepal, Sikkim & Bhutan: 23 days, 3/17, 10/6 • Kenya: 23 days, 2/3, 7/21, 10/20 • Zimbabwe & Botswana: 19 days, 5/26, 7/7, 10/13.

Oceania and Australasia

Australia & New Zealand: 28 days, 2/12, 10/1 • New Zealand & the Milford Track: 22 days, 2/11, 11/11 • Papua New Guinea: 22 days, 5/20, 8/5, 11/4.

Write for the 1983 Questers Directory of Worldwide Nature Tours. If a particular tour strikes your fancy, ask for its Detailed Itinerary.



QUESTERS

Questers Tours & Travel, Inc.
Dept. AB, 257 Park Avenue South
New York, NY 10010 • (212) 673-3120

OSPREY BINOCULARS
Powerful. 7.5x, 42mm C.F. computerized optics use BPG-2 prisms. Shock resistant rubber armored with rainguard. Perfect for outdoor use. Endorsed by National Audubon Society.

LYNX SPOTTING Scope-Telescopic Lens
Compact 65mm. Zooms 20-60x. World's most advanced catadioptric scope has resolving power close to theoretical limit.

WRITE FOR LITERATURE AND DISCOUNT PRICES ON A COMPLETE LINE OF OPTICS FOR THE OUTDOORSMAN

BIRDING P.O. BOX 5AB
AMSTERDAM, N.Y.
12010