

YOUR NAME	Kevin Scaldeferri
YOUR EMAIL	kevin@scaldeferri.com
BIRD IDENTIFICATION	Brown Booby (1)
DATE(S) OF OBSERVATION	Oct 22, 2022
TIME OF DAY	10:45 AM
LOCATION	On the north observation platform at the Cape Meares Lighthouse State Park
LIGHTING AND WEATHER CONDITIONS	Partly cloudy, very good visibility
DETAILS	<p>I first picked up the bird in my scope flying north, more-or-less directly west from my vantage point and it immediately jumped out as having a somewhat unfamiliar shape and the general dark-on-top, white-on-the-bottom pattern I was looking for. I continued to track the bird while increasing to maximum magnification which allowed me to observe that the head was dark and a large, long, conical yellow bill. I was pretty confident this was the Brown Booby at this point, but it passed behind Pyramid Rock at this point, so I pivoted my scope to focus on the north side of the rock, hoping it would reappear on that side. A few seconds later it did, flying a short distance past the rock before banking around and landing just on the far side of the rock. When it banked, I got a good view of the underside of the bird, which was bright white on the belly, dark on the throat, and the wings were white in the center with dark surrounding on all three sides. I confirmed the bill shape and color from this angle as well, but did not see the feet as it landed where I could not see it. As it landed, I could assess that it was smaller than the Brown Pelicans, and comparable, perhaps slightly larger, than the Double-crested Cormorants. I continued to watch the area for about 20 more minutes, but did not see the bird take flight again.</p>
DO YOU HAVE ANY PRIOR EXPERIENCE WITH THIS SPECIES?	<p>No. If this bird had not been reported twice in this location in the preceding days, I probably would have seen this bird and thought "that looks odd", and let it go. But, because I was specifically looking for this bird, I had studied it and was prepared to quickly evaluate any candidates that appeared.</p>
SIMILAR SPECIES	<p>The dominant species on and around Pyramid Rock that day were Brown Pelicans, Double-crested Cormorants, and Pelagic Cormorants, all species that I am very familiar with. It was obviously not a Pelagic Cormorant. The color of the bill and pale undersides could perhaps suggest a juvenile Double-crested Cormorant, but the brightness of the belly, the underwing pattern, and shape of the bill ruled that out. Brown Pelicans can sometimes show a similar underwing pattern, but not as bright white, and the head/bill shape and bill color was entirely different. Some shearwaters show similar plumage patterns, but are smaller and particularly have much smaller bills; I also would not expect to see one landing on a "haystack rock" at this time of year. A Loon could also have similar plumage patterns, but their flight style is different, their bills smaller, and they would certainly never land on a rock. As far as other even less common Booby or Gannet species, the bill and plumage patterns rule them out as well.</p>
DO YOU HAVE PHOTOS?	No

BRBO-2022-27 (Brown Booby)

1st round vote — December 8, 2022

Accepted: 8
Species Unresolved: 1

Accepted, sight record, single report

I feel the report lacks details on plumage coloration, but the observer's description of the bill clinches this as a Brown Booby for me. It also helps that other observers had previously reported presumably the same bird from the same area.

The details provided are barely sufficient to establish the identification of this bird as a Brown Booby. The observer never really described the back of the bird or the upperwings except to say that the bird was "dark on top". However, the long conical yellow bill eliminates all species other than Masked Booby and Brown Booby. The underwing pattern doesn't seem consistent with that of a Masked Booby. The observer said that underwings were white in the center with dark surrounding the white on all three sides (the trailing edge of the secondaries, the primaries, and the leading edge of the underwing). This description of the underwing is a much better match for a Brown Booby than a Masked Booby since Masked Boobies don't really have dark coloration on the leading edge of the underwing. Juvenile Masked Boobies are typically fairly dark brown on the upperwings, but they have a white collar on the neck that was not observed on the bird in question.

Convincing description, rules out any of the other booby species.

Bird known to be in the area via WhatsApp RBA reports. Description matches species.

I thought report described a Brown Booby, wish he had eliminated other boobyd, but I think he got there

Although we only received a single report, there were at least two additional observers reporting the (presumed) same bird from Cape Meares on October 17th and October 19th. Checklists: <https://ebird.org/checklist/S120872046> <https://ebird.org/checklist/S121141615> Conditions sounded kind of rough and the viewing windows minimal, but I think there's enough information here to narrow it down to a Brown Booby. Probably the closest species of confusion would be a juvenile Masked/Nazca Booby, but I'd expect some mention of a white collar (which is clearly missing in the eBird reports).

Very nicely written description which would seem to safely confirm Brown Booby. Previous sightings of this bird, per WhatsApp reports from the time, were by Colby Neuman (finder) and then Conor Scotland.

Solid description

Species Unresolved

Candidate Species: Brown Booby, Nazca Booby.

Immature Nazca Boobies can have all the features mentioned in the description, including pale bill, dark head, and white underwings surrounded by dark.

BRBO-2022-27 (Brown Booby)

2nd round vote — March 1, 2023

Accepted: 8
Species Unresolved 1

Accepted, sight record, single report

My thoughts on this record remain unchanged. While there may have been some room in Kevin's report to create the thought of another species of Booby, the comments in the eBird checklists from Conor Scotland and Colby Neuman (see Nick's first round comments for links) clinch it as a Brown Booby for me.

While I certainly can see [another committee member's] point about the similar plumage shown by an immat. Nazca Booby, I still feel that the description here points rather clearly to a Brown Booby. The observer states that the upper side was dark, with no mention of a white collar (which should have been noted), and he specifically mentions a yellow bill (Nazca would just have a pale grayish bill, not yellow). I am further swayed by the fact that a Brown Booby was reported from the same location around the same time by two other observers, both of whom are reliable.

I continue to believe that the description adequately eliminates both Masked Booby and Nazca Booby. The fact that Colby Neuman and Conor Scotland also reported a Brown Booby from the same area around the same time adds credibility to this report. They did write very good descriptions on eBird, however. It is unfortunate that neither Colby or Conor submitted reports to the OBRC.

Although I agree that the report is a bit bare in some areas, I feel there is still enough there to arrive at an ID of a Brown Booby, especially when we factor in the two additional reports on eBird (from Colby and Conor - see my first-round comments for links).

Not sure exactly how to label this report but presuming the photo submitted by [another committee member] is the same bird, it removes all doubt as to the correct identification. The timing and location of reports seems to corroborate that they are indeed the same bird. In any case, I feel that the reporter's description is just about sufficient to accept this record, particularly his description of the bill in combination with other features. I am accepting this record based on the written description as I'm not sure the addition of a photo from a different observer pushes this record into the verified by photograph category.

Good description, I feel other booby species are eliminated, Also others viewed bird not in report

I feel that the description is sufficient for BRBO. Had there been no other reports in the area at that time, I feel I'd need to give it more thought after seeing [another committee member's] NABO comment/photo.

I still believe this is a good description for Brown Booby. It would have been nice to have the observer note the lack of a white collar, but they certainly would have noted that (and seen that) in the field. The observer does talk about the dark upperparts and never mentions white on the upperparts. The description of the underwings is also consistent with Brown Booby and seems to rule out Masked/Nazca which have much more extensive white underneath. I certainly see why this description would cause some pause, but overall I am comfortable accepting this as a Brown Booby which has a very well established vagrancy pattern in Oregon.

I think the photos adequately establish this as a Brown Booby.

Species Unresolved

Candidate Species: Nazca Booby, Masked Booby, Brown Booby

Upon further consideration, this report and written description does not eliminate immature Nazca/Masked Booby. If there are future reports of this individual, as there were multiple observers over the course of several days, that would be helpful.

Candidate Species: Brown Booby, Nazca Booby (immature)

Although the description is consistent with a Brown Booby, it does not sufficiently rule out an immature Nazca Booby. It is described as having a "general dark on top, white on the bottom pattern." Both boobies have this pattern. Although immature Nazca Boobies typically have a white "collar," it is not always apparent, and no mention was made one way or the other in the description. Immature Nazca Boobies can have yellowish bills, so bill color also does not necessarily distinguish Brown from immature Nazca Booby. It was described as being "white on the belly, dark on the throat," but no mention was made about where the dark changed to white - a critical factor in distinguishing between the two Boobies. On Brown Boobies, the dark continues to the breast, and in flight ends where the leading edge of the wing meets the body, whereas it ends at the bottom of the throat in the Nazca Booby. The underwings were described as "white in the center with dark surrounding on all three sides." While this description is better for Brown Booby, there is a dark line near the leading edge of the wing as well as dark primaries at the trailing edge and at the end of the wing, so it could be interpreted as being white surrounded by dark. Nick notes that the presumed same bird was mentioned by others. It would be interesting to know if any descriptions from those other observers might help clarify between the two species. I hope this discussion can go to a third round.