



WESTERN CUYAHOGA AUDUBON SOCIETY

CONNECT › EDUCATE › CONSERVE

Remembering August's Celebrity Bird - A Brown Booby

By Tom Fishburn

On Tuesday, August 25, 2020 Henry Trimpe, from Brunswick, spotted a most unusual bird for Ohio. Henry arrived well before sunset at Nimisila Reservoir in Summit County to witness the Purple Martin fall season spectacular. While waiting for sunset to draw closer, Henry spotted a bird out over the water that looked different. He said to his fiancé, Sarah who was with him, "there is something out there that doesn't belong here". That bird was Ohio's first record of a Brown Booby.

This Brown Booby was a young bird, likely not even a year old. Kids do like to wander away. And sometimes they get into trouble. Since this story has an unhappy ending, I prefer to tell that part of it now. On Friday, September 4th the bird was reported to be killed by an unknown predator. But this special visitor to Ohio will be remembered by many as providing oohs & aahs as it stayed at Nimisila for over a week.

Boobies are tropical seabirds, rarely seen from land even in Florida and Texas. Their range is widespread in both the Atlantic and Pacific oceans. This is the first time I and many others have ever seen one. After I first heard of this bird's appearance, I kept paying attention to the reports. It was seen each day into Friday when bad storms came through. So hoping it stayed around, on Saturday morning I took the drive to the Nimisila Reservoir (the same viewpoint where I watched the Purple Martins three weeks before). It did stay through the storms and several admirers were already enjoying this celebrity.

After I scoped the area for how to best view this bird I walked into two feet of water and stayed there for most of the 2-1/2 hours of my visit. The Brown Booby had a favorite perch from a bare branch of a tree that extended over the water. Most people stayed dry on land and shared a few openings to see it through leaves and branches. But I had heard that a good many folks

were getting better views from going into the lake. So I was prepared with nothing but my car keys in the back pocket of my shorts.

The bird stayed put for about an hour before it flew off to feed. I saw it far out in the lake take a plunge as it went after something. I had changed my position to look for it to return. Only after some twenty minutes the young Brown Booby flew back in my direction and to its perch. It remained there another hour before leaving again. During that second hour it spent considerable time preening and was more animated stretching and scratching itself. Boobies got their names partly from their clumsiness and their behavior which seemed daft to early observers that figured it had a small brain. Perhaps that is why it ignored the attention it got from all the humans around it.

I certainly had an amazing time watching this special visitor and will remember it fondly.

Thanks to Rogue Birders for publishing the article, and Henry Trimpe who wrote of his experience from which I got some of my information here:

<https://roguebirders.com/2020/08/31/a-very-special-moment-in-summit-county/>