

# LOUISIANA BIRD RECORDS COMMITTEE

## REPORT FORM

1. English and Scientific names: Red-billed Tropicbird *Phaethon aethereus*
2. Number of individuals, sexes, ages, general plumage (e.g., 2 in alternate plumage):  
1 juvenile, sex unknown
3. Parish: Plaquemines - private pelagic trip, GOM  
Specific Locality: Out of Venice, 28 37 187; 88 58 137—depth 2200, T H<sub>2</sub>O = 88 degrees
4. Date(s) when observed: 26 July, 2021
5. Time(s) of day when observed: 12:25pm
6. Reporting observer and address: John Dillon, 183 Dance Road, Athens, LA 71003
7. Other observers accompanying reporter who also *identified* the bird(s): David Booth, Paul Conover, Charlie Lyon, Mark Meunier, David Muth
8. Other observers who independently identified the bird(s):
9. Light conditions (position of bird in relation to shade and to direction and amount of light): Direct, full sun. No clouds. Bird was on water and in flight.
10. Optical equipment (type, power, condition): Alpen Rainier 8x42 binoculars in very good condition. Alpen Rainier 8X42 in good condition; Nikon Coolpix P900 83X zoom.
11. Distance to bird(s): as close as within 150-200 feet while it was sitting on the water.
12. Duration of observation: About 12 minutes according to photo sequence.

13. Habitat: blue water, past loop current in GOM.

14. Behavior of bird / circumstances of observation (flying, feeding, resting; include and stress habits used in identification; relate events surrounding observation): Conover initially found the bird sitting on the water, and I saw it next because he and I were up front. We were both sort of taken about back how much white we saw. I was first thinking it was a Masked Booby given how much white there was. About the time it started taking off, David Muth said, "That is a tropicbird!" Once it was airborne we could tell it was not shaped like a Sulid, and we could see the dark colors of the dorsal side. The captain drove the boat about 45 mph until we got directly below the bird and then beyond it, at which it veered left. We veered right and cut the engine, and the bird circled down and landed again. We slowly idled up to it for more looks on the water. It stayed there for a few more minutes before taking off again.

15. Description (include only what was actually seen, *not what "should" have been seen*; include if possible: total length/relative size compared to other familiar species; body bulk, shape, proportions; bill, eye, leg, and plumage characteristics. Stress features that separate it from similar species, *or for species that are known to hybridize frequently, stress features that help eliminate possible hybrids*): Obvious tropicbird, though lacking tail streamer. Yellow bill indicates a juvenile bird. Completely white overall with black outer primaries and outer primary coverts (the coverts distinguishing it from White-tailed Tropicbird). Dark between eye and bill, with black line extending from behind eye to the back of the head and neck and extending in a downward line. Back speckled black from nape to rump. Feet dark.

16. Voice: Silent

17. Similar species (include how they were eliminated by your observation): Distinguished from White-tailed Tropicbird by black eye line wrapping around back of head and by its black primary coverts. Distinguished from Red-tailed Tropicbird by yellow bill. Distinguished from larger, bright-billed terns like Caspian and Royal also by yellow bill, along with dorsal pattern and being white overall with no gray.

18. Photographs or tape recordings obtained? (by whom? attached?): Several, I assume by all present.

19. Previous experience with this species: Zero.

20. Identification aids: (list books, illustrations, other birders, etc. used in identification):

a. at time of observation: Used Harrison's Seabirds (1983) to check differences between Red-tailed and White-tailed.

b. after observation: Sibley.

21. This description is written from:

study of images

22. Are you positive of your identification? If not, explain: Yes.

23. Date: 28 July, 2021

Time: 5:47pm

24. May the LBRC have permission to display this report or portions of this report on its website? \_\_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_\_

If yes, may we include your name with the report? \_\_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_\_



