

# The Glory Bird

by Rob vanZandt



What the heck is a glory bird? If you are fortunate to find the unusual, out-of-place bird, lost and blown by storm or just one with a screw loose in its wee brain, then you will get up to 15 minutes of fame as a hotshot birder, and thus, the glory!

A glory bird, the blue-footed boobie, normally found near salt water, was recently spotted at Patagonia Lake State Park, and, as of August 21, was still there, feeding off the lake's fish. The blue-footed booby is a marvel to watch feed. He rises to a height, and then dives head first, submerging completely and literally flying under water to catch its prey, much like a brown pelican. As a pelagic bird, it is only at breeding time that boobies come to shore. Pelagic means they are quite at home out on the open sea flying and diving for fish or sitting comfortably on the ocean's surface. This one has no chance of breeding; it is in the park alone.

One reason birds wind up in places they have never been before is because of habit loss. Global warming may have an effect, although the research is ongoing. Giant corporate farming taking place in northern Mexico has destroyed a lot of natural habitat and is the reason for the increase in local sightings of sinaloa wrens, ruddy ground doves, yellow grosbeaks, rose-throated becards, violet-crowned hummingbirds, and many others glory bird species. This includes gray hawk, whose numbers have increased dramatically over the last decade in southeast Arizona.

All of these birds could be considered glory birds, especially if you find one before others do. If you report a glory bird, get ready for scrutiny from the rare bird folks comparable to the Spanish Inquisition. You had better be correct in your observation and identification, or you'll not get the glory, but your name could be mudd, instead.

Maybe this bird of the Pacific Ocean will stick around. A lot of people have come great distances to see it in this new setting, and the park is getting extra revenue as a result. Some people who come here are making the boobie a prize on their list. Some might consider it silly to make a list of birds seen in the USA, when one could see this bird over open water in the Sea of Cortez (Gulf of California), Mexico, or as far south as Guerro on the Pacific Coast. I mentally put it on my USA list, even though I've seen this bird in Mexico. So, I too am guilty of silly lists.

I remember one Freeport, Texas Christmas Bird Count I found a glory bird. I had to get up in front of 130 individuals at the count-down dinner, and the birding guru that started the annual count, V i c t o r Emanuel, and tell why the bird I saw out-of-range in the dead of winter, a bird that should have been in South America, was indeed a rose-breasted grosbeak. I think I rattled off all information defining this bird except one key diagnostic feature. When asked by the guru Emanuel, "Aren't you forgetting something?" I was lost and nervous and couldn't think to what he could be alluding. I stood there dumbfounded, until he finally asked, "What color was the breast?" I had left out this obvious feature because it was, well, so obvious. It was with relief that I joined the laughter of 130 people. Indeed, I had seen a rose-breasted grosbeak, and that was my small slice (about 5 minutes) of glory.



Blue-footed  
Booby

## The Grasshopper

*He stands rigid in his armor plate.  
Unblinking eyes of  
Hundreds of angular facets  
Stare out at the wide world, three hundred and sixty degrees.  
He lifts his right front leg  
And draws his right antenna through  
The curved cleft on his foot  
To clean thousands of microscopic hairs  
That smell rain and grass and fire.  
Then the left side.  
He raises his head  
He stands tall on his six legs  
Antennae move to the forward position  
As if to say, ready.  
No one knows his intentions  
As he steps among the dead leaves  
Over stone mountains  
Between tall grasses.  
The sun shines  
And his step is confident.  
He reaches a patch of bare ground and stops.  
One long back leg stretches out and up  
Then both back legs engage in a slow cycling movement  
As the tips of his antennae touch the soil.  
What has he noticed?  
Suddenly both back legs vibrate  
Making rows of tiny pegs  
Scrape against the hard front edges of his wings  
And his song pierces the still-fresh air  
He celebrates life and calls for love.*

— Liz Bernays

## The Subject Is JOBS

Are you unemployed, under-employed, or looking for other employment opportunities? Come to a presentation by Santa Cruz County One Stop Career Center at 11:00 a.m. on Thursday, October 10 at Cady Hall in Patagonia. You'll receive information about programs and services available to Santa Cruz County residents that provide tools and resources to maximize earning potential. There is no charge to attend the presentation.

SCC One Stop is a single point of entry to services and programs that prepare individuals for employment, and these programs are funded by the US Department of Labor through the Workforce Investment Act.

For more information, contact Carolyn Shafer at 394-0252.