

Glossy Ibis Record Number: 92-29
4 May 1992 Classification: A-P
Union Slough N.W.R., Kossuth Co., IA
Bobbi Webber, Dave Bunkofske
IBL 63:68, P-0338, P-0339

PHOTOGRAPHS

Bobbi Webber, 4 May, P-0338, 605 290th St, Lone Rock, IA 50559
Dave Bunkofske, 5 May, P-0339, 303 4th St., Burt, IA 50522

LETTERS

Matt Kenne [undated (summer 1992)](Oct 1993)
Bob Janssen to Tom [Kent], undated
Bruce A. Fall to Thomas H. Kent, 13 July 1993
J. V. Remsen to Thomas H. Kent, 21 Oct 1993

REFERENCES

Records Committee: IBL 63:68, 64:67
Kenne, M. 1994. Glossy Ibis in Kossuth County. IBL 64:83-84.

VOTE: 5 A-P, 1 NA, 1 A-P for White-faced Ibis

A-P, Excellent comparisons of facial patches. No doubt in my mind.

A-P, All comments apply to the close-up photograph. One bird clearly shows the red eye, red legs and white head feathering of a White-faced Ibis. In contrast, the other bird shows a dark eye and narrower, light area mainly in front of the eye. Under magnification, one could almost believe it has a blue tint. In the photo, it appears the white area extends narrowly behind the eye also, but this could just be light reflection off the eye or the feathers. The legs are grayer and the bill has a pinkish coloration. The problem is deciding if this is a White-faced at a slightly different stage of development. However, both birds pictured appear to be full adults as evidenced by the lack of brown or flecked feathers on the head and neck.

A-P, Remarkable, diagnostic photos!

A-P White-faced Ibis, The photographed birds appear to be a breeding White-faced Ibis. The lower bird has a white line from the base of the bill around the eye back to the base, red facial skin, probable red eye, and red legs. The white around the eye and red legs are diagnostic of White-faced Ibis according to Kaufman. The upper bird has no red facial skin and the eye color cannot be determined, but the white pattern surrounding the eye is still present.

A-P, The excellent photograph of two ibises shows both birds to be in breeding plumage with overall chestnut color and metallic green on wings. The contrasting feature of Glossy and White-faced ibises are clearly illustrated in one photograph. Eye color: black vs. red; leg color: gray-pink vs. carmine; facial skin: blue with light border not extending behind eye or to chin vs. probably cream colored; feathering around facial skin: dark vs. white. Differences in bill color are equivocal to me -- the base of the bill on the glossy may be grayer. This record is less than 100 miles from the first record in Minnesota at Heron Lake in 1991. Ref: Pratt, H.D. 1976. Field identification of White-faced and Glossy Ibeses. *Birding* 8:1-5; Janssen, R.B. 1992. A Glossy Ibis in Minnesota. *Loon* 64:5-10.

A-P, Blue color on face is evident on one bird in all photos and red color on face is just as evident on the other (White-faced Ibis) bird. The bird with the blue facial skin has darker looking green on the top of the head. The enlarged photo also shows bluish bare skin on the face but not behind the eye, only from the base of the bill to the eye. It also shows a dark eye but not enough detail is shown to tell if it is brown or red. The only thing that looks wrong in the photo are the pink legs and blue joints. Everything else fits Glossy Ibis.

NA, American Birds reported Glossy Ibis in Kansas on May 3-4, 1992, and a Glossy Ibis in Wyoming on 5-10 May, 1992. Minnesota accepted a Glossy Ibis record about 1 1/2 years ago. Iowa birders need to be on the lookout for Glossy Ibis. However, I think the enlarged vertical photo by David Bunkofske is a great photo and shows 2 White-faced Ibis. The left ibis has a bright red eye, white encircling the eye, and bright red legs. The right ibis with its wings lifted has a darker face in

this photo but clearly shows a small band of white feathers encircling the eye. This band of white feathers encircling the eye on the right ibis is much less than what shows on the left ibis, but eliminates Glossy Ibis because a Glossy Ibis does not have the white feathers encircling the eye. I would vote A-P on two White-faced Ibis.

REVOTE: 5 A-P, 1 NA, 1 A-P for White-faced Ibis

A-P, I'm commenting without having re-reviewed the photos, but will stick with my first impression: how could the photos have been more diagnostic for Glossy IBis?

A-P breeding White-faced Ibis lower, A-P transition W-f Ibis upper.

A-P, The comments of the A-P voters were on the mark. The NA voters have misinterpreted the thin line of light facial skin as white feathers. It would be difficult to get a better picture illustrating the differences between these two species.

A-P, I do not see how the bird with the obvious blue facial skin could be reviewed as anything but a Glossy Ibis. A review of any article or field guide clearly shows that breeding plumaged Glossy Ibis has some pale or whitish feathering surrounding the blue facial skin. These photos are diagnostic and cannot be anything but those of a Glossy Ibis.

NA, Only the long vertical photo of David Bunkofske really shows clear defining features although one smaller photo by him shows a White-faced Ibis. These two ibises are clearly adults. The left ibis is certainly a White-faced Ibis showing its red eye clearly with white encircling the eye. The right ibis with its wings upraised has its face in a shadow. The iris appears dark but could be any color really in this shadow. What really seems definitive to me is that white certainly encircles the eye. This white definitely isn't as prominent as the White-faced Ibis on the left, but it certainly encircles the eye. If the white encircles the eye, this must be a White-faced Ibis and not a Glossy Ibis. Kenn Kaufman in *Advanced Birding* says, "The exact shape of this white area is variable..." Leg color, bill color, and head color may be helpful but are not really definitive between species due to variability. I think without direct sunlight on the face of the right ibis with its wings lifted that its face could appear darker than it really is and that the white area encircling the eye would be even more prominent. I vote NA on Glossy Ibis, but I would vote A-P on two White-faced Ibis.

REVOTE (at meeting of 15 May 1993): no change. It was clarified that the white behind the eye seen by the NA voters was interpreted as a reflection on the eye by the A-P voters. It was decided to seek outside consultation.

REVOTE (by mail with letters from consultants): 7 A-P

A-P, I have reviewed the photo with Glossy Ibis in the upper righthand corner and White-faced Ibis in the lower left. I agree with Bruce Fall that the white mark is a reflection of the eye.

Therefore, the ibis has no white behind the eye and must be a Glossy. However, I still think there is a remote possibility that this bird could be a phase of the White-faced Ibis as it changes from basic to alternate plumage.

A-P, I do not have any problem with any of the comments made by the outside reviewers on this record. This agrees with my opinion and I greatly appreciate their help in resolving this record.

A-P, It was good reading the remarks of outside sources J. V. Remsen and Bruce Fall. Bruce Fall's comments especially on the position on the head for the eye of the Glossy Ibis along with the sunlight highlighting the back of the eye and producing a posterior-most pale mark on the head were helpful for me. I will change my vote to A-P.

December (Padelford and Padelford 1987). Two years later a Rock Wren was again observed by many from 8 to 28 November 1988 in the rip-rap along the Cherry Glen boat ramp at Saylorville Lake (Dinsmore 1989). On 17 September 1991 a surprised David Carlisle found two Rock Wrens in Red Oak. Although the birds were in his garage, he noted that suitable rocky habitat was nearby (Carlisle 1992). The Warren County bird was somewhat of an enigma since the Youngblut residence is on an acreage surrounded by some timber and heavily cultivated land. Perhaps the extensive railroads ties in their yard simulated the rocky areas typically used by Rock Wrens.

LITERATURE CITED

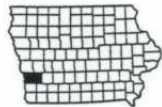
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 Kent, T. H., and W. R. Silcock. 1984. Rock Wren in Woodbury County. *Iowa Bird Life*. 54:37.
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532 120th Avenue, Norwalk, IA 50211

CALIFORNIA GULL AT CARTER LAKE, POTTAWATTAMIE COUNTY

TANYAE BRAY

On the morning of 21 November 1993, Jerry Toll called to inform me that he had seen a California Gull at Carter Lake near the Omaha airport. When I arrived, Jerry had the gull in view in his scope. It was swimming on the lake about 200 feet from us in company with approximately a dozen Ring-billed Gulls and a few Herring Gulls. At this distance, we could see that the California Gull was slightly larger than a Ring-billed Gull, definitely smaller than a Herring Gull, and with a mantle a shade darker than both. The bird swam and preened until a Bald Eagle flew over, and all the gulls lifted off the water. The California Gull flew toward us, and circled along the shoreline no more than 25 feet away. The wings and mantle were medium gray colored. The outer two primaries were black with fairly large square white spots near the tip. Both the inner and outer primaries had small white spots on the tips of the feathers. The head was white with some thin dark brown streaking on the crown, hindneck, and nape. This streaking was heavier and much more noticeable on the hindneck. Most importantly, the eye was dark, and the bill was very different from a Ring-billed Gull. It was long, more slender than a Herring Gull's bill, and was dull gray-yellow with a bright yellow tip. The lower mandible had a red spot near the gonys with a black rectangular-shaped spot on front of the red. A narrow strip of black extended from the black spot onto the upper mandible. Proximal to the black spot was a smudgy area of red-black. Toll described the legs as grayish in color. The bird flew up the shoreline, caught a fish, and ate it. It then flew behind an island in the lake and out of sight.



The size, eye color, bill shape and coloration, and mantle color clearly identified this bird as a winter-plumaged adult California Gull. The bird remained in the area until 23 November 1993, was seen by many observers, and was photographed by B. J. Rose (see cover). Carter Lake is an enclave of Iowa enclosed by Nebraska. The center of the lake is the state line; thus the eastern side of the lake is in Nebraska, and the western shore in Iowa! This is the fourth record for Iowa, and the first to be confirmed by photographic evidence. Previous records are an adult seen at Credit Island on 23 November 1989 (Petersen, *Iowa Bird Life* 61:121-122, 1991), an adult at Saylorville Reservoir on 8, 14-23 September, 11 October 1990 (Dinsmore, *Iowa Bird Life* 62:24-25, 1992), and a first-year bird at Coralville Reservoir on 27-28 October 1990 (Kent, *Iowa Bird Life* 61:123-124, 1991). This species is becoming increasingly common in western Nebraska and is to be expected more frequently in Iowa in the future.

1107 Ironwood Court, #186, Bellevue, NE 68005

GLOSSY IBIS IN KOSSUTH COUNTY

MATTHEW KENNE

Both the Glossy Ibis of the Gulf and southeastern Atlantic Coasts and the White-faced Ibis of the West wander extensively; there are reports of Glossy Ibis from many locations in the West, and there is a White-faced Ibis breeding record from Iowa (Dinsmore and Dinsmore 1986). This tendency, coupled with the fact that the two species are very difficult to identify outside the breeding season, make any ibis seen in Iowa a challenge to identify. Several purported Glossy Ibis sightings have been considered by the I.O.U. Records Committee, but none have been accepted.



On 6 May 1992, I received a report that two ibis had been photographed the previous day at Union Slough N.W.R. in Kossuth County. I combed the area on 7 May but could not find the birds, nor were they seen there again. I then checked with the refuge headquarters, where I learned that Assistant Refuge Manager Bobbi Webber had photographed two ibis at the same location on 4 May. She had assumed the birds to be White-faced Ibis, rare birds on the refuge, but didn't document the sighting. I left a message asking if I could examine her slides when they were developed.

I then contacted David Bunkofske, an amateur nature photographer from Burt, Iowa about the photographs that he had taken on 5 May. He had recognized the birds as ibis, but had not identified them as to species. He agreed to show me the prints as soon as possible.

When I saw Bunkofske's photographs a week later, I was surprised to see two different looking adult ibis. In the best photo, one bird was obviously a White-faced Ibis; it had a red eye and face, a wide band of white feathers around the face (encircling the back of the eye), and bright red legs. The other bird was very interesting. What appeared to be a narrow band of light blue surrounded a facial area without red coloring. This bird looked like a Glossy Ibis.

I thought that the second bird was a Glossy Ibis but I first had some problems that needed to be addressed, not the least of which was my total lack of experience with Glossy Ibis. The photographs also presented a few problems. The bird's face was slightly in a shadow, and the bird itself was moving and slightly blurred in the

photo. The legs were dark at the joints instead of red. And most bothersome of all, there was a strange pale area where the upper and lower facial borders came together that looked like it could be white feathers behind the eye. I had no references to the transition from non-breeding to breeding plumage in the Glossy Ibis, and, although I believed that the bird was a Glossy Ibis, I thought that it possibly could be a White-faced Ibis in less-than-full breeding plumage.

In early fall 1992, I obtained Bobbi Webber's slides taken on 4 May. One slide clearly showed the bird in question, but from too great a distance to view the face in detail. The face was well lit however, and when I examined it with a 100 power microscope, I found the key feature of the Glossy Ibis listed by Kaufman (1990) evident. There was no pale area behind the dark eye. The pale-bluish facial border was narrow where it crossed the forehead above the upper mandible, widened between the bill and the eye, and then narrowed as it approached the top of the eye. It resumed at the bottom of the eye and continued narrowly to the base of the lower mandible. This set of characteristics strongly suggested that the bird was a Glossy Ibis, the first for Iowa.

Unfortunately, I made the mistake of not submitting a documentation with the photos and slides, so although the committee received prints of the Webber slides, they mainly looked at the much clearer view in the Bunkofske photo.

In May 1993, the Records Committee decided to have some outside experts review the slides. Robert Janssen, Editor of *The Loon* examined the prints and also showed them to Bruce Fall who had reviewed a report of a Glossy Ibis at Heron Lake, Minnesota (less than 100 miles from Union Slough) in May 1991 (Janssen 1992). This in-depth review of the Bunkofske photo (including measuring the position of the "pale spot" in relation to head width as compared to other ibis photos) concluded that the pale area was a sunlit highlight of the eye, and not white feathering behind the eye.

J. V. Remsen, Curator of Birds at the Museum of Natural Science, Louisiana State University said that the bird in the prints was "absolutely, unquestionably Glossy Ibis." He went on to say, "The Glossy, wings upheld, shows all critical features of the face pattern, particularly the narrow whitish skin border below and the bluish-white "visor" line above" (pers. comm. to T. H. Kent, I.O.U. Records Committee, 21 Oct 1993).

Finally, a year and a half after the sighting, an off-hand remark heard in a grocery store led to Iowa's first conclusive record of Glossy Ibis. It is also interesting to note that Glossy Ibis were reported on 3-4 May 1992 in Kansas (Grzybowski 1992) and on 5-10 May 1992 in Wyoming (Kingery 1992), the first records for both states.

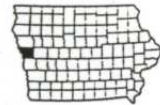
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709 North Phillips, Algona, IA 50511

RED KNOT IN MONONA COUNTY

PETER ERNZEN



On the evening of 12 May 1994, I was returning from an engagement at Decatur Bend. I decided to check out southeast Blue Lake for shorebirds. Earlier in the day I had observed large numbers of shorebirds on the north side of the lake.

Upon arriving at the southwest corner, I scanned the shoreline. I immediately noticed large flocks of shorebirds flying about on the east side of the lake. I drove to the south side and walked toward the birds. Due to the sun's glare, I decided to walk to the north to a point that offered much better lighting conditions. There the birds were much clearer and easier to identify.

Among the birds that were there, one, due to its odd coloring, immediately attracted my attention. While sitting, the bird displayed the following characteristics; general colors light gray and white, light gray eyeline, gray back and head, white belly, chin, and face. The bill was black, thin, and slightly down turned at the end. Other features included a scaly looking feather pattern on the scapulars. I was able to observe the bird for a considerable amount of time and approached to within 15 feet.

When the bird flew, I noticed a white wing stripe and a finely barred tail and rump. Upon returning to my vehicle I jotted down my notes and returned to the Monona County Conservation Center. I suspected that I had just seen a Red Knot. When I compared my notes with several handbooks available in the office, I was able to eliminate three other possibilities. This bird was not as gray as a Dunlin, and the bill did not have such a pronounced downward curvature. Its neck was not long enough and its head was too large to be a Stilt Sandpiper. The smaller peeps were eliminated due to the bird being 25-50 percent larger than a nearby Baird's Sandpiper.

Knowing that this would be the third spring sighting for Iowa, I tentatively identified it as a Red Knot. I then contacted Jim Fuller and related my sighting to him and placed it on the Iowa Birdline. However, to the best of my knowledge, no one else saw the bird at Blue Lake.

The next day, I wrote my narrative and made a line drawing of the bird. Two details about this bird made it initially difficult to identify. These were the slight down turn at the end of its bill and the molting sequence from basic to breeding plumage. Most illustrations and books indicate that this species has a straight bill. Several publications however, do mention a slight down turn in the bill, a feature that can be seen only at close range. The molting sequence is still a puzzle, as there should have been reddish feathers on the breast simultaneous with the appearance of the dark centers of the feathers on the scapulars. I still don't know why the reddish colored breast was not present, but perhaps this bird had just begun its molt when I found it.

401 Taylor, Ida Grove, IA 51445



LOUISIANA STATE UNIVERSITY
AND AGRICULTURAL AND MECHANICAL COLLEGE
Museum of Natural Science

92-29

21 October 1993

Thomas H. Kent
IOU Records Committee
211 Richards St.
Iowa City, IA 52246

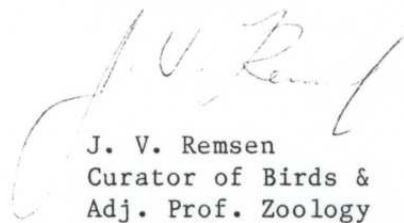
Dear Mr. Kent:

Apologies for the delay in responding to your ibis ID query -- everything around here has been on hold while we deal with the tragic death of Ted Parker.

The photos are absolutely, unquestionably Glossy Ibis. In fact, the close-up could be used in an ID article for the two. The Glossy, wings upheld, shows all critical features of the face pattern, particularly the narrow whitish skin border below and the bluish-white "visor" line above. Note the much broader white border of the White-faced, whose white is feathers, not skin.

Consider archiving the best photo in VIREO.

Sincerely,



J. V. Remsen
Curator of Birds &
Adj. Prof. Zoology

Iowa Ornithologists' Union

92-29



STATE BIRD OF IOWA: THE GOLDFINCH

IOWA BIRD LINE

319-524-3569

July 6, 1993

Robert B. Janssen
10521 S. Cedar Lake Road, #212
Minnetonka, MN 55343

Dear Bob:

Thanks for agreeing to looking at our Glossy Ibis record.

Enclosed are the photos, correspondence regarding the record, and results of our review. As you can see, two members differ on the interpretation of the facial pattern, especially whether the bird is in shadow or sunlight and whether or not there is a reflection on the eye.

Please feel free to respond in any way you see fit. The style you use for Minnesota records would be fine.

Thanks for your interest and help.

Sincerely,

Thomas H. Kent, Secretary
IOU Records Committee
211 Richards Street
Iowa City, IA 52246

Tom: I went to Bruce Fall an
this to get you the best info.
possible - I think he pranced
this - when I first looked at
the slide I would have
Voted Glossy - you have
(over)

better photos than we did - ⁹²⁻²⁹

I need your help now -
we are writing an article on
our 2nd Great-tailed Grackle
nest from last spring -

do you have dates & locations on
Iowa breeding records of
the Great-tailed Grackle -
if so please send me
the information - thanks

Bob Jensen

13 July 1993

92-29

Thomas H. Kent, Secretary
IOU Records Committee
211 Richards St.
Iowa City, IA 52246

Dear Tom:

Bob Janssen sent me the photographs of the 1992 Iowa ibis and associated IOURC comments. I have been a MORC member since 1987, and was on the committee during the evaluation of the Minnesota Glossy Ibis in 1991. I think the photos strongly support that the ibis in question was a Glossy, and if I were on your committee, I would vote for acceptance of a first state record based on these photos. However, my field experience with *Plegadis* ibis is limited to White-faced; I have seen very few Glossies.

I viewed the five prints under both a dissecting microscope (7-30X) and a 10X hand lens: two 4 X 6 prints (print A = largest image, both birds; print B = more distant, Glossy only); and three 3.5 X 5 prints (print C = Glossy on left, wings raised; print D = Glossy on right, wings raised); print E = Glossy on left, head not visible). A colleague (Rick Peifer) and I also scanned print A with a Microtek slide scanner at 600 d.p.i. and loaded it into Adobe Photoshop on a Macintosh IIFX computer; we enhanced the photo (sharpened one time), cropped it (head and bill only) and enlarged it to fill the screen. Our attempts to print this enlargement in color have not been successful, but if we do succeed later I will send the print to you. This enhanced enlargement was in some ways superior to viewing the print under a microscope.

I feel that the posterior-most pale mark on the head in print A is a sunlit highlight of the eye, and not white feathering posterior to the eye as some IOURC members thought. It is not connected (either dorsally or ventrally) to the pale areas in front of it (the white feathering of White-faced is continuous from bill to behind eye to bill); it is in the proper position on the head for the eye; and it is the proper shape (oval). If the pale area is actually white feathering behind the eye, then the eye must be the dark area immediately anterior to it, and this dark area seems too far anterior to be the eye, and does not have the shape of an eye (it is concave posteriorly). Measurements of the position of this pale spot, relative to head width, compared with similar measurements in the photo of White-faced Ibis in the Master Guide support this interpretation. The ibis' head appears to be somewhat angled toward the camera, which would result in the apparent relative eye position moving more toward the center of the head compared with a perpendicular orientation (as in the Master Guide). In either case (and especially if the head is angled toward the camera), the position of the dark area is too far forward to be the eye; in my opinion, it is an area of the dark facial skin just anterior to the eye.

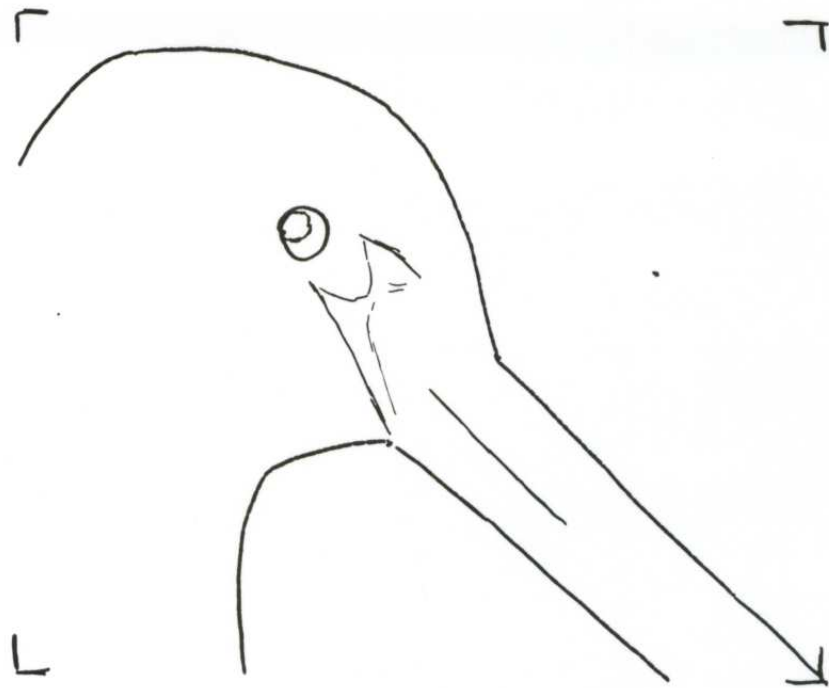
The other pale marks on the face (which I interpret as the pale border of the facial skin) have a bluish cast, different in color from the white feathering evident on the White-faced Ibis in print A, and also apparently thinner in width. The difference in color can also be seen in print D. The pale facial area is more limited in extent than is the white feathering of the White-faced -- it appears to not extend below the lower mandible, nor above the upper mandible, and it ends anterior to the eye (or at least what I believe is the eye). It also appears to encompass a smaller area than does the white facial border of White-faced Ibis. This is consistent with it being pale facial skin border rather than white feathering surrounding the facial skin (see the Glossy Ibis photo in the Master Guide). Finally, in the 4 photos in which the head of the Glossy can be seen, there is no hint of red facial skin, while red facial skin is evident in the White-faced in prints A, B, and especially D.

I think these photos offer compelling evidence for this bird being a Glossy Ibis. The only inconsistency would seem to be leg color. While clearly duller than the bright red legs of the White-faced, the Glossy's legs are not as described in Kaufman -- they seem to be grayish pink but dullest, rather than brightest, at the joint. However, the legs of the Glossy Ibis in the Master Guide appear very similar to those of the ibis in question, including the grayish joints.

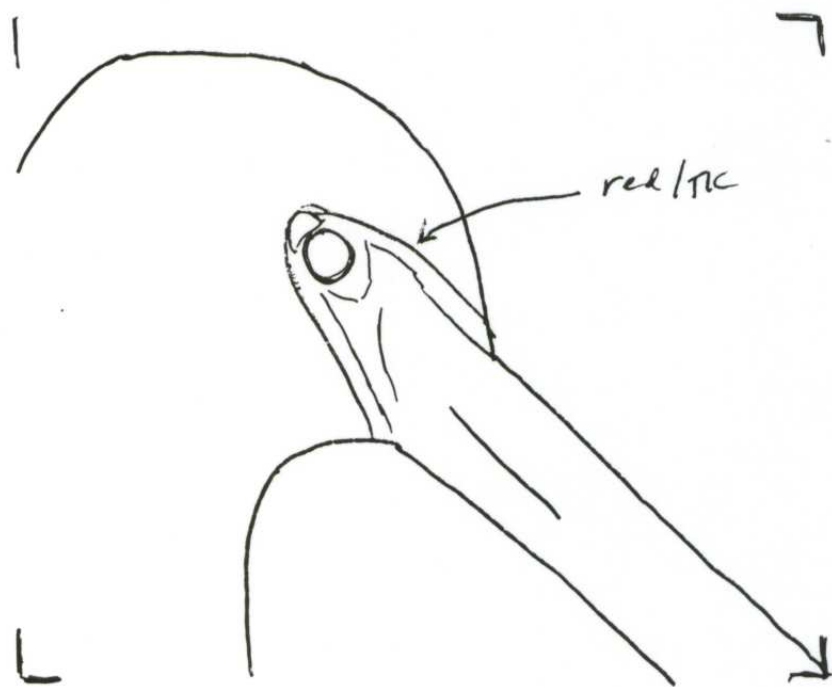
Sincerely,

Bruce A. Fall

Bruce A. Fall
4300 29th Ave. S.
Minneapolis, MN 55406



B. Fall's interpretation of eye location



Red = estimated position of white feathering bordering facial skin if the eye were in the position shown and if this bird was a white-faced Ibis.

92-29

Tom,

The enclosed slide was taken on May 4, 1992 by Bobbi Webber, Asst. Refuge Manager at Union Slough NWR. The location is just off the road (to the North) between USNWR and Buffalo Creek Wildlife Area, the road that goes by Deer Meadow Picnic Area.

The photograph was taken on May 5, 1992 by Dave Bunkofske, an ~~amateur~~ amateur photographer with an interest in birds at the same location.

Neither person wrote any description of the birds at the time.

I heard of the birds on the 6th and looked for them on the 7th (I've never seen a Spring Ibis), but they were gone.

I looked at the slide under 100X magnification on a binocular microscope at Ross. Co. Hospital and I believe the bird to be a Glossy Ibis. The ID points appear to be as good as the ones used for Minnesota's Glossy last year, especially given 2 views on 2 days. Thanks! Matt

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FIELD IDENTIFICATION
OF WHITE-FACED AND GLOSSY IBISES

By H. Douglas Pratt

The White-faced Ibis (*Plegadis chihi*), of western North America and southern South America, and the Glossy Ibis (*P. falcinellus*), of eastern North America and the Old World, meet only in southern Louisiana. Although Palmer (1962) considered them conspecific, the two apparently exist in sympatry and are therefore good species. Glossy Ibises have bred in the Mississippi delta region for some time (Lowery, 1974) and lately have spread westward widening their zone of overlap with the White-faced Ibis. Holt's (1933) record of Glossy Ibises breeding in Cameron Parish is almost surely an error, since not a single individual of that species was seen there between the time of his observations and the 1970's. In 1973, I obtained the first recent evidence that Glossy Ibises may breed in southwestern Louisiana (Imhof, 1973). Since that time the species has been observed there several times in spring (Hamilton, 1971, Imhof, 1974) and even in winter (Hamilton, 1975). Although sightings in Texas have been reported, the Glossy Ibis is still considered to be of hypothetical occurrence there (Oberholser, 1974). Birders in southeastern Texas should be on the alert for this species since the most westerly Louisiana sightings occurred within two miles of the state line in Cameron Parish. When good documentary photographs or a specimen are obtained, the bird can be added to the Texas list.

The study of the range extension of the Glossy Ibis is complicated by the difficulty of distinguishing the two species in the field, as well as by the needle in a haystack nature of the search. Glossy Ibises are by no means common in Louisiana, even in the Mississippi delta, where they have occurred for years, being outnumbered ten to one by White-faced Ibises (Imhof, 1971). In Cameron Parish, only a sprinkling of Glossies can be found among the thousands of White-faces. A further complication is that dark ibises vary seasonally in the characters most useful in identifying the species. Unfortunately, many questions remain to be answered about these seasonal changes. The birder must be cautious when attempting to identify nonbreeding birds. The following descriptions and accompanying color plate should enable birders to identify more dark ibises than in the past, but one should not expect to identify all individuals, even when well seen. The capitalized color names used in this account are taken from Smithe's (1975) color guide.

Both species of *Plegadis* are dark Chestnut as adults, with beautiful metallic green and purple reflections, especially dorsally. Immatures and winter adults lack the overall Chestnut coloration. Such birds are Dusky

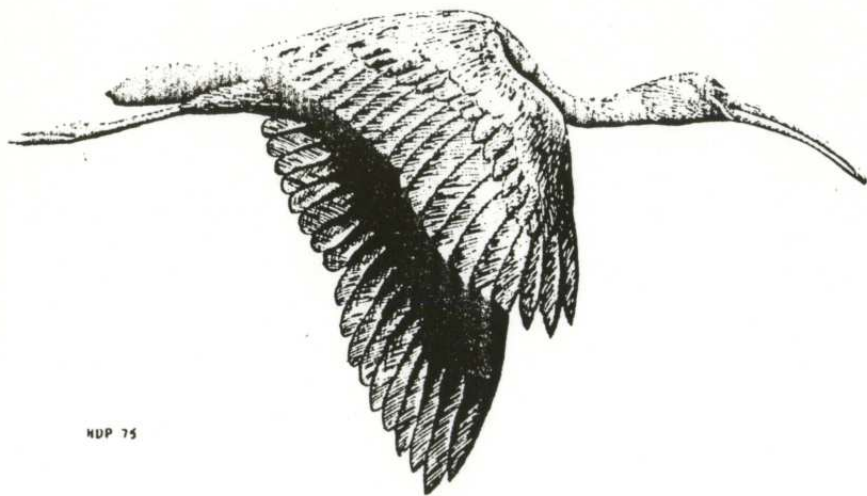
*The second in a series of comprehensive field identification articles under the general editorship of Will Russell.

Pratt, H. D. 1976. Field identification of White-faced and Glossy Ibises. Birding 8:1-5.

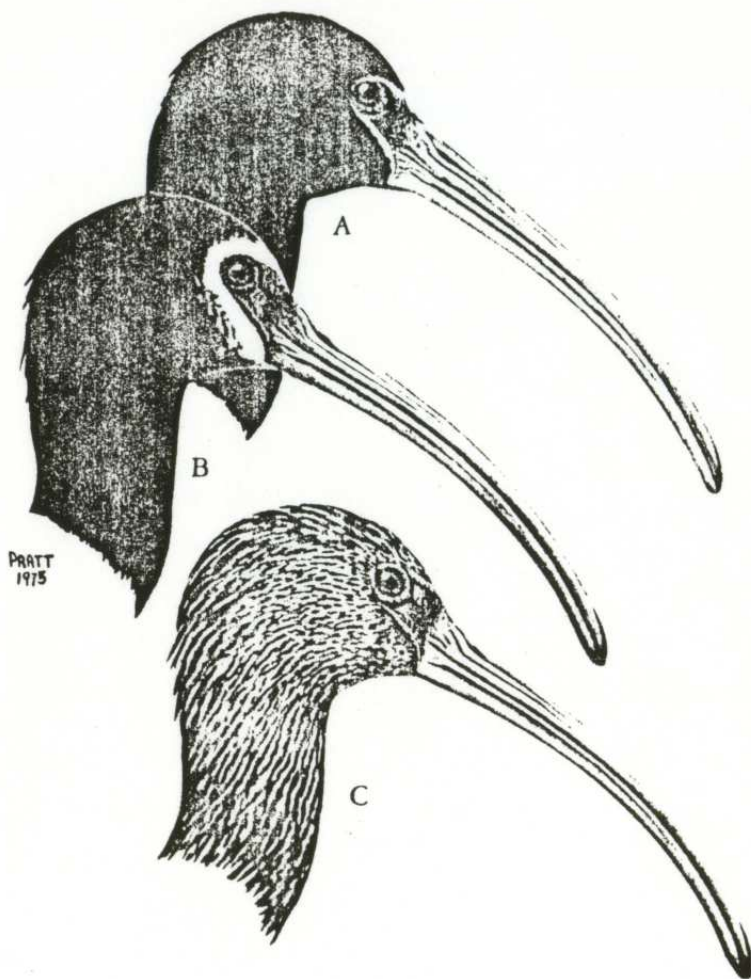
Brown with metallic green iridescence dorsally, and with the head and neck finely streaked with white. No consistently workable means has yet been found for distinguishing adults from first-winter birds in the field, although many winter adults retain some Chestnut feathers at the bend of the wing (Belknap, 1957). Whether all winter adults exhibit these feathers is not known. Palmer (1962) claims that juvenal White-faces are lighter above than juvenal Glossy Ibises, but the difference is not apparent to me. Except for the white feathers bordering the facial skin of the White-faced Ibis, the breeding plumages of the two species appear identical. The white face is acquired last in the sequence of changes leading to the breeding plumage and in some individuals is quite narrow and difficult to see. Thus the field observer must rely on other characters, particularly the colors of the facial skin, bill, and iris to identify dark ibises during most of the year.

The facial skin of the White-faced Ibis in breeding condition is a bright Carmine. The color is less intense before and after the nesting season and fades to dark Smoke Gray in the winter. The facial skin never shows a pale border in this species. The bill is usually Olive-gray but at the height of the breeding season it becomes Cream Color distally, with a suffusion of Carmine. The eyes are blood red (between Carmine and Geranium) in adults throughout the year. I do not know whether all first-winter White-faced Ibises have red eyes, although Belknap (1957) states that all specimens of this species he collected had them. I have seen winter ibises that I felt certain were White-faces, but which did not seem to have blood red irides. Perhaps the color is less intense in winter birds. At any rate, the iris color is always difficult to see.

The Glossy Ibis possesses Plumbeous facial skin margined above and below with pale Sky Blue. This margin is broken behind the eye and thus



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HEADS OF DARK IBISES

- A. Glossy Ibis breeding.
- B. White-faced Ibis breeding.
Many individuals show less white.
- C. Glossy Ibis immature and winter adult.
Same stage in White-face is similar but with red iris in adult and some immatures.

does not completely encircle the facial skin. The pale border of the facial skin could be confused with the white feathers bordering the face of the White-faced Ibis. In winter, the blue border fades, but some individuals retain traces of it all year. Birds in transition may show only that portion of the border above the eye. The bill is Olive-gray throughout its length, with a Vinaceous tinge at the height of the breeding season. The eye color is Dark Grayish Brown, appearing essentially black at a distance.

The legs and feet of both species are Olive gray for much of the year, but during the breeding season those of the White-faced Ibis become bright Carmine throughout, while those of the Glossy become Carmine about the ankle joint only, at least in some individuals. Immatures show no differences in leg color.

Obviously, not all dark ibises seen will be identifiable to species, particularly in the winter. Iris color may be diagnostic throughout the year, but I would never "call" a winter Glossy on that basis alone. If one sees a red iris, the bird is surely a White-face, but nothing is proven if no such iris is visible. I have seen many a bird that seemed to have dark eyes until, even after careful observation with a spotting scope, the individual in question held its head at just the right angle, revealing a red iris after all. Ibises begin to develop their breeding dress in late January or February and from then, at least until August, most can be identified by facial skin coloration. At considerable distance, the facial features of the White-faced Ibis make it look pink-faced and quite unlike the gestalt of the Glossy Ibis. Even so, most birds seen far away or flying overhead in long V formations must simply be called *Plegadis*.

Acknowledgements

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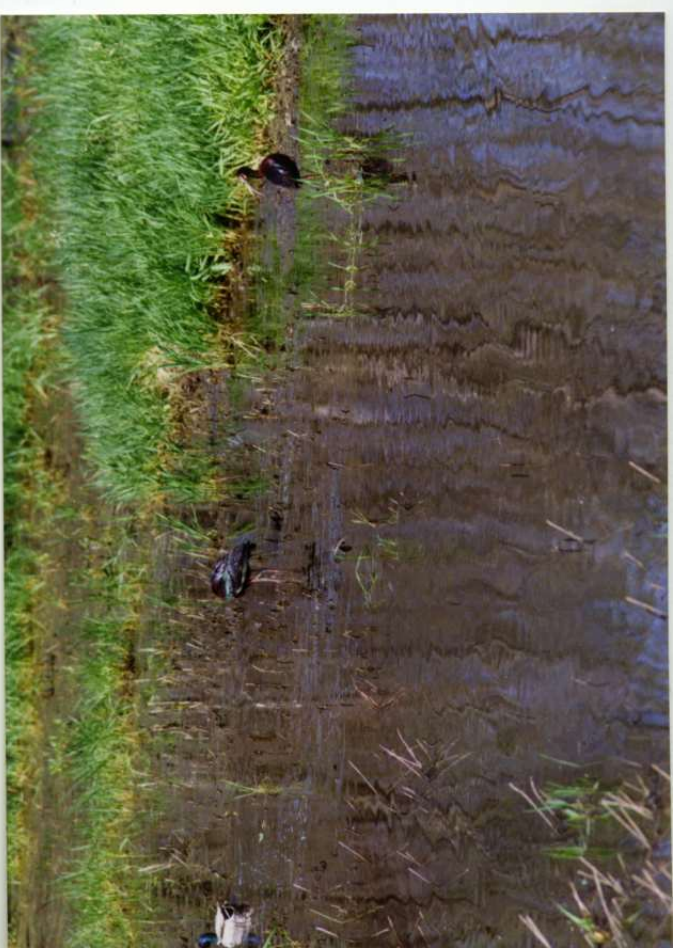


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near Union Slough NWR, Kossu Co.
5 May 1992 David Bunkofske (s)
P-0339

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near Union Slough NWR, Kossu Co.
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near Union Slough NWR, Kossu Co.
5 May 1992 David Bunkofske (s)
P-0339



Glossy Ibis P-0338
near Union Slough NWR, Kossu Co.
4 May 1992 Bobbi Webber (sent)

92-29