

White-faced Ibis
13 May 1981
Lake Manawa, Pottawattamie Co., IA
*#T. Kent
P-0159, Kent 1981, IBL 51:64, 52:42

Record Number: 81-04
Classification: A-P

DOCUMENTATION

Thomas H. Kent

PHOTOGRAPHS

T. H. Kent, P-0159 (IBL 51:74)

REFERENCES

Field Reports: IBL 51:64

Kent, T.H., and W. R. Silcock. 1981. White-faced Ibis at Lake Manawa. IBL 51:74

Photograph: IBL 51:74, P-0159; Am. Birds 35:829, 1981, P-0159

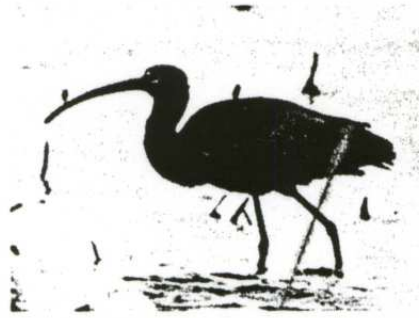
Records Committee: IBL 52:42

VOTE: 7-I-P

I-P, Great photos.

I-P, Excellent.

with reports from at least 36 locations. Least Bitterns were observed at 21 sites, a normal number for spring. Greater numbers of Am. Bitterns were encountered although still scarce in many areas. White-faced Ibises invaded w. Iowa with 14 at L. Manawa May 13 (BR, †T, RS), two at Willow Slough May 19 (†BW) and two at Taylor L., May 21 (BW, RS, BR). Elsewhere, singles were reported from Swan Lake N.W.R., Mo., May 4 (SS, TBk), S.C.R., May 31 (†L) and Horseshoe L., May 16 (†PS *et al.*). Unidentified ibises were noted at one Iowa and two Ohio locations. For all *Plegadis* ibises, observers should carefully note coloration of the legs, lores and eyes. Soft-part coloration, particularly iris color, may provide the only discernible field marks for immatures or adults out of the breeding season. While White-faced are most likely in w. states and Glossy in the East, both species could conceivably occur anywhere in the Region. Hence, ibis identification should be based on field marks and not geographic probability.



White-faced Ibis, L. Manawa, Ia., May 13, 1981. Photo/T.H. Kent.

WATERFOWL—The waterfowl migration was under way by Mar. 1 and many birds had already passed through the Region. Spring concentrations were generally disappointing. Some divers appeared in good numbers, particularly Redheads, Ring-necked Ducks and Lesser Scaup. Large concentrations of puddle ducks were not reported. As expected, small numbers of most species lingered into May or early June at many areas.

Few Whistling Swans appeared at the w. Lake Erie staging areas; the only large flock in Ohio was 1000 at L. Rockwell Mar. 27 (LRO). Elsewhere, one or two birds were reported from Illinois, Indiana and Iowa. Normal numbers of White-fronted Geese were noted in w. states including 3000 at S.C.R., Mar. 14 (L). Farther e., up to 23 appeared at 4 Illinois sites, five at Kankakee W.M.A., Ind., Mar. 21 (KB *et al.*) and three at Cleveland Apr. 5 (†TL *et al.*). Two Ross' Geese were observed at Willow Slough, Ia., Mar. 24-28 (†T, †BW, m.ob.) and singles at S.C.R., Mar. 22 (L) and Horseshoe L., Mar. 19-Apr. 1 (†CR, m.ob.). Drake Cinnamon Teals were noted at six locations: Wilmette, Ill., Apr. 4 (†JL *et al.*); two at Saylorville Res., Ia., Apr. 5-8 (RMo, m.ob.); Alton Dam, Mo., Apr. 25 (M&LS); Sunken Grove, Ia., Apr. 29-May 16 (MB, †RC); two at S.C.R., May 1 (L, KJ); Spring Run W.M.A., Ia., May 6 (DH). Single Eur. Wigeon appeared at O.W.R., Mar. 6-Apr. 20 (†JP, ET, m.ob.) and Palos, Ill., Apr. 3-10 (PD, †m.ob.). Small numbers of Greater Scaup

were regularly reported from inland locations in all states as observers have become familiar with their identification.

Oldsquaw were very scarce. The only reports were one or two at 3 n. Ohio locations Mar. 24-Apr. 29 (M, JP) and one at Indianapolis Mar. 12 (MR). Single Harlequin Ducks were noted at Chicago Mar. 5-Apr. 4 (†PC, RGo, JL) and Lorain, O., Mar. 12 (†JP) while two lingered at Cleveland Mar. 13-Apr. 29 (M). Small numbers of White-winged Scoters migrated along the Great Lakes in Illinois and Ohio. Inland, two were observed at Louisville Mar. 1-22 (AB) and one at Thomas Hill Res., Mo., Mar. 7 (SS, TBk). Single Surf Scoters appeared at Spfld., Mar. 26 & Apr. 13 (H) and along L. Michigan in Indiana and Illinois Apr. 23-May 11. The only Black Scoters were singles at Chicago Apr. 10 & 17 (JPo, RE). Few Red-breasted Mergansers were reported along the Great Lakes; the peak was only 2500 at Cleveland Mar. 27 (TL).

DIURNAL RAPTORS—The expected spring hawk flights did not materialize this year. Even at traditional areas, migrants passed by in steady streams with few large concentrations. Exemplary peaks were 60 Sharp-shinned Hawks at O.W.R., Apr. 26 (LRO), 150 Red-tailed Hawks at Palos, Ill., Mar. 15 (RB) and 122 at Spfld., Mar. 21 (H), and 350 Broad-winged Hawks at O.W.R., Apr. 26 (LRO).

Indiana's first White-tailed Kite appeared in Monroe County Apr. 18 (†GH, †SG—ph.). The kite was within a mile of the Gannet on the same date. While a locally severe storm the previous evening may have forced these birds down, factors causing them to appear at the same place and time are



White-tailed Kite, North Fork Ref., Apr. 18, 1981. Photo/Tom Alexander.

intriguing and not easily explained. Mississippi Kites arrived late in Illinois. Elsewhere, they were noted at Ballard W.M.A., Ky., Apr. 28 (JE) and St. Louis May 16-21 (m.ob.). Goshawks were reported at four sites, singles at Thomas Hill Res., Mar. 7 (†SS, TBk), Reading, O., Mar. 27 (†JI), Chicago Apr. 8 (†RGo, PC) and a late bird in Kent, O., Apr. 28 (†LRO). Cooper's and Red-shouldered hawks were widely noted in small numbers. Reports of 1-4 Swainson's Hawks were received from 4 Missouri, 7 Iowa and 2 Illinois locations. Singles e. to Decatur, Ill., Mar. 28 (†SSSt) and Spfld., Apr. 23 (H) were unusual. Six reports of Golden Eagles Mar. 14-Apr. 18 were normal; four were observed in Ohio. Large numbers of Bald Eagles remained into early March with 532 along the Mississippi and Illinois Rivers Mar. 10 (RCo). Regular small numbers were observed elsewhere. A pair nest-building at Mingo N.W.R., Mo., in late May was an encouraging sign (*vide JW*). Ospreys were plentiful

including early birds at Upper Iowa R., Ia., Mar. 4 (*vide DN*) and Busch W.M.A., Mo., Mar. 7 (EL). Most were found in April and May. The Lawrenceville, Ill., Prairie Falcon lingered through Mar. 8 (LH). Reports of 11 Peregrine Falcons and six Merlins were normal for spring. Few were adequately documented.

CRANES THROUGH GALLINULES—Large numbers of Sandhill Cranes are normal in n.w. Indiana but this year's flight in n.e. Illinois was unusually impressive with 373 at Palos Mar. 21 (JL) and "thousands" in s. Cook County Mar. 25 (PD). Away from major staging areas, up to 40 were noted at Monroe Res., Ind., Mar. 3-21, 18 over Bernheim Forest, Ky., Mar. 4 (*vide BM*) and 42 at Glasgow, Ky., Mar. 7 (RSt). One-to-three appeared on 8 dates in Ohio and single locations in Iowa and Missouri. King Rails were reported from 11 locations Apr. 5-May 25 with none in Indiana or Kentucky. Yellow Rails were observed at M.M.W.A., Apr. 6 (†JP), Irwin Prairie, O., Apr. 28-May 2 (ET *et al.*) and Swan Lake N.W.R., Mo., May 4 (†SS, TBk). Single Purple Gallinules at Mingo N.W.R., Apr. 18 (SS *et al.*), Goose Pond, Ky., Apr. 12 (JHa) and Owsley Fork Res., Ky., May 9 (GR) were noteworthy.

SHOREBIRDS—As usual, habitat conditions and numbers of shorebirds varied considerably across the Region. From April through mid-May, low water levels in w. states created ideal habitats, attracting a large variety and number of birds. In e. states, habitat conditions were spotty at best and numbers were poor.

Piping Plovers appeared at nine locations Apr. 9-June 10 with an exceptional seven at Horseshoe L., Apr. 18 (JEa). None were reported in Indiana or Kentucky. Single Snowy Plovers were noted at St. Joseph, Mo., Apr. 10-12 (†L) and Big Lake S.P., Mo., May 21 (MRO). Good numbers of Am. Golden Plovers passed through the n. states, beginning Mar. 17 in Richland County, Ill. (LH). Concentrations of Ruddy Turnstones are expected along the Great Lakes in spring. This year, maximum counts were 82 at Oregon, O., May 21 (JF) and 64 at Chicago May 29 (RGo, PC). Inland, 15 were noted at L. Manawa, Ia., May 23 (*vide TB*) and smaller numbers at 8 other locations. Twelve Whimbrels at Findlay Res., O., May 30 (*vide TBa*) and one at Willow Slough, Ia., May 19 (†BW) were exceptional. One or two appeared at 4 Great Lakes locations in Ohio and Illinois Apr. 22-May 31. Upland Sandpipers returned in small numbers to regular nesting areas. Early Solitary Sandpipers were detected at Horseshoe L., Mar. 28 (RB) and M.M.W.A., Mar. 29 (J). Fair numbers of Willets appeared in all states except Kentucky Apr. 16-June 7. Maximum counts included 28 at Horseshoe L., May 2 (BRu) and 10-13 at 4 other locations. Small numbers of Red Knots migrated along the Great Lakes in Illinois and Ohio May 25-31. It was an excellent year for Pectoral Sandpipers including 3000-5000 in Newton County, Ind., Apr. 29 (CK *et al.*). Expected numbers of White-rumped Sandpipers were observed in all states with a peak of 111 at Thomas Hill Res., May 11 (JRa). Small numbers of Baird's Sandpipers were reported from Iowa and Missouri while one

bird described above, but its bill was totally black or very dark, indicating that it was probably slightly younger than the first bird.

SEPARATION FROM OTHER SPECIES: The above description separates by direct comparison first-year Thayer's and Herring Gulls, the most similar species present. Thayer's may be confused in first year plumage with Kumlien's form of Iceland Gull, but the Thayer's had primaries slightly darker than the mantle (from above), whereas the opposite occurs in Iceland Gull (Lehman). Lehman also notes that some first-year Western Gulls may show translucent primaries from below in certain light but these observations took place in excellent light at fairly close range.

Tom Kent kindly forwarded a copy of his documentation of the bird his group saw March 24, apparently the bird with the pale base to the bill (see my description above). Additional features described by Kent are:

(1) "Wing coverts with distinct light edging on dull light brown feathers."
"The most outstanding features noted were . . . the edging on the wing feathers giving a mottled effect (The Herrings were plain brown) . . ."

(2) "Also the head feathers extended further out over the upper mandible than the lower."

The bird seen with the Armstrongs March 27 was rather far away, but telescope views were sufficient to note the different head shape, paler overall coloration, by comparison with an adjacent first-year Herring Gull. This bird was probably the same seen by Kent's group. — W. ROSS SILCOCK, RR 2, Malvern.

White-faced Ibis at Lake Manawa -- At 1:25 p.m. on May 13, 1981 we encountered 14 White-face Ibis feeding in shallow water at the southwest corner of Lake Manawa, Pottawattamie County, Iowa. Their overall dark color, long legs, and decurved bill made them easily recognizable as ibis. All appeared to be in breeding plumage with red facial patch and uniform, distinct, thick white line around the facial patch and extending behind the eye. The head, upper neck, and back were black with a slight reddish sheen. A brighter greenish sheen was noted on the wings. The bill was bluish and legs dark orange-yellow. The birds were busy feeding and paid little attention to us as we took photographs. We learned later that they had been spotted an hour earlier by B. J. Rose of Omaha. The birds were still present the next day at noon, but were seen to fly off to the north at that time. — THOMAS H. KENT, 211 Richards St., Iowa City and W. ROSS SILCOCK, Rt. 1, Malvern.

Burrowing Owl in Story County -- The Burrowing Owl (*Speotyto cunicularia*)



White-faced Ibis, Lake Manawa, May 13, 1981
Photo by T. H. Kent

is a western species of the Great Plains that is seldom seen in Iowa. In fact, ornithological records indicate that only three other sightings of this bird have been reported since 1969 with the Ames sighting being the most easterly of the four.

March ended on a very stormy note. Wind gusts during the day and evening of the 31st had been clocked at 70 mph with heavy thunderstorms blanketing the state. The following morning, April 1st, Susan Coats and another graduate student drove to the Iowa State University research farm which is located 1.4 miles south of new Highway 30 on Elwood Drive (Story County, SE quarter of section 21, T83NR24W). Upon entering the driveway to the farm, a flash of light brown and white flew by the passenger's side of the car. The passenger assumed that the bird was an American Kestrel but Coats was unconvinced because the bird was of the wrong size and color. Failing to locate the bird during the next few minutes, they obtained their supplies from the quonset hut and started back down the driveway. Once again the bird shot over the car and landed in a plowed field six feet from the car door. The owl's yellow eyes, earless, rounded head, white chin, skinny legs and brown and patterned belly and back gave away its true identity, a Burrowing Owl. Coats had seen several of these diurnal owls in prairie dog towns around the Black Hills the previous year.

In response to movement of the car or its passengers, the owl became quite agitated and flew in short hops of 20 to 30 feet and then would land in the nearby road, ditch or plowed field. After watching the bird for 10 minutes, Coats returned to Ames and notified Nancy Gorder and Hank Zaletel who verified the sighting.

Hank Zaletel then notified his wife, Dr. Jim Dinsmore and several of his students who then returned to the site around noon. They searched for approximately half an hour and were ready to leave when the owl emerged from the culvert under the driveway. He opened his mouth and it appeared that he would let loose with a warning call. Instead, the owl regurgitated a pellet. It was recovered and an analysis of it revealed a partial skull and two pair of lower mandibles along with other bones and fur of the White-footed Mouse (*Peromyscus*). No insect parts were found.

In 1938 in Clay County, Iowa, the pellets of a nesting Burrowing Owl were recovered and analyzed and were found to contain the remains of the White-footed Mouse (*Peromyscus*) and vole (*Microtus*), the predominate small mammals of that area. Many insect parts were also identified in the order *Coleoptera* (beetles).

Pellets of Burrowing Owls found in western states contained the remains of jack rabbits and toads in addition to the small mammals and insects already mentioned.

By late afternoon, the owl had become much more cautious and would not let anyone closer than forty yards. To our knowledge, this was the last sighting of the owl for the following morning the bird could not be found.

Scott, T. G. 1940. The Western Burrowing Owl in Clay County, Iowa in 1938.



Burrowing Owl
Photo by Hank & Linda Zaletel

Literature Cited

- Bond, R. M. 1942. Food of the Burrowing Owl in western Nevada. *Condor* 44:183.
Franklin, W. L. 1978. A Guide to the Mammals of Iowa and Other North American Mammalian Families. Iowa State University Research Foundation Inc.

BIRDS: VERIFYING DOCUMENTATION OF
AN EXTRAORDINARY SIGHT RECORD

81-04

(2)

1. Species White-faced Ibis 2. Number 14
3. Location Lake Manawa, Pottawattamie Co, IA
4. Date: 13 May 1981 5. Time Bird Seen: 1:25 to 1:45
6. Description of size, shape and color-pattern (describe in great detail all parts of the plumage, and beak and feet coloration, in addition, to the diagnostic characteristics, but include only what actually was seen in the field):
- "Obvious Ibis feeding in flock with a few Ring-billed Gulls. Overall dark color, long decurved bill. All have white facial marking separating reddish facial patch. White marking uniform and extends all around the facial patch. Larger than Ring-billed Gull. Legs dark orangish-yellowish. Bill bluish. Red-facial patch includes eye. White goes behind eye. Upper back, head and upper back reddish shaven. More distal wing coverts and primaries and secondaries have greenish shaven. All birds have ~~facial~~ facial patch. Birds feeding in shallow water with weeds."
7. Description of voice, if heard: NA
8. Description of behavior: Busy feeding
9. Habitat - general: large round lake
specific: South west corner of L. Manawa near point with parking area
10. Similarly appearing species which are eliminated by questions 6, 7 & 8. Explain:
Glossy Ibis - all had red face patch and complete white outline of White-faced
11. Distance (how measured)? 50 yards (guess)
12. Optical equipment: 250x Quanta 750 mm Celestron with 2x extender
13. Light (sky, light on bird, position of sun in relation to bird and you): Overcast Photos taken
14. Previous experience with this species and similarly appearing species:
Seen in Texas in winter
15. Other observers:
Ross Silcock
16. Did the others agree with your identification? yes
17. Other observers who independently identified this bird:
Rose from Omaha saw bird about 1/2 hour early (we learned this later that evening)
18. Books, illustrations and advice consulted, and how did these influence this description:
none
19. How long after observing this bird did you first write this description?
dictated immediately.
- Signature: Thomas H Kent Address: 211 Richards St
- Date: 15 May 1981 City, State: Iowa City IA 52240