

Ibis species

2

Record Number: 90-01

23 Apr 1990

Classification: A-D

Cone Marsh, Louisa Co., IA

P. Petersen, Bendorf, J. Fuller

Bird 1 = White-faced; Bird 2 = Ibis sp.; IBL 60:64, 65, 62:21

## DOCUMENTATIONS

Peter C. Petersen

Carl J. Bendorf

Jim Fuller

## REFERENCES

Field Reports: IBL 60:64, 65

Records Committee: IBL 62:21

VOTE: White-faced Ibis = 6 A-D, 1 NA; Glossy Ibis = 3 A-D; 4 NA  
A-D: White-faced Ibis - Document of W F Ibis is acceptable. I personally seen this bird and agree. Glossy Ibis - Based on Petersen document the description seems to be adequate. I viewed this bird and was undecided as to species.

A-D: White-faced Ibis; NA: Glossy Ibis, One must start with the initial realization that the odds and common sense are greatly against the second bird being a Glossy Ibis. In order to accept this record, one must explain how two individuals of separate species would each leave their separate normal ranges and somehow find each other and then decide to travel together to the same marsh in eastern Iowa. I haven't done any research but I haven't heard of mixed ibis species following the same vagrant path before. Let's see if the facts can overcome this initial bias. The key factors are leg color, eye color, and the facial skin/feathers. Kaufman (Advanced Birding) seems to be the latest word on these birds so I turned to him for help. Regarding eye color, he says "If you can see red eyes, the bird is a White-faced. However, if the eyes seem dark, it does not necessarily mean the bird is a Glossy - because on some White-faced Ibises, the red eye color may not have developed yet or may simply be hard to see". So eye color on this record is not alone diagnostic for Glossy. About leg color, Kaufman says that this "has limited value as a field mark [because] a White-faced in a transitional stage could show the same leg pattern as a Glossy Ibis". Thus, leg color alone is not diagnostic in this record. On the face pattern, Petersen's description is most suggestive of Glossy Ibis. Kaufman describes the breeding Glossy as having "...blue-black facial skin with narrow, pale-blue border...". Petersen said "very narrow whitish border to gray-blue facial patch". This is pretty close but is it enough then to serve alone as a diagnostic identifier? Kaufman cautions that "superficially, this pale skin border resembles the white border on breeding White-faced Ibis". If so, couldn't the reverse also be true--that the White-face border resembles superficially the Glossy pattern, especially if the White-faced is not yet fully developed into breeding plumage from the plainer winter plumage? Also, it is important to note that the narrow Glossy face border is skin while the White-faced border is feathering. Kaufman says, "It may take a close view to tell feathers from

bare skin". Petersen didn't mention whether he saw skin or feathering at his distance. It is the shape of the pale border in Glossy that is distinctive and, if seen and described, it could possibly have clinched this identification. In summary, this record seems to allow for a reasonable doubt on all of the key field marks. In addition, Kent and Cecil (personal communication) saw many White-faced Ibis in Texas also in late April and they were all in various stages of transition from winter to breeding plumage. It seems reasonable that these were two White-faced Ibis, with one not yet as well developed as the other.

A-D: White-faced Ibis; A-D: Glossy Ibis, Mr. Peterson presents a detailed description of an adult Glossy Ibis with an adult White-faced Ibis. The bill and leg color, facial skin color, white edgings of facial patch which did not extend behind the eye, eye color and size as described by Mr. Peterson do not contradict his identification of Glossy Ibis. The bill and leg color, facial skin color, wide white border to facial skin are more than adequate to identify White-faced Ibis, and both observers appear to agree on the identification of this individual. Mr. Bendorf, however, appears reluctant to identify the other bird as a Glossy Ibis. The problem, therefore, is to distinguish this individual from a transitional White-faced Ibis. The second observer mentions that the facial skin "did not look reddish," but does not mention or could not determine if this area was "grey-blue" as stated by the first observer rather than charcoal as would be the case with a non-breeding White-faced Ibis. A second consideration--are the legs just beginning to turn to the full breeding color of a White-faced Ibis or are they already in the adult color of Glossy Ibis? In May 1985, Wayne Mollhoff prepared a road-killed specimen of a White-faced Ibis found in Nebraska that had been originally identified in the field as a Glossy Ibis. It had "knees [that] were a maroon #31 as were the backs of the lges. The fronts of the legs above and below the knees were still covered with dark scales of greenish-maroon that were sloughing off." This specimen, a male with enlarged testes that was physiologically at or very near breeding condition, also still had a completely dark bill (Nebraska Bird Review 53:77-78). Third, was the white area on the face really not present or just undetected by the second observer due to poorer light conditions in the afternoon than in the morning? Neither observer mentions head color--in fully adult birds it should be rich chestnut (Kauffman 1990). Kauffman also states that a Glossy Ibis can be identified positively only "if it has a very clear indication, in pale gray, of the blue facial skin border...and if the eyes are definitely dark." Despite some reservations, I am inclined to believe the description adequate for Glossy Ibis based on details given, length of observation, and experience of observer.

A-D: White-faced Ibis; A-D: Ibis species; NA Glossy Ibis, Difficult to evaluate. One of these birds is pretty clearly a White-faced Ibis. The identification of the second is much less clear, and there seems to be some disagreement among observers as to species. My first hunch - I have a difficult time believing

that two very similar birds would show up in the same marsh on the same day from two very different parts of the country. Much more plausible - two migrating and only slightly off track White-faced. As to field marks, one should bear in mind that these are essentially "two year" birds, with 1 year old spring birds generally duller. In addition, birds of this time of year may or may not be in full alternate plumage. I have seen them in Texas within a few days of this date which were in transitional plumage. Also, at nearly 120 meters, the difference between gray facial skin (immature or transitional plumage adult) and blue gray could be slight and could be mistaken. As to knee joint, see illustration of White-face in NGS. While this bird may have been a Glossy, I feel the preponderance of evidence suggests a conservative view.

A-D: White faced Ibis; A-D: Glossy Ibis, White-faced Ibis #1:  
1) Bill, both documentors describe a large decurved reddish bill, Pete thinking the bill to be slightly smaller than bird with narrow border. 2) Facial skin, described as reddish cast and reddish-brown. 3) Facial border, both agree the bird has a wide white border surrounding the facial patch. Neither however indicate whether it goes around the eye or under the chin. 4) Eye, Pete indicated the eye appeared red but was not positive, Carl could not determine eye color. 5) Head, neck, underparts, and back, Carl calls the body and neck greenish not described by Petersen. 6) Wing, described as iridescent purple, not described by Petersen. 7) Legs, both agree that they were reddish. Glossy Ibis #2: 1) Bill, Carl reddish, Pete tanish olive-brown a little smaller than the white bordered bird. 2) Facial skin, grey-blue and not reddish. 3) Facial border, both see narrow white upper facial border to the eye, neither mention any white below. 4) Eye, eye color not determined but appeared dark. 5) Head, neck, underparts, and back, described only by Petersen as chestnut, not noted by Carl. 6) Wing, glossy green and purple. 7) Legs, both described the legs as grayish with reddish knees. In reviewing the above data I see both documentors agreeing on the facial skin (reddish in #1 and not reddish in #2), facial border (prominent white border in #1 and narrow light border in #2), and legs (reddish in #1 and gray with reddish knees in #2). In addition, Petersen points out several key field marks which were not otherwise noted, bill color (red in #1 and olive-brown in #2) and (#1 is slightly larger than #2). In conclusion I think we need to call #1 a White-faced Ibis and #2 a Glossy Ibis.

A-D: I agree that these birds are beyond any doubt *Plegadis* sp. Detail need to identify these birds to species is not complete enough to be beyond reasonable doubt. Petersen mentioned a narrow whitish border to a grey-blue facial patch. According to Kauffman (Advanced Birding, 1990) if the facial skin TRIM is not clearly delineated and if the eyes are not obviously red, the bird must be left unidentified. Petersen also states that the eye LOOKED dark. At this time of year with the possibility that the "Glossy" looking bird could still be coming up to breeding plumage and in fact be a White-faced Ibis. At the distance that these birds were observed and taking the descriptions as written

I can not conclude that these birds are either White-faced or Glossy Ibis.

A-D. I feel one adult White-faced Ibis and one adult Glossy Ibis were present at Cone Marsh. The White-faced Ibis seemed to be unquestionable through the good details provided. The Glossy Ibis with the "very narrow whitish border to grey-blue facial patch not extending past eye, eye looked dark, legs grey except reddish brown at knee joint" seems to be conclusive to me. There was a breeding-plumage Glossy Ibis reported in American Birds in Michigan on May 19, 1989. Also, information from Ken Kaufman's Advanced Birding, Audubon Master Guide, and Nat'l Geographic Guide help support the details for a Glossy Ibis.

REVOTE: Bird # 1 accepted as White-faced Ibis; Bird # 2: 3 A-D as Glossy Ibis; 4 A-D as Ibis species.

Bird # 1: A-D as White-faced Ibis; Bird # 2: A-D as Glossy Ibis [Regarding bird # 2] I accepted the bird from Pete's document, so with the additional information from Fuller I still vote to accept. As for both species being there together, the Master Guide to Birding states that the range of the Glossy Ibis has expanded and both birds are found in the same flocks.

Bird # 1: A-D as White-faced Ibis; Bird # 2: A-D as Ibis species. After studying the comments of the first round, it seems clear that the bird with the prominent white around the face is a White-faced Ibis. It is not clear that the other bird can be positively determined to be a particular species. In fact, one of the accepting commenters cited the May specimen from Nebraska of a White-faced Ibis that was not yet fully developed. I don't think there is enough detail to rule out that possibility here either.

Bird # 1: A-D as White-faced Ibis; Bird 2: A-D as Ibis species I, too, have reservations that two ibis, one of each species would just happen to appear on the same day at the same place. This would be an unlikely occurrence but probably possible. I am influenced, also, by the fact that the "Glossy" Ibis appears to have been seen by several observers who with regularity send in documentations but have not chosen to do so in this case. The one additional documenter indicates that this bird was not distinct enough to make a confident identification as to either species. The field marks considered are: Facial skin color: "blue-gray" Blue-gray is probably as close to charcoal as it is to bright blue or blue-black so this mark is probably not adequate. Facial border: "very narrow whitish border...not extending past eye." Other observers could not detect this. I am still inclined to believe this favors Glossy Ibis. Eye color: "eye looked dark" Perhaps an unfortunate choice of words. If the eye really was dark, this too would indicate Glossy Ibis. Leg color: "legs gray except reddish brown at knee joint", "legs grayish-red", and "legs looked greyish with perhaps a little reddish at the knee joints." As I indicated in my earlier comments, I feel this has limited value as a field mark. Bill color: "bill tannish olive brown" and "bill appeared grayish". Could indicate adult Glossy, but doesn't entirely eliminate White-faced. I am changing my vote on this bird to a more conservative A-D for Ibis species because

with the additional documentation (and the absence of same), the identification no longer appears to be beyond a reasonable doubt.

Bird 1: A-D as White-faced Ibis; Bird 2: A-D as ibis species  
With regard to bird #2, there is hardly a consensus among observers as to its identification. Of four observers (one not submitting a documentation), two were undecided, one thought it was a White-faced, and one a Glossy. This alone should put this record in the reasonable doubt category. With regard to the comments, we have thoughtful and thorough comments on both sides of the question. Without belaboring what has already been stated, I don't feel this record has met the standard of beyond reasonable doubt.

Bird 1: A-D as White-faced Ibis; Bird 2: A-D as Glossy Ibis  
[regarding bird 1] The evidence is strong, as pointed out by six of the A-D reviews, that bird #1 is a White-faced Ibis. It is also corroborated by three documentations and seven other observers who reportedly agreed with the documentors ID.  
[regarding bird 2] The vagrant pattern definitely favors the occurrence of a White-faced Ibis. The White-faced Ibis would be only slightly west of its breeding range and within its migrant corridor. However, I think it is possible that a Glossy Ibis could leave it's Louisiana wintering grounds migrating up the Mississippi River valley with a White-faced Ibis before turning east. The Illinois experience of 70% Glossy sightings to White-faced indicates a Cone Marsh Glossy would at least have a probability. All the above aside the reported field marks described an adult Glossy Ibis, grey-blue face patch, narrow whitish border above cheek patch to eye, dark-eye, gray legs with reddish knees, and reddish body and neck with purplish-gree wings. The body color was not supported by Bendorf (greenish body and neck) and Fuller (only mentioned brownish rump) who were as far or further away and in poorer light. It seems to me the sum of the field marks reported by Petersen who got the best look are supported by the other two documentors who could not report the detail in color because of light and distance.

Bird 1; A-D as White-faced Ibis; Bird 2: A-D as Ibis species  
I will agree that there is enough detail given to conclude that Bird #1 was a White-faced Ibis and will vote A-D on this particular bird. Bird # 2 is another matter. Details given by Peterson are only suggestive of Glossy Ibis, not conclusive enough to say that this record is a Glossy Ibis beyond reasonable doubt. I do not agree that information from Advanced Birding and the guides listed support the details for Glossy Ibis. Distance is an important factor here and I believe that the distance given by all observers. None say that the eyes were positively red in color and som of the other reviewers seemed to have discounted the idea that the bird may have been in a transitional plumage and not full breeding plumage or close to breeding plumage as the other bird was. I would say that bird # 2 was most likely a second White-faced Ibis but detail given is not beyond reasonable doubt for that species, there I would conclude A-D for Plegadis, sp.

Bird 1: A-D as White-faced Ibis; Bird 2: A-D as Glossy Ibis

Bird #1 is clearly a White-faced Ibis from the details of the three documentations. On Bird #2, after reading and studying the comments of the documentors and reviewers many times I come to the point that the eye color, bill color, and leg coloration could be of a Glossy Ibis or a White-faced Ibis that hasn't changed into its breeding plumage. But the "very narrow whitish border to grey-blue facial patch, not extending past eye" noted by Petersen seems to be the decisive factor along with his good details of eye color, bill color, and leg coloration which are all consistent with Glossy Ibis and seems to me to designate a Glossy Ibis. Petersen's good notes, long period of observation, powerful scope, and relatively close viewing distance were all factors considered along with his birding knowledge. Five other ibis (all White-faced) were seen this spring from April 28-May 6 at three other locations in Iowa. This was an unusual number of Ibis to push into Iowa. Maybe a Glossy Ibis showing up in Iowa may not be that extraordinary in the Spring of 1990 in light of the White-faced Ibis sightings.

DOCUMENTATION FORM  
For Extraordinary Bird Sightings in Iowa

90-01

What species? Glossy Ibis How many? 1

Location? N. E. corner of Cone Marsh, Louisa Co., Ia.

Type of Habitat? Marsh & Mud Flat, & low areas.

When? date(s): April 23, 1990 time: 8:30 AM to 9:40 AM CDT

Who? your name and address: Peter C. Petersen

Others with you: Jim Sieh, Cal + Bernice Knight

Others before or after you: after Brian Blevins, Ann Barker

Describe the bird(s) including only what you observed. Include size, shape, details of all parts (bill, eye, head, neck, back, wing, tail, throat, breast, belly, undertail, legs, feet). Also mention voice and behavior.

Medium sized wading bird; long-decurved bill; back, neck, underparts chestnut; wing coverts + wings glossy green + purple, very narrow whitish border to grey-blue facial patch, not extending past eye, eye looked dark, bill tanish olive brown, legs grey except reddish brown at knee joint. Not heard. Wading + flying in + around marshy area + mud flat in company of a second ibis - see Wh-Faced doc. At times the two birds avoided each other but they once flew together for several minutes + were feeding close together when I left the area.

Similar species; how eliminated:

White-faced Ibis, which was present for direct comparison, had a wide white facial border around a reddish-brown facial patch, eye seemed red but distance was a bit far to be positive, legs were uniformly reddish brown, bill darker + more reddish + bird seemed a bit smaller.

Did any one disagree or have reservations about the identification? not to my knowledge  
If yes, explain:

Viewing conditions: give lighting, distance (how measured), optical equipment. Sunny day, sun directly behind observers, est. 120m. closest point, 150m. mostly. Used Swiss scope at 35-50X, 60mm. objective.

Previous experience with species and similar ones: Have seen this species in Romania, Australia, Kenya, S & E U.S. on many occasions.

References and persons consulted before writing description: Checked Geo. guide during obs, + before, also Pratt article on Ibis ID - Birding vol. 8, p. 1-5. Looked at Master Guide, Eastern Peterson + Robbins.

How long before field notes made? during this form completed? 8 hrs.

Send completed form to Field Reports or CBC editor (address on back cover of Iowa Bird Life).

**WHITE-FACED IBIS**

Carl J. Bendorf  
845 Cypress Ct.  
Iowa City, IA 52245

2 birds, apparently in breeding plumage

23 April 1990

Cone Marsh, Louisa Co.

Initial observation was at approximately 5:40 PM, looking obliquely into sunlight at a distance of about 175 yards with 22X scope. This observation was for about 10 minutes.

Second observation was at 6:40 PM from about 100 yards through Kowa scope for about 5 minutes. Sun was lower and birds had moved slightly so light was better but not perfect.

Following notes dictated into recorder within 3 minutes of second observation:

"Greenish body and neck with irridescent purple on wings. Both birds were feeding actively in shallow water. Both had long decurved bills and one had a very prominent white border at the base of the skin in a semicircle. This same bird appeared to have a reddish cast to the bill and the base of the bill and perhaps a reddish cast to the legs.

The other bird had a much less prominent--in fact, you really could not detect a white border at the base of the facial skin. The facial skin area of this second bird did not look reddish and its legs looked greyish with perhaps a little reddish at the knee joints."

At this range and light, I could not detect the color of the eye on either bird.

Also present during the second observation were Ken Lowder of Iowa City; Ann Barker of Princeton; and John Daniels of Cedar Rapids. There was some brief discussion that the second bird might be a Glossy Ibis.

I have seen (but not studied in detail) White-faced Ibis in the Southwest and have seen from a distance a Glossy Ibis in Florida.

This report typed 4 hours later from recorded field notes.



What species? WHITE FACED IBIS & IBIS (SP.) How many? 2Location? CONE MARSH - LOUISA COUNTYType of habitat? OPEN MARSHWhen? date(s): 23 APRIL, 1990 time: 10:21 AM to 10:58 AMWho? your name and address: JIM FULLER, 6 LONGVIEW KNOLL, IOWA CITY 52240

others with you: \_\_\_\_\_

others before or after you: CARL BENDORK, RICK HOLLIS, JIM SCHAD, PETE PETERSEN, KNIGHTS, ANN BARBER

Describe the bird(s) including only what you observed. Include size, shape, details of all parts (bill, eye, head, neck, back, wing, tail, throat, breast, belly, under tail, legs, feet). Also mention voice and behavior.

I WATCHED TWO BIRDS AT A DISTANCE OF 200 AND 250 YARDS - OTHERS SAW THEM MUCH CLOSER. BOTH BIRDS WERE THE GENERAL SIZE OF A SMALL NERON (i.e. LITTLE BLUE OR SNOWY EGRET) BUT STOCKIER WITH A LARGE DECURVED BILL WHICH WAS 2-3 TIMES THE WIDTH OF THE HEAD. BOTH BIRDS HAD A SHINY REDDISH (IN RIGHT LIGHT) CAST TO HEAD NECK AND BACK AND GREENISH GLOSS ON WINGS.

LEFT BIRD (200 YARDS) - IBIS (SP)

- ① NO WHITE COULD BE SEEN AROUND EYE AND AT BASE OF BILL
- ② BILL APPEARED GRAYISH
- ③ LEGS - GRAYISH RED
- ④ BROWNISH RUMP - IN THE RIGHT LIGHT
- ⑤ KAT-A-TAT FEEDING MOTION

RIGHT BIRD (250 YARDS) - WHITE FACED IBIS

- ① DEFINITE WHITE AREA AROUND EYE AT BASE OF BILL
- ② GRAYISH-RED BILL
- ③ LEGS - REDDISH

Similar species and how eliminated:

Did any one disagree or have reservations about identification? ?

If yes, explain:

Viewing conditions: give lighting, distance (how measured), and optical equipment:  
EXCELLENT CONDITIONS - SUN AT BACK IN MORNING  
KOWA TSN-4 SCOPE (20+60X)Previous experience with species and similar ones: SEEN SEVERAL TIMES IN IOWA AND WESTERN US (WHITE FACED) SAW GLOSSY IN FLORIDA

References and persons consulted before writing description:

NAT'L GEOG.How long before field notes made? AS VIEWING this form completed? 11 HOURS

MAIL TO: T. H. Kent, Field Reports Editor, 211 Richards Street, Iowa City IA 52240