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P.R.

BIRDS: VERIFYING DOCUMENTATION OF AN EXTRAORDINARY SIGHT RECORD.

1. Species White-Faced Ibis 2. Number: 2

3. Location 3 mi. S. of west edge of Lake View, Sac Co. Iowa

4. Date: 5-9-'75 and 5. Time Bird seen: 10 AM to 4 PM
*4-19-'76

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):

about the size of a Black-crowned Night Heron. Dark brown plumage which appeared bronzy. Decurved bill, dark legs. white line around eye quite visible. (I have not seen enough of the birds to say ~~that it was~~ definitely that it was a White-faced. According to the range map in Zim it fits it more closely than it does the Glossy Ibis.

7. Description of voice, if heard: As I recall - the two made light chirping calls but may not have called at all.

8. Description of behavior: Hopping around probing in mud with beak

9. Habitat - general: marshes
specific: a grazed wet prairie - wet at this time - usually grazed in June & July

Similarly appearing species which are eliminated by questions 6, 7 & 8, Explain:
Little green heron

11. Distance (how measured)? 300 feet - approximated 12. Optical equipment: 20X spotting scope

13. Light (sky, light on bird, position of sun in relation to bird and you): light behind me
sky clear,

14. Previous experience with this species and similarly appearing species: I saw one of these in NW Ohio. 25 years ago.

15. Other observers: Mark Bohemeyer, Ed Weimer

16. Did the others agree with your identification? Yes

17. Other observers who independently identified this bird: none

18. Books, illustrations and advice consulted, and how did these influence this description:
Birds of N. America (A Guide to Field Identification)
by Robbins, Braun, Jim, Singer
*I did not see the birds in 1976 - Bohemeyer & Weimer did.
(2 birds seen in 1976)

Signature: Glenn E. Jones Address: W. L. Biologist
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Date: 7-12-78 City, State: Rockwell City, Iowa 50579

However, they saw the 2 in 1975 as well as in 1976 so they should know the bird.
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If you watch birds solely for your own enjoyment, there really is no need to describe your observations in writing. But, if you have seen something unusual and want to share this experience with others, a written description is essential. It is true your immediate friends who know and respect your ability probably will accept your report without question, but what about those who do not know you, particularly the bird students 100 years from now who cannot know you? Also, what about the habitual skeptics? And most importantly, what about the compilers of regional bird lists who probably will insist that records be scientifically sound? All these critics will investigate your observation not because they assume you are wrong, but merely because they ordinarily expect verification. Whether the individual demanding verification realizes it or not, in doing so, he is employing a basic rule of the scientific method.

If your observation involves a common species during a season of abundance, verification is achieved simply by returning there again in season. If, however, the observation involves a rare species, or a common species out of season, verification is not obtained easily and special documentation is necessary. The best documentation is a collected specimen, and many bird students insist this is the only acceptable evidence. However, others recognize the importance and reliability of sight records accumulated by the experienced field observer, and maintain that even extraordinary sight records are acceptable if accompanied by an adequate verifying description.

It must be emphasized that a request for documentation is not an affront, but an effort to perpetuate a record by obtaining concrete evidence which may be permanently preserved for all to examine. This procedure is required for every extraordinary observation irrespective of the observer.

It should also be pointed out that with the great photographic equipment now available, species identification from photographs are possible. Such species documentation are highly desirable and should be sent to the state editors or to large museums.

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City, State

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