

DOCUMENTATION OF RARE BIRD

SPECIES: Ibis (Sp.)

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LOCATION: Tomahawk Marsh (Sac County)

DATE & TIME: 12 October, 1994 (7:30-8:05 AM)

OBSERVER: Jim Fuller, 6 Longview Knoll, NE, Iowa City, Iowa, 52240

OTHERS: Originally discovered on 9 October by DNR personnel from Black Hawk Lake at Lake View. Seen on 14 October by Pete Ernzen.

BACKGROUND: I was notified by Jim Dinsmore over E-mail that a possible Ibis had been found by Black Hawk Lake DNR personnel at Tomahawk Marsh on 9 October, and seen again that day, 11 October. I arrived there shortly after 7AM on 12 October, and after searching the marsh for a half hour, an Ibis came flying in to the east side of the road from the west. I watched the bird for over a half an hour while it was walking, feeding, and flying, sometimes as close as 100 feet, but the bird was always to the east, and with a bright sun, I could not get a good enough look to determine species.

DESCRIPTION: The general appearance was a long-legged, long-necked, short-tailed wading bird, about the same size as one of the small herons (Little Blue Heron or Snowy or Cattle Egret). However, the bill was grayish in color, quite long and decurved, and was thick at the base, and tapered to the end. The bill was judged to be about two and a half times the width of the head. Overall, the bird appeared to be a dark brown color, although a couple of times I could see a greenish sheen on the back. The legs were long and also a brown color. The eye also appeared to be dark. The tail was quite short.

BEHAVIOR: When flying the bird trailed its legs and its bill pointed down, so it looked like a shallow "C" in profile, with the back the highest part of the C. It also had choppy wingbeats, and often glided.

While walking in the marsh, it often was in water up to its knees, and it poked its long bill entirely into the water. It was a very wary bird.

SIMILAR SPECIES: Shorebird possibilities with long decurved bills are Whimbrel, which is generally much smaller with a relatively longer and thinner bill. Long-billed Curlew also has a much longer and thinner bill, and is generally lighter in color.

VIEWING CONDITIONS: Viewed with 8.5 X 44 Swift Audubon binoculars, mostly when flying, and KOWA TSN-4 (20-60X) telescope, both on tripod and car window mount at distances of 100-500 feet. I was always looking some direction of east, and the bright early morning sun made it difficult to get color details.

PREVIOUS EXPERIENCE: I have seen White-faced Ibis five previous times in Iowa and numerous birds in the west, and I have seen Glossy Ibis often in Florida and on the east coast.

REFERENCES & FIELD NOTES: Field notes were made immediately, and this form was typed on 14 October. I did not look at any field guides, until the evening of the sighting.