

095-02-1996

Glossy Ibis
(*Plegadis falcinellus*)

Pymatuning Area, Crawford County, Pennsylvania / November 3, 1996

by Mike Fialkovich

I was leading a bird outing for the Audubon Society Of Western Pennsylvania, and I took the group to the fields surrounding the Miller Ponds area and found a Glossy Ibis.

As we pulled into the parking lot of the Office Of The Pennsylvania Game Commission, just south of the Miller Ponds, several ducks flew out of a small pond behind the building. Along with them was a dark ibis that circled back and returned to the pond. We observed the bird for approximately 10-15 minutes through binoculars and variable power (10-60x) spotting scopes. The bird was actively feeding during our observation and did not appear to be nervous. Other observers were Chuck Tague, Joan Knudson, Jack Solomon, Sue Solomon, and Scott Kinsey.

DESCRIPTION:

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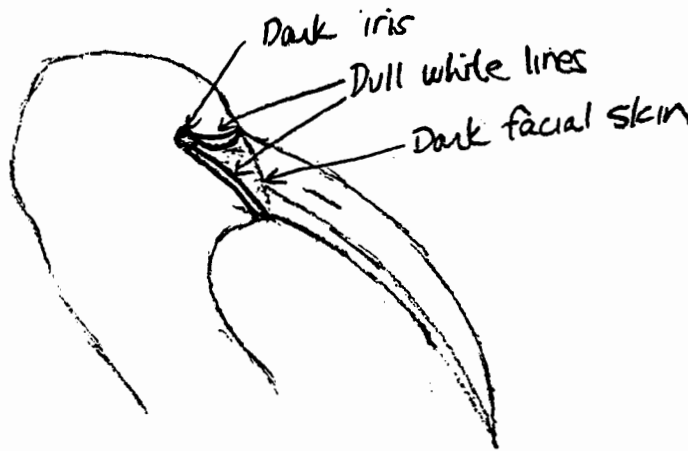
A heron like wading bird, in between a Green Heron and a Great Blue Heron in size.

Color and bare parts: the bird was very dark brown overall, with a hint of dark greenish on the wings. The bill was dark brown, very long, and obviously downcurved. The legs were very long and very dark gray to almost black in color. The neck was long and thin.

I studied the face of the bird carefully to determine if it was indeed a Glossy Ibis. The iris was dark; the facial skin was also very dark. Two dull white lines extended from the top and bottom of the eye, to the upper and lower mandible of the bill (as illustrated below). These lines did not extend beyond the eye.

The head was marked with light spotting formed by the light tips to the feathers which is typical of an adult Glossy Ibis in basic plumage.

The bird fed by submerging the bill, pulling it out of the water either completely or partially, and working food morsels up the length of the bill to the throat. It used the mandibles like a pair of forceps.



DISCUSSION OF VARIOUS IDENTIFICATION POINTS:

After returning home, I consulted Advanced Birding by Kenn Kaufman to check the characteristics I observed in the field, and to confirm my belief that the bird I saw was a Glossy, and not a White-faced Ibis (*Plegadis chihi*).

Kaufman states that the facial skin “. . . is mostly dull charcol in both species on immatures and winter adults.” This bird’s facial skin was dark brownish to blackish in color. The next point are the whitish lines on the facial skin. Kaufman states that “. . . adult Glossy Ibises generally retain at least a hint of this pale edging all year, providing a potential field mark at all seasons.” The bird I observed had these pale lines, which were very dull white. According to Kaufman, White-faced Ibises lose the white feather bordering on the face completely in the non-breeding season, and the white lines on the Glossy are the pigment of the edge of the facial skin, not feathers. Kaufman discusses the actual shape of the white markings, but I could only see that they curved from the eye to the bill. The upper line curved downward, and the lower line curved upward (see illustration). I could not judge the thickness of these lines in detail.

EXPERIENCE: I have seen hundreds of Glossy Ibises in VA, DE, and NJ. I have never seen a White-faced Ibis.

Literature cited:

Kaufman, Kenn. 1990. Advanced Birding. Houghton Mifflin Company, Boston.

References:

Kaufman, Kenn. 1990. Advanced Birding. Houghton Mifflin Company, Boston.

Plumage Notes:

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Glossy Ibis - seen during snow storm on 11/12 in pond across street from maintenance buildings at SGL 214. Adult in winter plumage. Back solid dark brown. Neck dark brown with fine white streaking on rear of crown and back of neck. Wings dark brown with greenish iridescence. Legs dark (olive-brown?). Long decurved bill (pale brown). Bare skin

of lores dark (looked brown). Eye brown. Pale bluish stripe at upper edge of bare loreal area. Less distinct pale stripe at lower edge of bare loreal area. Legs approx. 1 foot long. Feeding constantly by probing in aquatic vegetation at edge of pond. Ate several small fish. Not found after this date. After finding this bird I was surprised to hear it had been on the bird alert for several days.

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Long-billed Dowitcher - Large plump shorebirds with long straight bills, feeding together and probing mud/water with sewing machine-like bill movements. In flight, tail feathers appeared dark (narrow white bands with wider black banding on tail) relative to broad pure white stripe down center of back. Back feathers solid dark brownish (with narrow reddish brown edging. Heavy barring in flanks, extending to tips of undertail coverts. At times, it appeared that it was actually dark spotting on undertail coverts and not barring. Calls heard on several occasions - a sharp "kip" which was given in an irregular series, or singly. The call was not the more soft sounding "tu-tu-tu-tu" of Short-billed Dowitcher. Seen on several days at this location, once in November (single bird - see field notes)

Pennsylvania Ornithological Records Committee

Voting Tabulation - Round # 1 of

Species: Glossy Ibis (*Plegadis falcinellus*)

Date of Sighting: 3 November 1996 to 3 November 1996

Location: PYMATUNING - MILLERS POND

County: CRAWFORD

Observer(s): Mike Fialkovich

Walter Shaffer

Date of Submission: 1996

Submitted by: Mike Fialkovich

Written Description: YES

Photo: YES

Specimen: NO

Recording: NONE

Member	Class I	Class II	Class III	Class IV	Class V			Abstain
					A	B	C	
F. Haas	X							
N. Pulcinella	X							
E. Kwater	X							
R. Ickes			X					
G. McWilliams	X							
P. Schwalbe	X							
S. Feldstein	X							
TOTALS	6		1					
DECISION	X							

Comments:

Signature (Secretary):

F. Haas

Date:

8-16-97