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COLORADO RARE BIRD REPORT

GLOSSY IBIS
Plegadis falcinellus

Location: 2.4 miles east Boone along Highway 96; Pueblo County, Colorado

Date: May 4, 1996

Background:

I was driving along alone; returning from birding at Lake Henry. It was 2:10 p.m. and I stopped to look at 13 Plegadis ibises in a flooded field on the north side of the highway, right along the road. The birds were wading in shallow water and feeding about 75 feet away. They walked along, haltingly, exploring the water and mud with head down; occasionally standing cautiously erect. The sun was bright, the sky clear and the conditions were excellent. I watched the birds in my binoculars (B & L Elite 10x40) from inside my car, so as not to scare them. I was astonished to see that the small flock consisted of 12 White-faced Ibises and one Glossy Ibis. I observed the birds feeding for only a minute or two. However nearly the first bird I came to was the Glossy Ibis. Although viewing was unfortunately brief, I was able to clearly observe the field marks described below. After a minute or two the flock took wing and flew back east along the railroad easement and finally disappeared below me, towards the river, into a distant flooded field. I pursued the birds as they flew about 2 miles, paralleling and just above the road, and I was able to pick the Glossy Ibis out of the flock quite easily.

Description:

The bird was a breeding-plumaged adult. It was in the flock next to the White-faced Ibises and seemed at ease with them, closely associating with them while feeding. The Glossy Ibis was about the same size as the White-faced Ibises. It was not distinctly taller and bigger like I have noted with some other birds. Overall it was very similar to the White-faced Ibis: about 24" long; overall glossy chestnut brown with greenish highlights; long reddish brown wader legs; a long neck; a long distinctly down-curved bill. This bird differed from the White-faced Ibis (WFI) in: 1) having a duller greener-gray bill (not as reddish as WFI); 2) having a narrow pencil-thin white border to the facial skin, in front of and below the eye only (not broad, white and feathered, including the area behind the eye as in WFI); 3) having brilliant blue facial skin (not reddish-brown as in WFI); and 4) having a brown eye (not red as in WFI). I did not note a difference, if any, between this bird's leg color and the WFI.

Similar Species:

The White-faced Ibis is the very similar. For main differences, see the Description above.

Experience with Species:

I have seen Glossy Ibises in Florida on several occasions. I have previous experience with both ibises' in Colorado and other states.

This report is prepared from notes made during observation.

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