

5-72-31

Louisiana Heron -- Jack Reddall reports as follows: A Denver Field Ornithologists' field trip on July 25, 1971, to Barr Lake produced Colorado's third state record of a Louisiana Heron. The group, led by Harold Holt, was investigating a Black-crowned Night Heron rookery in a stand of willows at the south end of the lake when attention was called to a lone heron standing on a dead limb some 200 feet away. Although the bird had its back to the observers, it clearly was of medium size with a long bill and slender neck and was tentatively identified as a Louisiana Heron. Harold Holt and Van Remsen, each armed with a telephoto camera, moved into a position where they were able to view the bird head on. The white underparts clearly identified the species and a good number of color slides were obtained from approximately 100 feet with 12x and 16x telephoto lens. Shortly thereafter, the heron flew off in a westerly direction over the lake revealing the distinctive white belly and white rump to all of the observers which included LaVona Holt, Pam & Roy Gruver and Jack Reddall. The only previous records of a Louisiana Heron for Colorado occurred on May 18, 1963 also at Barr Lake, and the second record from April 23-May 2, 1970 on a small lake 10 miles southwest of Colorado Springs (see Colorado Field Ornithologist, No. 9, July 1971, p. 16).

This bird was observed again on August 1, 1971 at Mile High Duck Club area on the regular DFO trip, per Harold Holt.

Mrs. Inez Baker reports as follows: I've observed the Louisiana Heron (Hydranassa tricolor) hundreds of times on the south Texas coast and, in the spring of 1971, on Florida coasts. But I was unprepared to find a beautiful adult specimen feeding with two Common Egrets (Casmerodius albus) and two Great Blue Herons (Ardea herodias) right here at home near Longmont, Boulder County, Colorado.

At 9 A.M. on 17 August 1971 a friend and I discovered two Common Egrets at Union Reservoir, a large lake three miles east of Longmont. That evening we went out to see the egrets again and were astonished to find a Louisiana Heron. The lake was lowered by irrigation use and the egrets and herons were feeding on the wide mud flats some distance from the water. As we walked toward the four large birds, I saw a tail protruding from one side of a small (4 feet diameter) clump of reeds. When the tail's owner stepped out into the open it was the Louisiana Heron. It fed leisurely along toward the larger birds while we observed them in excellent light. When we walked nearer, the birds flew.

Editor's Note: A color slide of the July 25, 1971 sighting is deposited with the Colorado State University Department of Fishery and Wildlife Biology.



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Robert Andrews
c/o Department of Zoological
Collections
Denver Museum of Natural History
City Park, Denver, Colorado 80205

Dear Mr. Andrews:

Thank you for sending me your records of Louisiana Herons (Hydronassa tricolor) / Tricolored Heron (Egretta tricolor) / in Colorado. I was not aware of the surprising number of observations in your state. This information will be used in my paper as further evidence to suggest that inland Louisiana Herons are demonstrating a northerly and inland expansion trend. I hope to point out that the nest and eggs found in North Dakota this past summer may not be an accidental incident, and attempt to alert other ornithologists to be on the lookout for indications of other nesting activity.

The Heron in Mr. Holt's photograph in my opinion is clearly not in breeding plumage. This conclusion is based on the yellowish facial skin which extends behind the eye. In breeding plumage this area would be a slate-blue. There is a hinting indication that the bird may be coming into a breeding cycle as the bill seems to be bluish, though I can't be certain from the photograph.

From the photographs that I have taken of a known nesting Heron in North Dakota, the leg color is pale pink-gray and does not at all compare to Gilmore's plate in Herons of the World, 1978. The book does suggest that there are regional differences, and I suspect leg color is probably one of them. Thank you for the pertinent information and for including the photograph for my scrutiny. While the bird in the photo is not in full breeding plumage, it does suggest the possibility of coming into it. Your assistance is much appreciated.

Sincerely yours,

Rod Schmidt
Environmental Specialist