

APPENDIX II

10 DOCUMENTATION OF RARE BIRD SIGHTINGS
FOR
THE COLORADO FIELD ORNITHOLOGISTS' RECORDSSpecies: Louisiana Heron ; Hydranassa tricolor
(Vernacular name) (Scientific name)

If you watch birds solely for your own enjoyment, a written description of your observations is unnecessary. But, if you have seen something unusual, and would like to share this with others, a written description is essential. Compilers of regional bird lists must insist that their records be scientifically sound; future bird students -- those studying occurrences 50 years from now -- must have a written record on which to depend. By providing the verifying written description, you are employing a basic rule of the scientific method.

We recognize that experienced field observers can provide important and reliable records, if supported by an adequate verifying description. Thus this request is an effort to perpetuate your record by obtaining concrete evidence which may be permanently preserved for examination by others in the future. This procedure is required for every extraordinary observation, irrespective of the observer.

Dates (s): 6 August, 1978 Time Bird Seen: 1700 to 1730Locality : Dye ReservoirRocky Ford, Otero County, Colorado

Nearest town, county and state:

Scope:
Optical equipment: Bushnell Spacemaster II; 20x, wide-angle eyepieceIf photographed, please enclose copy. Equipment used: No photosNumber of birds seen: One Sex: ? Plumage: JuvenalLight conditions: Good--no clouds; observer south of bird in mid-afternoonDistance from bird, and how measured: 70 yards; guess estimate

Describe the bird's overall behavior: Bird fed by sharp, darting stabs at the water. Prey never revealed. Attack-point was further away (comparative from the bird than I've noticed with other herons. Stance lower prior to striking. Motion stealthy; 4-5 steps taken, stop, "listen", strike.

Describe the habitat in which you observed the bird: North-east corner of reservoir. Water level high; no mudflats exposed. Bird stayed close to, but not in, cattails and tall grass. Water level preferred was approximately 4 to 7 inches.

Other observers who independently identified this bird (Please list name and address):

No other observers

Describe in great detail the bird which you saw. Emphasize particularly the field marks used to identify the bird, but include a complete description of the bird. Include size, overall shape, plumage and color pattern; details on shape or size of bill, wings, and tail. (Reference to its resemblance to field guide descriptions is not enough). Describe what you actually saw in the field. Neck, rich, rusty brown. White on throat extended down the front of the neck in a narrow line, widening at the base of the neck to the entirely white breast and belly. When neck distended, a ruff of brown feathers were exposed at its base. Head, brown (like neck) with a fleshy area around eye extending to base of bill. Bill was yellow with a slightly darker tip, straight. Bill length, approx. 25% longer than head. Upper wing coverts, brown like neck (without the rich color). Back, dull slate-blue. Legs, greenish. Rump, white extending to tail. Tail, white, with a broad slate-colored terminal band. Wings, white on underside with some black marks around wrist. Upperwings, slate-blue. Describe the bird's calls or sounds, if heard; including method of delivery with contrast i.e., from perch, in flight, etc.: No vocalizations between flight feathers and forewing.

List similar species and how you eliminated them:

Great Blue Heron -- Larger with a dark belly. No brown on neck. This is a chunkier heron with few of the darting spurts of motion seen in this Louisiana Heron.

Little Blue Heron-- Approximately the same size, but body is uniformly dark blue, and neck does not show a ventral stripe. Bill is grayish with a darker tip, not yellow.

Prior experience with this and similar species: I have never seen this species before. Four days previous to this sighting, I saw an adult Little Blue Heron for the first time. Several Great Blue Heron were on the same day as this sighting and have been seen extensively in Colorado.

This report was written from notes made during x after observation; from memory .

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8/29/78

Return Form To:

CFO Records Committee
c/o Curator - Dept. of Zoological Collections
Denver Museum of Natural History
City Park
Denver, CO 80205

Notes on the plumage sequence of the Louisiana Heron (Hydranassa tricolor ruficollis). Taken from: Palmer, R. S. 1962. Handbook of North American Birds, pp. 465-472.

Juvenal plumage: " . . . head and neck medium brownish red, mantle and tail brownish olive; the chin, stripe down throat, most of underparts, and rump white; wings brownish olive, the coverts edged with chestnut." From the first fall through the winter the bird undergoes a gradual molt (Prebasic I).

Basic I plumage: Feathers of the dark portions are a dull slaty. In spring, before the first year, the bird undergoes a limited molt (Prealternate I) which is evidently restricted to the head, neck, and mantle.

Alternate I plumage: Essentially the same as Definitive Alternate plumage ". . . with short plumes on head, neck, and back." At about a year or a little older the bird undergoes a complete molt (Prebasic II).

Definitive Basic plumage: "Most of head and neck, mantle (except for cinnamon filamentous plumes), upper wing surface, and tail slaty--varies individually from dark to blackish. Head plumes purplish maroon. Chin white; a mixture of white and rusty continuing as line down to upper breast. Toward base of neck the feathers progressively more lanceolate and elongate, becoming long purplish-slaty plumes. Rump mostly white; underparts beginning at upper breast, and under wing coverts, white." In February and March the bird undergoes the Prealternate II molt, again restricted to the head, neck, and mantle.

Definitive Alternate plumage: "New head plumes include some white, the longest longer than any maroon plumes; all other plumes longer and somewhat more highly colored than those of Definitive Basic." The remainder of feathering is retained Definitive Basic. The bird again undergoes Prebasic molt in July and August.

This description does not include colors of the facial soft parts which Palmer displays in a set of color plates. Although the plates show the bill color in two stages of adulthood, Palmer makes no special reference to the bill color of the juvenal-plumaged bird. The same applies to leg color. Birds in breeding condition^{show} a cobalt-turquoise blue bill with the distal 1/3rd black. Lores appear smoke gray and the legs are scarlet orange. Birds in Definitive Basic plumage show dull yellow lores and base of the bill, gradually fading into black distally. Unlike the contrast in bill colors evident in the breeding plumage, there appears to be a blending and gradual transition in non-breeding plumage. Leg color is likewise a dull yellow.