

Glossy Ibis – Wood County

Unanimously Accepted – Vote (7-0)

Committee Members Comments:

CM1: When we consider reports of *Plegadis* ibises, great care must be taken to distinguish between Glossy Ibis and White-faced Ibis. The differences are subtle, so it is always important to have good written descriptions, preferably accompanied by good photographs. In this case, the observer ably describes the amount of white around the facial skin and its placement in relation to the eyes. The description and the photographs point to Glossy Ibis rather than White-faced Ibis. Another important field mark is the color of the legs. Although the observer does not address that issue, the photograph clearly shows the greenish legs that are characteristic of Glossy Ibis. And finally, the birds were seen by several experienced birders who all agreed on the identification.

CM2: The reporter provided photographic evidence that supports an identification of Glossy Ibis for these birds. The birds are adults, the iris is dark, the birds lack a reddish face and the white border does not go completely around the eye, which is diagnostic for Glossy Ibis rather than the alternative, and rarer species for West Virginia, White-faced Ibis.

CM3: Excellent photos and corroboration with other eyewitnesses indicate that these are glossy ibises.

CM4: Photo shows a grouping of Glossy Ibis. I see no characteristics pointing to the rarer White-faced Ibis which has been reported in the state. The submitter's previous experience with the species and concurrence from other well-known WV birders shows these birds to be Glossy Ibis.

GM5: This is a straightforward report and has an accurate description of the plumage and field identification marks of a Glossy Ibis (*Plegadis falcinellus*), as well as very detailed photographs in high resolution. I have seen between 300-400 Ibises in Virginia, West Virginia, Delaware, and Florida, and these birds show all the classic field marks. The birds were witnessed in the habitat described in this report by multiple observers, including some very well-respected birders. The photographs show large, long-legged birds with decurved bills. They were described as feeding in one area, then flying in a flock a short distance to feed again in various stretches of muddy, marshy, or similarly wet environments near the observers. The behavior and the distinctive posture shown in the photographs and described in the narrative makes clear that these are Ibises or as a remote possibility, Wood Storks (*Mycteria americana*). Of the three species of Ibises that are possible, it is possible to quickly eliminate the White Ibis since it never shows, in any stage of its life, the iridescent, plummy purple plumage with bottle-green and bronze accents shown in these photographs. The same may be said for the Wood Stork.

The only plausible contender for misidentification is the White-faced Ibis (*Plegadis chihi*). This bird has most of the field marks noted by the observers, but as they also noted, none of the birds had the characteristic and diagnostic white mask encircling the eye, nor the exposed pink skin anterior to the eye that White-faced Ibises have in breeding plumage. It was also evident to me, from the photograph, that at least two birds whose facial features were clearly visible in the photograph lack the two facial features—full eye mask and exposed skin in front of the eye—that the White-faced Ibis has. By process of elimination, this makes the case for a valid identification of Glossy Ibis.

As a final note, and this has no bearing on my judgement or deliberation of this sighting, I am surprised that this bird is still on the review list. I had a sighting in 2015 at Fisher Road near Moorefield, along with others, and photographed the individual I saw. I should have submitted it to the records committee but was told (I forget by whom) that it was to be done by another birder. I guess that never happened, or this bird would probably already be off the review list.

CM6: Filed marks and excellent photographic evidence differentiate from white-faced ibis, and multiple observers have excellent history with species. Multiple other eBird reports to the north in the same date range may also corroborate.

CM7: I am voting for the Glossy Ibis record because the report meets the requirements of the by-law and the photos provide sufficient evidence of the species identification. The photos, description and multiple viewers more than meet the requirements. The photos show a shorebird with a long, curved bill. The dark color with greenish, purplish feathers toward the back and reddish feather on the neck and shoulders limit this species to either Glossy Ibis or White-faced Ibis. The primary difference between the two species is the amount of white on the face and surrounding the eye. The White-face Ibis has a complete thick white line across the nares, around the eyes and under the chin, whereas the Glossy Ibis has a thin white line that is broken across the back of the eye. The second photo provided shows good details of the face for two of the birds in the flock and both clearly have the broken white line behind the eye. Thus, there are at least two Glossy Ibis in the flock of six birds and it is presumed that the others are Glossy Ibis as well but there is not enough photographic evidence on the other four birds to positively identify them as either. The only other question was whether or not the birds were in WV, but the Ohio River is considered WV territory and the birds were on the WV shore.