

## Great Blue Heron (White Form)

Accepted 6-1

### Committee Member Comments:

CM1: Given the extremely small range of this species (?), I was initially skeptical about this report, thinking it must have been a misidentified Great Egret. But a little research showed that “Great White Heron” does stray from its range to as far as Texas, the Great Lakes, and the Canadian maritime provinces. Moreover, after reading the descriptions contained in the report and examining the photographs, I must say the bird certainly looks like a “Great White Heron.” Unless it is some weird, aberrant Great Egret, I’m not sure what this could be. As of now, the “Great White Heron” is considered a subspecies or color morph of Great Blue Heron by most authorities. However, it was recently split by Bird Life Taxonomy as a separate species. And the North American Classification Committee of the AOS recently rejected a proposal to split the species. However, if any further proposals with new scientific and genetic information warranting a split are submitted, a future split by the AOS is possible. In that event, this would be a new species for the West Virginia list should this record be accepted.

CM2: This was a nice job by the observer to not pass this off as a Great Egret. The photographs and description are sufficient to evaluate this as a Great White Heron and not a Great Blue Heron with plumage abnormalities, though it would have been nice for this to have been covered in the discussion area of the written report. The overall continuity of plumage color and bare parts coloration seem to confirm the bird as this subspecies. This is a subspecies that has been considered for some time to be a valid species, thus warranting its evaluation by this committee. Overall, a very nice job by the observer.

CM3: Description and pictures indicate this is a white form of the great blue heron.

CM4: Excellent documentation submitted by Richard Gregg in support of his record of the white morph of the Great Blue Heron. I consulted his eBird checklists to view the photos, particularly looking for the leg color of the heron, which was not shown in the 3 photos attached to this record. It was clear that Mr. Gregg observed the white form, or white morph (Great White Heron) as referred to in the Sibley’s Guide to Birds, 2nd Edition. The observer had 3 different sightings of this bird on 2 different days, and had excellent documentation of the circumstances of the record. I support this record for the State List as the white form of the Great Blue Heron being present in WV.

CM5: I vote to include the Kanawha County, WV sighting of the Great Blue Heron (White form) record to be noted as record for State List. The written description has good detail with research references and includes both photographic evidence. The observer noted leg color but did not submit photos with leg color. There was a link to his eBird report with leg color photographic

documentation. <https://ebird.org/checklist/S71757387> His photographs did show the bill size to differentiate from Common Egret. Therefore, this report meets the standard set by the by-laws for inclusion on the official State List as a Review Species. Since the Great Blue Heron is well documented species, I believe, this White Form is a footnote to the species until or if ever separated.

CM6: Nice find and well documented, but it is still a Great Blue Heron

CM7: The photo of the bird in question clearly shows a large white heron/egret with a relatively dark, bi-colored bill. The size with the bi-colored bill makes the identification unmistakable as a Great Blue Heron White Form. The additional description of yellow-green legs supports the identification. The bill coloration could only be matched by a Tri-colored Heron, but this species does not come in a white form and is much smaller.