

Limpkin – Jefferson County

Unanimously Accepted to the State List (7-0)

Committee Member Comments:

CM1: Although the attached photographs were taken through thick foliage, enough field marks are visible to see that the bird is indeed a Limpkin. I also appreciate the fact that the observer attached a copy of a topographical map with the exact location the bird was seen. Records of birds seen on state lines are always problematic in that it can be difficult to determine which state the bird was in. In this case, the bird was (just barely) within West Virginia territory.

CM2: The report includes a good description of a limpkin and the photographs, although not providing a clear unobstructed view of the bird, provide sufficient detail to identify the bird as a limpkin. Visible field marks observed in one or more of the photographs, such as the long, de-curved bill, white streaked head and neck, and white spotted body with lack of streaking near the rump, are supportive of a limpkin. The question of which state the bird was observed in is clarified by the two maps provided with locations marked, indicating that the bird was seen on the West Virginia bank and not in the water, which would be in Maryland. Photographs are provided that clearly show the bird standing on the mud bank, while a few are less clear where the bird is standing.

CM3: The observer provided enough information to include the Limpkin (*Aramus guarauna*) on the State List. The report includes a description of the bird, photographs, documentation of exact location and names multiple observers who have experience with the Limpkin. Photographs and the written description uphold the identification. Since the bird was on border of Maryland and West Virginia, the observer used multiple methods to document and describe the observation inside the West Virginia border. Even though the photographs were backlit and taken through brush, multiple photographs provide enough details to confirm. The bird's size described between a green and great blue heron is consistent. The plumage is dark olive-brown with paler face, chin and throat. The feathers characteristic triangular white markings were evident. The straight and thick bill separates it from confusing in the field with the immature White Ibis and immature Glossy Ibis.

CM4: Photographic evidence and good description of this species.

CM5: There's no question as to the ID of the bird. It was found in MD across the Potomac river near Synder's Landing and was observed / photographed many time from there. It also ventured onto the shoreline on the WV side. We can spilt hairs as to where is the official MD/WV birding border but to me if the water level happens to allows for more shoreline so be it.

CM6: I am in favoring of including the Limpkin on the State list. This is because it meets the criteria listed in the by-laws under provision 4: "One or more documented observations, each of which involved at least three persons having previous experience with the species." I have reviewed records on previous occasions submitted by at least two of the three observers of this bird. They have always been meticulous and careful, as was the case with this report. Their description of the bird's appearance and behavior was entirely consistent with my own sightings of this species in Florida. The description gave careful delineation of the major field marks, and also noted the head-swaying gait of the bird, which clicked all the boxes for me. There is also photo documentation, although it is an

imperfect view of the bird and does not show the head as clearly as one might hope. Still, the decurved bill is discernible and unique. A Limpkin is so distinctive that it left me no doubt as to the identification.

CM7: The bird in the photos is clearly a relatively large, dark brown wading bird with white spots, dark legs and a downward curved bill, but it was smaller than cranes, Great Blue Heron or Great Egret. The most likely possible species are Whimbrel, Long-billed Curlew, Glossy Ibis, White-faced Ibis, White Ibis and Limpkin. The three Ibis species all have the same length and thickness of bill as the bird in the photo, but none of them have the white spots and can therefore be eliminated as options. Whimbrel are smaller than Limpkin and have speckles rather than clearly white spots and the bill is more sharply downward curved. The Long-billed Curlew also has a much longer, thin bill than the bird in the photo and only has a few small white spots. This bird in the photo has larger white spots. By process of elimination, Limpkin is the only species that has all of the requisite field identification marks of a thick, downward curved bill, black legs and relatively large white spots on the back and wings. The only other question is whether it was actually in WV, and the locations on the map indicate that it was on the WV side of the river.