

WHITE-FACED IBIS

Plegadis chihi

non-breeding visitor, occasional

monotypic

White-faced Ibis breeds in w. N. America from Oregon and California SE to Louisiana, withdrawing in winter from northern areas as far S as Guatemala; they also reside in Chile and se. S America (AOU 1998), and have been recorded on Clipperton I (Howell et al. 1993). The closely related Glossy Ibis (*Plegadis falcinellus*) inhabits Atlantic and Gulf coasts of N and S America and across s. Eurasia, Africa, and Australia (AOU 1998). The two species can be difficult to distinguish in Hawaii, particularly first-year birds (Pratt 1976).

Plegadis ibises occur rarely but regularly in the *Southeastern Hawaiian Islands*. An older specimen record was reported as the White-faced Ibis ("*P. guarauna*"), considered to be the more likely species to reach the islands (Wilson and Evans 1899, Rothschild 1900). However, some specimens of first-year birds taken in 1872-1900 (see below) have not been fully identifiable to species, and the same can be said for sight observations before 1960 that lack identifying notes (Pyle 1977, Pratt 1980a). In recent years *Plegadis* ibises that have remained for extended periods have all been identified as White-faced Ibises based on the red iris color and/or recently developed criteria based on the color of the loreal skin (see [HRBP Page](#)). The Glossy Ibis has not as yet been confirmed from the Hawaiian Islands, although measurements of two specimens collected in Hawaii in and around 1900 suggest that they may be Glossies (see below); reports of Glossy Ibises on [DOFAW Waterbird Surveys](#) in 1993, 1998, and 2007 all pertained to known White-faced Ibises. *Plegadis* ibises reaching the *Southeastern Hawaiian Islands* have arrived singly or in groups of 2-11 birds, some individuals remaining for years. From 2003 through 2009 multiple individuals were observed on multiple islands, and it is difficult to infer how much inter-island movement may have occurred.

On *Kaua'i*, an adult *Plegadis* ibis collected by the Knudsens in 1872 (Stejneger 1887; USNM 61258; [HRBP](#) 5104) has measurements that could pertain to either species (PP examination) and is thus unidentified to species at this point. A first-year White-faced Ibis was near PMRF 21-27 Oct 1992 and (presumably the same bird) at Hanalei NWR 6 Dec 1992-21 Mar 1993. In fall 2003 a group of *Plegadis* ibis reached Hanalei NWR; 5 were first seen 16 Sep, increasing to 8 on 6 Oct, 10 on 15 Oct, and 11 by 6-21 Jan 2004 ([HRBP](#) 5051-5058; published Pratt 2004 and *NAB* 58:297). Many were critically identified as White-faced Ibis and we presume they all arrived as part of an incursion of this species. Only one individual was observed after Jan, to 27 Apr 2004. Two additional White-faced Ibises were photographed at Princeville, Kaua'i 19 Aug 2009. On *O'ahu* six *Plegadis* ibises were observed together on Kaelepu Pond in the early 1930s (*E* 7:11, Munro 1944) and one bird was present on Waipi'o Peninsula 10-15 Oct 1966 (*E* 27:55-56) but was not seen again. A White-faced Ibis first appeared at Waipi'o 12 Sep 1976 and thereafter was observed repeatedly there and at nearby Honouliuli unit of PHNWR until 10 Apr 1986 (10 [HRBP](#) photos 1978-1983). Another (first-year) White-faced Ibis appeared at Honouliuli 24 Sep 2004, was seen repeatedly here, at the Ki'i Unit of JCNWR, and occasionally elsewhere on O'ahu through 2009

([HRBP](#) 5177-5178, 5201, 5516), and was joined by 1-2 others in at various times in May 2006-Apr 2007.

On *Moloka'i* one *Plegadis* ibis was taken from a flock of 5 during Sep or Oct 1865 but the specimen fragments (sent to Baird at USNM) are now lost (Bryan 1901a, 1905a). A first-year bird (BPBM 7090) was collected on Moloka'i 28 Sep 1900 (per specimen tag, contra the report of 1903 by Munro 1944). Another uncatalogued mounted specimen of a *Plegadis* ibis at BPBM has a tag suggesting it was also collected around 1900, but at an unknown locality. Measurements of these two specimens (PP examination) suggest that they may be male and female Glossy Ibises, respectively, but confirmation should be obtained with molecular evidence before assuming species identification. A White-faced Ibis also frequented several localities on Moloka'i 11 Sep 2006-25 Nov 2007. On *Maui*, two *Plegadis* ibises were shot near Kihei during the winter of 1873, one of which was saved (Bryan 1905a; BPBM 2218) and has measurements indicating a female White-faced Ibis (PP examination). A group of 3 *Plegadis* was observed at Kanaha Pond 18 Nov 1937 (*E* 7:11, Munro 1944). A White-faced Ibis visited Kealia Pond from late July until at least 6 Dec 1999 (NAB 55:232), and another present at Kealia 22 Oct 2004 through 2009 ([HRBP](#) 5245, 5629, 5731), was joined by at least 2-5 others in Mar 2005-Feb 2006 ([HRBP](#) 5851-5852) and 4-5 more in Oct-Nov 2009. On *Hawai'i*, a White-faced Ibis was first seen at Aimakapa Pond 19 Oct 1992, was joined by a second individual 10 Jan 1997, and the pair was seen between here and at the nearby Kona Water Treatment Ponds through 22 Jan 1999, when both were last seen. A White-faced Ibis was observed at Loko Waka Pond in Hilo 25 Nov 2007. One to three White-faced Ibises also appeared on Hawai'i in Oct 2009, being reported from Alua Bay, Kaloka NP 4-10 Oct ([HRBP](#) 5628-5629), Akala Pond near Hakalau NWR 16 Oct, and in Hilo 20 Oct-14 Nov ([HRBP](#) 5630). A *Plegadis* ibis mentioned for Hilo in the 1930s (*E* 45:71) appears to have been based on a report of a "white-faced species" (*E* 7:11) which probably refers instead to a [Greater White-fronted Goose](#). The many records of White-faced Ibises in Hawaii since the incursion on Kaua'i in 2003 have led to speculation that they may have been breeding in the state during the mid-to-late 2000s, but no direct evidence of this has been obtained.

Two flightless species of ibis (*Apteribis*) have been discovered in subfossil deposits of Moloka'i and Maui (Olson and Wetmore 1976; Olson and James 1982, 1991, James et al. 1987). This taxon is sufficiently modified from its ancestral stock that its origins cannot be determined (Olson and Wetmore 1976), although genetic evidence suggests that the White Ibis (*Eudocimus albus*) of N America may be its closest living relative (Fleisher and McIntosh 2001).

[Acronyms and Abbreviations](#)

[Literature cited](#)

Citation: Pyle, R.L., and P. Pyle. 2009. The Birds of the Hawaiian Islands: Occurrence, History, Distribution, and Status. B.P. Bishop Museum, Honolulu, HI, U.S.A. Version 1 (31 December 2009) <http://hbs.bishopmuseum.org/birds/rlp-monograph/>