

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), with only one record for the North Pacific Basin, from Palau (Pratt et al. 2010). The two species can be difficult to distinguish in Hawaii, particularly first-year birds (Pratt 1976).

Plegadis ibises occur somewhat 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 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 this species (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 often arrived as first year birds in fall, singly or in groups of 2-11 birds, some individuals remaining for up to 10 years. Notable incursions occurred in the falls of 2004 and 2015. From 2003 through 2016 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. Subsequently a [minimum](#) of 15 White faced Ibis have been recorded on Kaua'i during 1992-2011, including a group at Hanalei that expanded from 5 on 16 Sep to 11 by 6-21 Jan 2004 ([HRBP](#) 5051-5058; published Pratt 2004 and *NAB* 58:297), tying the high count for the Hawaiian Islands (see below); at least one of these birds remained until 27 Apr 2004. On *O'ahu*, six *Plegadis* ibises were observed together on Kaelepulu 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). Subsequently a [minimum](#) of 14 White-faced Ibises were recorded from 1976-2016, including long-staying birds observed Sep 1976 through Apr 1986 (10 [HRBP](#) photos 1978-1983) and Sep 2004 through 2016 ([HRBP](#) 5177-5178, 5201, 5516, 6357-6358), and a high count of seven during Jan-Feb 2016. 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 and 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 single White-faced Ibis was subsequently observed at several localities on Moloka'i Sep 2006-Nov 2007 with a high count of 8 present in Feb 2016 ([HRBP](#) 6360, published *NAB* 69:513) probably including the 7 birds on O'ahu (above), which appeared to vacate this island at the same time. 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). Subsequently a [minimum](#) of 25 White-faced Ibises were recorded in 1999-2016 (*NAB* 55:232; [HRBP](#) 5245, 5629, 5731, 5851-5852), including a high count of 11 at Kealia NWR 27 May 2016 (probably including the 7-8 O'ahu and Moloka'i birds mentioned above). On *Hawai'i I*, a [minimum](#) of 11 birds were recoded in 1999-2016 ([HRBP](#) 5628-5630, 6359); a *Plegadis* ibis mentioned for Hilo in the 1930s (*E* 45:71) appears to have been based on a [Greater White-fronted Goose](#). The many records of White-faced Ibises in Hawaii during the 10 years after the incursion on Kaua'i in 2003 have led to speculation that they may have bred 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 indicates that the White Ibis (*Eudocimus albus*) of N America is its closest living relative (Fleisher and McIntosh 2001, Dove and Olson 2011).

[Acronyms and Abbreviations](#)

[Literature cited](#)

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