

Glossy Ibis *Plegadis falcinellus*



Folk Name: Black Curlew

Status: Migrant

Abundance: Very Rare

Habitat: Shallow water pools, ponds, streams, mudflats

The Glossy Ibis is the dark counterpart to the White Ibis. It is regularly found along the coast of both Carolinas, but unlike the White Ibis, it does not regularly disperse far inland after breeding. In the late 1980s, an editor for *The Chat* characterized the Glossy Ibis as “always notable in the Piedmont,” and today it remains a sought after and highly notable find in the Central Carolinas. There are five records of Glossy Ibis from this region prior to 2010.

The first Glossy Ibis reported in the Carolina Piedmont was a bird seen by Larry Crawford in Greensboro, NC, on July 7, 1960. The earliest report of a Glossy Ibis in this region is of a single bird sighted by Flo Cobey and other observers conducting the Charlotte Spring Bird Count on May 10, 1968. They found it at Creech’s Pond near Carowinds, just inside of York County along the York–Mecklenburg county line. The discovery of this ibis was later characterized as being “most unusual,” as spring sightings of Glossy Ibis inland are especially rare.

The first account of Glossy Ibis within the boundaries of Mecklenburg County was provided by David Wright. He witnessed a flock of about 30 birds flying in the standard V-formation over Hassell Place near Selwyn Avenue on April 26, 1982. A decade later, Kevin Hennings provided a second report of a Glossy Ibis along the York–Mecklenburg county line on October 21, 1991. Hennings sighted a lone bird near the Catawba River outside of Rock Hill. The following year on August 15, 1992, Taylor Piephoff found another lone Glossy Ibis foraging along the edge of the left viewing pond at Cowan’s Ford Wildlife Refuge. The bird lingered for a few days. No Glossy Ibis were reported from the region for the next 17 years. Then on May 5, 2009, Rob Van Epps watched a Glossy Ibis fly into a wetland across the street from Concord Mills Mall in Cabarrus County, just half a mile east of the Mecklenburg County line. The bird stayed for at least 2 days.

There were four reports of Glossy Ibis in the region in 2015 and 2016. A pair of juvenile Glossy Ibis showed up at Pee Dee National Wildlife Refuge and were photographed on August 13, 2015. The following spring, an astonishing total of three reports of Glossy Ibis were made in Mecklenburg County within a four-day period.



J F M A M J J A S O N D

The author reported a pair of Glossy Ibis flying over Linda Lake in east Charlotte on March 30, 2016. On 2 April, Barry Rowan photographed a flock of 30 birds “flying in a near perfect V-formation” over the Latta Plantation Nature Preserve Piedmont prairie restoration site. That same morning, Bob Haussler and Jan and Phil Fowler sighted four Glossy Ibis at Dearness Gardens in Huntersville. These ibis were “seen in flight with quick wing beats... flying west to east from the Catawba River area.” There was one report in 2017. Jeff Lemons photographed one Glossy Ibis in flight at the McDowell Nature Preserve on July 29, 2017. Birders in the Central Carolinas are eagerly anticipating more regular appearances of Glossy Ibis in this region in the future.



Detail of a flock of 30 birds flying over Latta Plantation Nature Preserve in Huntersville. (Barry Rowan)