

California east to central Texas and south into Mexico. Not surprisingly, the species has turned up occasionally in much of the eastern seaboard, and it has been reported from nearly all of the states in the region (Sibley 2000), including South Carolina (Post and Gauthreaux 1989; South Carolina Bird Records Committee 2002). In fact, based on the range map in Sibley (2000), North Carolina was one of the last states in the East to definitively add Green-tailed Towhee to its state bird list.

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## **First Documented Record of the White-faced Ibis in North Carolina**

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A White-faced Ibis (*Plegadis chihi*) was observed on 1 July 2002 in South Nags Head, Dare County, NC, by Paula Crockett and Martin Gibbins, who reported it on the logsheet at the Visitor Center at the nearby Pea Island National Wildlife Refuge. Kim King-Wrenn subsequently relayed the sighting to Jeff Lewis, who observed the bird on 2 July and reported the finding to the Carolinabirds e-mail group. Over the next week, dozens of birders visited the site, observed the bird, and documented it with photographs. I observed the ibis on 4 July with Derb Carter and Lewis. It was last reported on 18 July 2002 by Skip Morgan.

The bird, probably a one-year-old (second calendar year) individual, fed in a vegetation-choked ditch alongside Old Nags Head Road, a busy ocean-side street that runs parallel to NC 12. The ibis was calm when cars passed by, but it often flushed at the approach of people.

The White-faced Ibis was very similar in appearance to the Glossy Ibises (*P. falcinellus*) that were present in the same ditch and were seen before and after the White-faced was seen (though not in direct comparison). The

White-faced Ibis's overall plumage was dark purplish-brown. Its bill was horn-colored and also was very long and decurved. The face contained a wide white stripe running above, behind, and below the eye that formed an arc or semi-circle. The eye was distinctly red. Bare skin on the face was dark, not obviously red; thus, the bird was presumably not an adult in full breeding condition, as the bare facial skin is bright red during that part of the year. The legs were very long; the upper half (above the ankle) was reddish pink, whereas the lower half was darker without much red tint.



Figure 1. White-faced Ibis in South Nags Head, 9 July 2002. Photo by Will Cook

The Glossy Ibis is quite similar in plumage coloration to the White-faced, except that the stripes on the face are chalky blue and not as wide and are incomplete, not framing the eye. The eye is brown or black without a red tint. The Glossy's legs are not reddish; the individuals seen at South Nags Head showed a flesh color to the legs.

There is a previous North Carolina report of White-faced Ibis in the literature. Paxton et al. (1977) mention "a previously unpublished report of a breeding-plumaged adult at Pea Island NWR, NC in mid-May 1973 (J. Williamson, pers. comm.)". No description of the bird in this report was ever published in *The Chat* or any other journal. Because of this lack of published description, and a lack of any known unpublished notes for review, the NC Bird Records Committee gave this report an Unaccepted Sighting verdict in

1990 (NC Bird Records Committee 1990). The Bird Records Committee voted Accepted as Valid for the 2002 record, based on my written description; and, as a result of acceptance of documentation photos taken by Will Cook, Wayne Irvin, and Steve Shultz, the species was placed on the state's Official List (NC Bird Records Committee 2003).

The White-faced Ibis breeds in the western half of the United States and along the Gulf coast of Texas and Louisiana (Sibley 2000). It has strayed on many occasions to states along the Atlantic seaboard; Sibley (2000) indicates that the species has been recorded from nearly all seaboard states from Massachusetts south to North Carolina; presumably, this reference included the 1973 report on the range map. There is no record of White-faced Ibis for South Carolina mentioned in Post and Gauthreaux (1989), McNair and Post (1993), or on the Official South Carolina Birdlist as compiled by the Bird Records Committee of South Carolina, as presented on the Carolina Bird Club website, as of February 2004. However, a White-faced Ibis was seen sporadically at Savannah National Wildlife Refuge, South Carolina, from 1 November 2000 (*North American Birds* 55:40) through 11 March 2001 (*North American Birds* 55:289). Written description of this bird has been submitted to the Bird Records Committee of South Carolina for review (Donna Slyce, pers. comm.).

Because of the numerous reports to the east of the breeding range, it is not surprising that the species has recently been reported from the Carolinas. The White-faced Ibis does not show much of (if any) reddish tint to the facial skin, eyes, and legs in the immature and adult non-breeding stages, and thus is extremely similar to the Glossy Ibis at all stages; therefore, one must wonder how many such immature and non-breeding White-faced Ibises occur in the Carolinas and are simply overlooked. Fortunately, at least a few White-faced Ibises that have occurred out of range along the Atlantic coast still retained some breeding plumage and bare skin features that made identification possible.

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