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Authors: Posada, Arturo Kirkconnell, Kirkconnell, Arturo, and Kirwan, Guy M.

Source: Bulletin of the British Ornithologists' Club, 138(3) : 272-274

Published By: British Ornithologists' Club

URL: <https://doi.org/10.25226/bboc.v138i3.2018.a8>

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First record of White-faced Ibis *Plegadis chihi* in the West Indies

by Arturo Kirkconnell Posada, Arturo Kirkconnell & Guy M. Kirwan

Received 28 May 2018; revised 30 August 2018; published 24 September 2018

<http://zoobank.org/urn:lsid:zoobank.org:pub:6622EE25-FDBE-4269-A14C-AC7BEA0057E5>

White-faced Ibis *Plegadis chihi* occurs in two strikingly disjunct populations (Matheu *et al.* 2018). The northern one breeds at wetlands in south-west Canada (in southern Alberta), across the western and central USA (south to coastal Louisiana and Texas) and in Mexico; it winters in the southern USA south to Guatemala and El Salvador, exceptionally Costa Rica (Stiles & Skutch 1989, AOU 1998). The population in southern South America is believed to be largely resident, from south-east Bolivia, Paraguay and southern Brazil to north-central Chile and Argentina, and Uruguay. Until approximately the late 1970s, the species was believed to also occur in northern South America, in parts of Colombia and Venezuela (e.g. Blake 1977), until it was fully realised that these populations were in fact referable to the formerly conspecific Glossy Ibis *P. falcinellus* (as first postulated by Meyer de Schauensee 1970, and more fully documented by Gochfeld 1973).

Here we report the first record for the West Indies of White-faced Ibis; a single adult photographed c.1 km south of Yaguaramas, Matanzas province, in western Cuba, on 19 May 2018, foraging in a small rice field with four adult Glossy Ibis (a common resident breeder in country) and an unidentified, very young ibis (also visible in Fig. 1). During the observation, the observers (AKP & AK) did not notice that two species were present but, on subsequently



Figure 1. Adult White-faced Ibis *Plegadis chihi*, south of Yaguaramas, Matanzas province, western Cuba, May 2018, with unidentified young *Plegadis* ibis, at right (A. Kirkconnell Posada)

reviewing the photographs, AK identified the single White-faced Ibis by virtue of its much redder-coloured legs, pinkish-red loreal skin with a white border that encircles the back of the eye, and its greyish bill (Fig. 1). We are unaware of any characters that might be used to discriminate these two species of ibis prior to their first autumn (when *P. chihi* develops a red eye). The potential for *P. chihi* to occur in Cuba had been highlighted by A. Jaramillo (pers. comm.) in previous discussions with AK, and the possibility of West Indian records was also mentioned by Ryder & Manry (1994).

Indeed, the species was obviously likely to occur in the West Indies, given regular records in the north-east USA / south-east Canada and along the Gulf coast to Florida (AOU 1998), and a single record from Aruba, in the former Netherlands Antilles, in June 1978 (Prins *et al.* 2009), while the additional potential for vagrancy by the North American population is well illustrated by records on Hawaii, in 1873 and 2003 (Matheu *et al.* 2018) and on Clarion Island, more than 700 km off western Mexico (Wanless *et al.* 2009). Those breeding in Utah are well documented to winter as far south as western, central and eastern Mexico (Ryder 1967). Furthermore, in South America, movements of up to 1,800 km have been documented between northern Argentina and southern Brazil (Olrog 1975), while the species has wandered as far south as Tierra del Fuego (Hancock *et al.* 1992) and perhaps even north-west to southern coastal Peru (Hughes 1970). In North America, pre-breeding wandering appears to be more prevalent than in the post-breeding season (Ryder 1967, Ryder & Manry 1994), making the timing of the Cuban record documented here less surprising.

The North American population of White-faced Ibis has been generally increasing since about the mid 1960s, especially since the banning of certain pesticides, albeit with marked local fluctuations (Ryder & Manry 1994). The species has principally expanded its range west in subsequent decades; it is currently estimated to number at least 150,000 individuals (Matheu *et al.* 2018). Given possible breeding records of *P. chihi* in Florida (AOU 1998), sympatric breeding by *P. falcinellus* and *P. chihi* initially in Louisiana (Stewart 1964), subsequently in Alabama and possibly eastern Texas (Ryder & Manry 1994) and apparently also in Florida in the late 19th century (Brewster 1886), as well as dramatic recent changes in Cuba in the status of other wetland species, such as American White Pelican *Pelecanus erythrorhynchos* and American Avocet *Recurvirostra americana* (Kirkconnell *et al.* in press), the possibility that White-faced Ibis might be more regular than a mere vagrant in the northern Caribbean should be borne in mind.

Acknowledgements

We are grateful to David Mandry and George Wallace for reading in the manuscript in submission.

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- Addresses:* Arturo Kirkconnell Posada and Arturo Kirkconnell, Calle 46, #1705, between Av. 17 and 19, Playa, La Habana, Cuba, e-mail: Arthur.160587@gmail.com. Guy M. Kirwan, Research Associate, Field Museum of Natural History, 1400 South Lakeshore Drive, Chicago, IL 60605, USA.