

This resource is based on the following source:

Kale, H. W., II, B. Pranty, B. M. Stith, and C. W. Biggs. 1992. The atlas of the breeding birds of Florida. Final Report. Florida Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission, Tallahassee, Florida.

This resource can be cited as:

Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission. 2003, January 6. Florida's breeding bird atlas: A collaborative study of Florida's birdlife. <http://www.myfwc.com/bba/> (Date accessed mm/dd/yyyy).

Glossy Ibis *Plegadis falcinellus*

With its long, decurved bill and purplish iridescent plumage, the Glossy Ibis is an unmistakable Florida breeding bird. Distributed on nearly every continent, it breeds in North and South America, locally from coastal Maine and Rhode Island south to south Florida, west along the coast to Louisiana, and south to Venezuela (Stevenson and Anderson 1994).

Habitat. The Glossy Ibis prefers freshwater habitats for foraging and infrequently feeds in marine environments. The diet of the Glossy Ibis is comprised of aquatic invertebrates, such as crayfish, insects, and earthworms.

Glossy Ibises nest in colonies with other species of wading birds. Nesting occurs on the ground on grass clumps or in shrubs and trees. They are behaviorally subordinate to most other wading bird species in colonies. Clutches range from 1 to 5 eggs, but 2 to 4 are typical. The eggs are lustrous blue-green, quite unlike the chalky light-blue and greenish eggs of herons and egrets and the speckled eggs of the White Ibis. Nests are made of sticks and often contain a high proportion of vegetation and grass. Incubation lasts 21 to 22 days, and the young begin to walk in the colony at about 14 days of age. Dependence on parental feedings probably lasts until 50 days of age.



Illustration © 1995 Diane Pierce, All Rights Reserved.

Seasonal Occurrence. Most reports place breeding between March and June in Florida. Migratory individuals have been noted in spring and fall throughout the state. Most sightings in the Panhandle occur between March through May and again in October.

Status. Since ornithologists first recorded it, the Glossy Ibis has had a patchy and unpredictable distribution in Florida. It is generally less common than most of the other wading bird species. The numbers of Glossy Ibises in Florida are thought to have fluctuated markedly since the turn of the century, due to the northward expansion of its nesting range and the drainage of freshwater wetlands. Robertson and Kushlan (1974) estimated the Florida breeding population to be 3,500 birds. In statewide surveys conducted between 1986 and 89, Runde et al. (1991) estimated 3,000 breeding birds.

Glossy Ibises often nest in small numbers within mixed species colonies, although some aggregations can contain thousands of birds. They have been reported nesting somewhat sporadically throughout the central and southern peninsula, with occasional reports from phosphate mines in north Florida. Glossy Ibises typically nest in colonies over water and on coastal islands. Their almost uniformly dark coloration makes them far less conspicuous than the light-colored waders and almost impossible to count from the air. They are also probably overlooked in mixed-species colonies, unless they are nesting in large numbers.

Peter Frederick

Sponsored by Brian Winchester

Glossy Ibis

