

Phenomenal Appearance of Wood Ibis on Long Island — The most spectacular Long Island bird news for many months came with the sudden appearance of thirteen Wood Ibises over Orient on August 18, 1958. After a prolonged period of uncertain weather with some fog, Roy Latham of Orient glanced up to note these large black and white, stork-like birds, with heads and legs extended, circling about and flying over his farmland.

A few hours later, about two miles to the west, at East Marion, Edmund Morgan, Curator of Tackapausha Museum in Seaford, while collecting algae on the shore of Long Island Sound, saw apparently the same flock reduced by three, flying westward, and further down the North Fork. According to Latham, Paul Stoutenburg saw them east of Riverhead, still a flock of ten and traveling westward. That, according to our records, was the last seen of the combined flock.

Perhaps the most intimate association with the Wood Ibis took place at East Moriches, where one was discovered about August 29 by Gilbert Raynor of Manorville and was seen a day or so later by Dennis Puleston of Brookhaven and Roy Wilcox of Speonk. The bird was found along the Terrell River, a roosting ground for Common and Snowy Egrets, which has a wide estuary leading into Moriches Bay. The bird was noticed feeding in the reedy shallows or perched on one of the dead trees on the west bank where the area is still wild and forested. On the east bank are located various vantage points from which the Ibis could be observed, and it was on September 1, by invitation of Mr. and Mrs. Terry of Blue Point, that the author, his wife and Terry found the Ibis near the mouth of the Terrell River feeding along the east shore. While observing the bird we were joined by Roy Wilcox and Mr. and Mrs. Harold Evens of Northville.

Perfect views of the bird were available for about an hour through binoculars and a spotting scope. While feeding, the bird incessantly probed or sifted the soft black mud, apparently in search of soft marine life such as worms and the like. Whatever it found caused no hesitation in the incessant dowitcher-like probing. The bird's bill was continually open for an inch or more, allowing the pinkish interior to be easily seen. The Ibis was not distracted by a Mute Swan several feet away or by a Common Egret which lit nearby. After having been fully satisfied as to its method of feeding, Wilcox and Evans flushed the bird, and the long-gear'd flashy black and white form leisurely flew to a distant dead tree on the west bank where it alighted against the background of the setting sun.

As late as 1942 Allan D. Cruickshank, in his book "Birds Around New York City," tells of only one record of the Wood Ibis from Long Island — a specimen taken at East Marion on June 21, 1890. He called it "an accidental visitant from the south" and said that there were two twentieth-century records for Cape May County, New Jersey. Roy Latham in the Baldwin Bird Club's No. 5, 1956 publication of "The Long Island Naturalist" states that Clarencé Schellinger of East Marion shot the Ibis in 1890, in a swamp adjoining Dam Pond between Orient and Greenport. Continuing, Latham tells of a Wood Ibis seen by him on June 23, 1955, standing on the north border of Dam Pond at the exact location where the former Ibis was found. He writes: "The bird, an adult, was seen to strike several times for food. Schools of immature sea herring (*Culpea Harengus*) were running in the

pond, which is a salt water branch of the Orient harbor. The bird, when distributed, flew several hundred yards and alighted in the top of a small swamp tree. There appear to have been no intervening records for this species on Long Island between 1890 and 1955."

In the final analysis it seems phenomenal that on all three occasions the Wood Ibises were seen at East Marion, the first two records being limited to that locality, and also that a flock of thirteen should appear in 1958 when only two individuals had been seen in the 68 years previous to that date. — John J. Elliott, 3994 Park Avenue, Seaford