

NOTES AND OBSERVATIONS

Unusual Plumage Coloration of a Rufous-sided Towhee: On 15 May 1982, while operating the Fire Island Research Station, in Islip Township, Suffolk Co., I netted a previously banded Rufous-sided Towhee with unusual plumage coloration. This bird was mottled brown and black, and my first impression was that it was a young molting bird. When I checked the band number, 901-31889, I discovered that I had banded the bird on 17 May 1981 at the same location. At that time I had made a note that the bird was black and brown and had brown eyes and had reported it as a second-year male.

The description of the bird is as follows: the head, back, throat and upper breast, instead of being solid black, were black mottled with brown. The primaries and primary coverts were black but the rest of the wing was mottled with brown. The tail feathers were black with brown in the outer webs. There was more brown on the left side of the bird than on the right. The eyes were red. The pied coloration was present only on the portions of the bird that are solid black in a normal male towhee. Other coloration and characteristics were normal.

This bird is very likely a resident in the area of the Fire Island Research Station and further observations on any changes in its plumage may be possible in succeeding years.

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White Ibis Observed on Lake Champlain in Clinton County: An immature White Ibis (*Eudocimus albus*) was observed by a number of field observers at the mouth of the north branch of the Ausable River, Ausable Point Campsite (Town of Peru, Clinton County), on 12, 14 and 15 September 1982.

It was first spotted by Dr. C. Leon Harris (a biologist at SUNY, Plattsburgh) and his wife Mary Jane on 12 September 1982. It was a warm, September afternoon with excellent visibility. The bird was first observed resting among some gulls on a sand bar between the north and south branches of the Ausable River. It was observed by both Dr. and Mrs. Harris through 8 x 20 custom-compact binoculars. As they moved toward the resting area, the ibis flew to a small pool of impounded water and began to feed. They were able to come within 20 meters of the bird before it flew. On 14 September Dr. H. Klein of SUNY Plattsburgh's Biology Department observed the bird in the same general vicinity. According to his report, visibility was excellent in midafternoon. The bird was feeding about 100 meters distant. Dr. Klein was using a Bausch and Lomb Zoomscope (15x - 60x). He particularly noticed the flesh colored decurved beak and the white underparts.

On 15 September, I took my field ornithology class to the site at 7 a.m. It was dull, overcast, and cool, and it rained off and on, hard at times. The bird was observed for nearly two hours by myself and eleven students. We had 7 x 35 and 7 x 50 binoculars and a Bausch and Lomb spotting scope with a 30x

eyepiece. The bird remained in a small shallow pool, feeding continuously at a distance of 75 meters. Everyone had several excellent looks and it was still feeding when we left the area. Its plumage appeared as pictured by R. S. Palmer (1962, *Handbook of North American Birds*, Vol. I, p. 454). According to the Report of the New York State Avian Records Committee (*Kingbird*: Fall 1981), the White Ibis is on the list for which reports are sought. This is the first report for Clinton County and according to the range map in Palmer (1962, p. 525) the only other straggler reports in the Northeast have come from Vermont and the Province of Quebec.

Accepted reports listed in the NYSARC's report (*Kingbird*, 1981: p. 206) state that there have been 11 state sightings recorded as of September 1980.

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Yellow Rail at East Patchogue: On 23 October 1982 a Yellow Rail (*Coturnicops noveboracensis*) jumped up in front of me as I walked through a patch of Switch Grass (*Panicum virgatum*) on an area of dredge spoil material on the north shore of Great South Bay, east of Mud Creek in East Patchogue, Suffolk County. The area was covered mainly by Reed Grass (*Phragmites australis*), interspersed with pure stands of Beach Grass (*Ammophila breviligulata*), Northern Bayberry (*Myrica pensylvanica*), and Switch Grass. My first impressions were of an injured bird, since it flew so weakly, dangling its legs beneath its body. I could see its short bill and buffy overall coloration, and, as it turned fully away from me, the two white patches on the trailing edges of the wings. I ran to where it had landed, about thirty feet away, but it did not reappear then or later in the day when I returned with Barbara Spencer, Karen Rowley and Keith Rowley to look for it.

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Ring-billed Gulls Hawking Ants: On 28 September 1982, I observed a flock of approximately 30 Ring-billed Gulls (*Larus delawarensis*) that appeared to be hawking insects over a sandy dredge spoil area on the north shore of Great South Bay in East Patchogue, Suffolk County. Around me were thousands of flying ants emerging from the ground and flying in the direction of the gulls. While I tried following an individual ant and then an individual gull with my binoculars, I was unable to observe an actual capture, because the gulls were about 75 yards away. Each gull, just before grabbing something, raised his head, stalled a bit in the air and snapped its bill. After opening and closing its bill as if crushing something, the gull would fly on and circle for another pass. Not surprisingly, a number of Monarch Butterflies (*Danaus plexippus*) flying among the gulls and ants were ignored.

Bent (1921) states that in the western plains Ring-billed Gulls follow the plow "... picking up worms, grubs, grasshoppers and other insects." He also