

GLOSSY IBIS, CATTLE EGRET AND SNOWY EGRET: THREE NEW PENNSYLVANIA BREEDING BIRDS

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Rookery Island is located in Lake Clarke, near Washington Boro, Pennsylvania. Lake Clark is a main-stem impoundment of the Susquehanna River created by the construction of Safe Harbor Dam in 1931. Rookery Island is owned by Safe Harbor Water Power Corporation. It has supported a heronry since 1950 (Heintzelman, 1958), at which time it contained only Black-crowned Night Heron.

The 1975 census of Rookery Island showed the following nest counts: Cattle Egret (*Bubulcus ibis*), 772; Black-crowned Night Heron (*Nycticorax nycticorax*), 112; Glossy Ibis (*Plegadis falcinellus*), 6; and Snowy Egret (*Leucophoyx thula*), 2. Of these species, Cattle Egret, Glossy Ibis and Snowy Egret were not previously known to nest in Pennsylvania (Poole, 1964). Inquiries have failed to reveal any knowledge of nesting of these species in Pennsylvania since Poole's publication.

I. Glossy Ibis

The Glossy Ibis is undergoing a rapid breeding range extension in the United States. Bent (1926) listed it as a definite breeder only in Florida. It now breeds along the Gulf Coast and as far inland as Arkansas (Arkansas Dept. of Planning, 1974). This species was first found breeding in New Jersey in 1955 (Fowler, 1958), in New York State in 1961 (Bull, 1974) and in Delaware in 1964 (Cutler, 1964). The Glossy Ibis has subsequently nested as far north as Maine (Finch, 1973).

Paul G. Heisey first observed Glossy Ibis in the Washington Boro area in late April, 1974, but no search for nests was made. The initial observation of the 1975 season was of seven adult birds feeding in a swampy meadow on 26 April in association with several dozen Cattle Egret. Heisey and Jeffrey E. Dietz made the first visit to Rookery Island on 2 May. They located three active Glossy Ibis nests, all in an early stage of construction. On 16 May, the three nests were each attended by an adult in an incubating position. On 23 May, the author located a fourth Glossy Ibis nest in the same area. Another visit was made on 20 June. On this date, six active Glossy Ibis nests were identified. Three of these were observed to contain young. On 11 July, young ibis were observed in the branches of their nest trees. They were fully feathered, but appeared dull compared with the iridescent plumage of the adults.

The Glossy Ibis nests were located in Silver Maple (*Acer saccharinum*) and River Birch (*Betula nigra*) at a height of 4.5 to 8.0 m. They were composed of dried twigs and weed stalks and were of a tightly woven construction. The adults continued to add material to the nests throughout the period of ob-

servation. The nests reached a size approximately 40 cm in diameter and 30 cm in depth.

II. Cattle Egret

The Cattle Egret was first discovered to be nesting in the Delaware Valley in New Jersey in 1958 (Fowler, 1958). It was subsequently documented as nesting in Delaware (Cutler, 1964). There is only one nesting record for New York State (Bull, 1974), so this area would seem to be near the northern limit of the current breeding range of this bird.

The Cattle Egret was first observed in the Lake Clarke area by Theodore Hake in 1957. The exact year when this species began nesting on Rookery Island is not known. A total of 772 nests was counted in 1975.

Nests were located primarily in River Birch, Silver Maple and Box-elder (*Acer Negundo*) at a height of about 4.5 to 12 m. They were positioned toward the ends of the tree branches and were of a flimsy construction, much like a typical Mourning Dove nest. Often a dozen or more nests were located in a single tree.

III. Snowy Egret

The Snowy Egret has been steadily extending its breeding range northward (Harrison, 1975). It has previously been known to nest inland only in the Mississippi River Valley and certain western areas (Bent, 1926).

Although the Snowy Egret has been observed in the Lake Clarke area for many years (Beck, 1954), it was not known to nest until 1975. Two nests were located in a Box-elder in close association with many Cattle Egret nests. The nests of the two species of egret were quite similar and could not be identified unless the adult birds were present.

SUMMARY

The Glossy Ibis, Cattle Egret and Snowy Egret are three birds that have been extending their breeding ranges along the Atlantic coast. They are now known to be nesting inland in Pennsylvania. This represents a new trend in their range expansion.

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