Rare Animals of Louisiana

Glossy Ibis
Plegadis falcinellus

**Rarity Rank:** S2/G5

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**Identification:**
- Dark wading bird with long down-curved bill
- During breeding season, adult plumage is rich chestnut with iridescent purple-green on the back, wings and head
- Facial skin (lore) dark blue, bordered above and below by thin line of light colored skin, which does not extend behind the eye
- Iris brown, bill gray, legs gray-brown
- In winter, loses most of chestnut feathering and are mostly metallic green with fine white streaking on head and neck; facial skin dull gray with pale blue border
- Adult length is 19 to 30 in and wingspread is up to 40 in

**Habitat:**
- Generally flocks can be found in marshes
- Nests in shrubs and trees near water

**Food habits:**
Feeds on crustaceans, small snakes, and insects

**Range:**
- Breeding Range: Nests locally throughout the Atlantic coast of U.S. and the Gulf Coast west to southeastern Louisiana; also West Indies, northern South America, and Old World
- Winters in southern portion of breeding range; in LA may be found throughout coastal region, but rare in western LA
- In Louisiana, known to nest on islands in the Mississippi River delta and Barataria Bay; total nesting population probably less than 200 pairs.

**Reproduction:**
- Nests are a dense platform of twigs or reed, often lined with leaves and other vegetation
- In Louisiana, nests are made of bulrush or grass
- Eggs are deep blue to greenish-blue in color which fades during incubation
- Clutch size of three to four eggs
- Brooding mostly by female, but both parents feed young

Range based on occurrences in Natural Heritage database
**Threats:**
- Potentially sensitive to pesticides and oil spills
- Drainage of marshes, swamps and shallow lakes reduces habitat area
- Human disturbance
- Coastal land loss

**Beneficial Management Practices:**
- Creation of new habitat in the form of dredge-material islands
- Posting of buffer zones surrounding wading and nesting colonies
- Increased interest and education in wetlands protection programs

**LA River Basins:**
- Pontchartrain, Mermentau, Calcasieu, Sabine

**References:**