



**Natural Heritage  
& Endangered Species  
Program**

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*Massachusetts Division of Fisheries & Wildlife*

**Glossy ibis  
*Plegadis falcinellus***

State Status: **None**  
Federal Status: **None**

**SPECIES DESCRIPTION:** The Glossy Ibis is a medium-sized wading bird with a dark iridescent plumage and long, decurved bill used to probe substrates for insects and crustaceans. In addition to consuming animal matter, plants may constitute a major portion of their diet during some seasons.

**DISTRIBUTION AND ABUNDANCE:** The Glossy Ibis has greatly expanded its range in the 20<sup>th</sup> century in North America. This species has gone from a rare and local Florida species to regularly breeding as far north as Maine and occasionally along the east coast of Canada.

The first Massachusetts nests were found at coastal sites in 1974. There has been a somewhat recent uptick in the number of breeding pairs in the state, from 43 in 1994/95 to 126 in 2007/08. Kettle Island and Outer Brewster Island hold the bulk of the state's nesting pairs.

**HABITAT DESCRIPTION:** The Glossy Ibis is a colonial nesting bird (often with herons and egrets) that builds a nest in shrubs or trees, often on coastal islands. They primarily forage in freshwater marshes, but they are also found in saltwater or brackish marshes, mudflats, ponds, flooded fields, lagoons, and estuaries. Individuals that nest in coastal habitats often forage inland in fresh water. Following breeding, Glossy Ibis often disperse widely; it is considered semi-nomadic in parts of its range.



*Photo by Marie Read*

**THREATS:** Storms, drought, habitat alteration, pesticides, and food availability could threaten local populations.

**REFERENCES:**

- Davis, W.E., Jr., and J. Kricher. 2000. Glossy Ibis (*Plegadis falcinellus*). The Birds of North America Online (A. Poole, Ed.). Ithaca: Cornell Lab of Ornithology; Retrieved from the Birds of North America Online: <http://bna.birds.cornell.edu/bna/species/108>
- Melvin, S. 2010. Survey of Coastal Nesting Colonies of Cormorants, Gulls, Night-Herons, Egrets, and Ibises in Massachusetts, 2006-2008. Massachusetts Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program.
- Walsh, J., and Petersen, W.R. 2013. *Massachusetts Breeding Bird Atlas 2*. Massachusetts Audubon Society and Scott & Nix, Inc.

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**A Species of Greatest Conservation Need in the Massachusetts State Wildlife Action Plan**

**Massachusetts Division of Fisheries & Wildlife**

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