

NOTES ON OBSERVATION OF A GREAT EGRET (Casmerodius albus) AT  
GRAFTON SEWAGE PONDS, WASH. CO., UTAH

DATE: June 5, 1984.

TIMES OF OBSERVATIONS:

3:30 p.m. Observation by Kirk Topham.

4:00 - 4:15 p.m. Observation by Kirk Topham and Jerome L. Gifford.

5:45 - 6:30 p.m. Observation by Jerome L. and Jewel A. Gifford. Also photographed; Jerome L. Gifford.

LOCALITY: East pond of Springdale sewage plant, near Grafton, at the west edge of Rockville, Wash. Co., Utah.

OPTICAL EQUIPMENT: 6X18 and 7X50 binoculars; 30X telescope. Bird was photographed with a 35 mm. camera and 1250 mm. lens.

HABITAT: The bird always was found on the banks of the eastern pond of the Springdale sewage plant at Grafton; this is a 12-acre pond with the bank reaching about 6 feet above the water level. Depth of the pond is about 4 feet; besides the sewage, there is a heavy growth of algae and other water plants. Tiger Salamanders (Ambystoma tigrinum) and several species of snails live in the water.

DESCRIPTION: A large bird, closer to the size of a Great Blue Heron than to Snowy and Cattle Egrets. The plumage was entirely white. Legs were black; the feet also were black (observed both in flight and with the bird standing on a rock). The bill was yellow, long, and dagger-shaped. It showed no black. The head was long and narrow, with the lower mandible tapering into the bill rather than showing the thickening of the Cattle Egret.

BEHAVIOR: Except when the bird was scared into flight, it stood on the rocky bank of the sewage ponds. When scared, it would fly the length of the pond, sometimes making a circle over the pond, and then would land on the opposite pond.

OTHER OBSERVERS: Kirk Topham, who first found the bird, had once before seen this species at the Grafton ponds. Jerome L. Gifford had seen this egret here before and had photographed it at Tomales Bay north of San Francisco, Calif. Jewel Gifford observed the species for the first time.

SIMILAR SPECIES: Snowy Egret has black bill and black legs with yellow feet. It is also much smaller. Cattle Egret is smaller. It has a yellow bill, but it is shorter in relation to head length; the head is more rounded than in the Great Egret. Other white herons would be from their normal range.

STATUS IN AREA: This is the third record for the species in the Zion area. Previous records were also at the Grafton ponds: Sept. 23, 1981 (Jerome L. Gifford) and Apr. 19, 1982 (Kirk Topham).

WEATHER: Broken clouds, following rain at 1 p.m. and during the previous night.

*Jerome L. Gifford*

Jerome L. Gifford  
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*Jewel A. Gifford*

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*Kirk Topham*

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