## A LOUISIANA HERON IN NORTHEASTERN CALIFORNIA

On 24 August 1971 John Revill, then a seasonal aide at Honey Lake State Wildfowl Management Area, Lassen County, found an adult plumaged Louisiana Heron (Hydranassa tricolor) at Hartson Reservoir on the Dakin Unit of the area, near the northwest corner of Honey Lake. By carefully stalking the bird on his hands and knees, he was able to obtain the accompanying photograph (Fig. 1).

On 27 August 1971 Rich Stallcup, Anne and Georgianne Manolis and I observed the heron at the same location, standing on the shore of the reservoir in association with Snowy Egrets (Leucophoyx thula). The bird was quite wary, flying to the opposite side of the reservoir when we first approached it. We eventually managed to get within 100 yards of the bird, and were able to study it carefully for some time. Basically, the upperparts, including the sides of the neck and breast, were slaty blue with buffy aigrettes extending from the middle of the back to the tail, and a tuft of white aigrettes extending out from the nape. The rest of the underparts were white, as were the wing linings, which contrasted with the dark flight feathers when the bird was on the wing. The legs were greenish and the bill was grayish, becoming darker at its tip. The heron was approximately the same size as the nearby Snowy Egrets. The bird remained in the area until at least 26 September 1971, spending its time both at Hartson Reservoir and on the nearby Fleming Unit of the Management area (John Revill, pers. comm.).

This is the first record of Louisiana Heron anywhere in northern California. The species is a rare but regular winter visitor along the southern California coast as far north as Los Angeles County (McCaskie, 1970a), occurring casually as far north as Santa Barbara County (McCaskie and Pugh, 1964). It has been recorded at the Salton Sea twice, once in spring (McCaskie, 1967) and once in winter (McCaskie, 1970b). In addition, there are two fall records for the Colorado River along the California-Arizona border (Monson, 1955 and 1956). Elsewhere in the western United States, the Louisiana Heron has wandered once to Oregon, an immature collected at Malheur National Wildlife Refuge on 31 October 1943 (Scharff, 1944); four times to Colorado, twice in the spring and twice in late summer, both of the late summer records being in 1971 (Hugh Kingery, pers. comm.); and there are hypothetical sight records for Nevada in late fall (Grater, 1939) and Utah in spring (Kingery, pers. comm.). Phillips, Marshall and Monson (1964) list 4 fall records for Arizona, and there are two recent sight records for that state, one in fall (Monson, 1957a) and one in late summer (Snider, 1971). Ligon (1961) lists three hypothetical records for New Mexico, and there have been three more recent sightings, one in spring (Snider, 1969), one in summer (Monson, 1957b) and one in fall (Monson, 1961). The only New Mexico specimen seems to be one taken near Carlsbad, Eddy County on 25 August 1962 (Zimmerman, 1963). Since 1966, there have been two spring (Snider, 1969 and 1970) and two fall (Snider, 1967 and 1968) records for the west Texas panhandle, all at Big Bend National Park.

There are two general sources of possible origin for vagrant Louisiana Herons in the western states — breeding colonies on the west coast of Mexico and breeding colonies along the Gulf of Mexico. The most obvious, and I believe, most probable source of origin for Great Basin records is the west coast of Mexico, with individuals wandering north to the Salton Sea or the Colorado River, and occasionally going even farther north, to show up in the scattered marshes and alkali lakes of the Great Basin. This would account for the Honey Lake and Malheur records.

The possibility that these records are of birds that have wandered from the

Gulf of Mexico cannot be ruled out entirely, however. The Colorado, west Texas, New Mexico, and perhaps even some of the Arizona records, are quite likely of birds that wandered northwestward from the Gulf of Mexico. The west Texas and New Mexico records are all concentrated in the vicinity of either the Rio Grande or Pecos rivers, indicating a possible path these wanderers have followed. If such vagrants as these were to continue in a northwesterly direction from New Mexico, they could eventually show up in northeastern California or southeastern Oregon.

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FIGURE 1. Louisiana Heron (Hydranassa tricolor) standing on the shore of Hartson Reservoir, Lassen County, on 24 August 1971. Photo by John Revill

## NOTES

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