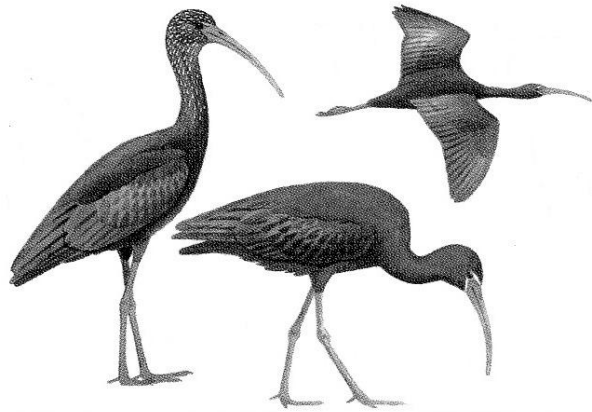


Glossy Ibises

As I write this on 19th January, there is great excitement in local birdwatching circles regarding 3 overseas visitors to Marloes. I am referring to the three Glossy Ibises which have taken up residence in the big marshy field next to the sewage works. They look quite at home and are very successfully catching worms and grubs in the wet ground.



Glossy Ibises are large birds, at first sight brown in colour, with a long down-curved beak, a bit like a Curlew. But as their name hints, they are not really brown – there is a glossy green sheen on the wings and there is much maroon colouration on the chest and back. The Marloes birds are in winter plumage with spotty heads.

But what are they doing here? They are essentially hot-climate birds - they breed in America, Africa, Asia and southern Europe and the more northerly birds usually migrate south in winter. The nearest breeding colony to Marloes is in the Camargue in southern France. Well, the “Handbook of the Birds of the World” gives us a clue – it describes the Glossy Ibis as a “notorious vagrant” and notes that they are often found well north of their breeding range. And our Marloes birds are part of a more general recent influx - last year there was a group of 25 birds which spent some time at Pembrey in Carmarthenshire. This ability to wander and disperse helps make them a very successful coloniser - perhaps in 20 years time Glossy Ibises will be as common here as Little Egrets are now!