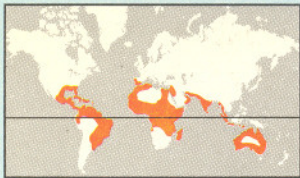


Cattle Egret



Cattle Egret

It has undertaken the conquest of the world

The cattle egret is one of the smallest members of the Ardeidae family, which includes all herons and egrets, and originated in tropical Africa and Asia.

As its name suggests, it is almost always found in the company of large mammals, though not necessarily cattle. It has adapted to a symbiotic way of life, which suits it perfectly. It feeds, most conveniently, on the great variety of insects, frogs and other small animals which take fright when these large animals move through the grass, acting rather like beaters. The cattle egret merely has to swoop down on its victims, without all the bother of looking for them and picking them out of the grass. With the speed of an arrow the bird darts its head forward and its long beak snaps up the victim before it is even aware of its danger.

In return for services rendered—for one good turn deserves another, even in animal kingdom—the cattle egret acts as sentry to its host. Because of its keen sight and alertness it detects the approach of all enemies, whether predators or human hunters. It gives a harsh cry and flies off, warning buffalo, rhinoceros, antelope, bison or elephant of imminent danger.

Along with domestic cattle the cattle egret has begun to leave its native lands and discover the world. It has now settled in temperate Asia, Japan, Central America, the Antilles, the southern half of the United States and also southern Europe, where it nests in Spain and Portugal at present. In the courting season the male grows a sort of orange cap on his head—very attractive against his spotless white plumage.

Nests in colonies and lays 2 to 5 pale blue-green eggs		Distinguishable by its not very long neck Height: 50 cm (20 in)		Has colonised Australia since 1948 Less aquatic than the other herons	
Phylum: Vertebrata	Class: Aves	Order: Ciconiiformes	Family: Ardeidae	Genus and species: Ardeola ibis	