



Cattle Egret

Scientific Name: *Bubulcus ibis*

FAMILY: Ardeidae

ORDER: Pelecaniformes

AZA MANEGMENT: None

GEOGRAPHIC RANGE

- EUROPE
- ASIA
- NORTH AMERICA
- NEOTROPICAL
- AFRICA
- AUSTRALIA
- OTHER

HABITAT

- FOREST
- DESERT
- GRASSLAND
- COASTAL
- RIVERINE
- MONTANE
- OTHER



TEMPERATURE TOLERANCE



From 30° F to 20° F

Tolerant of wide range of temperatures, can be kept outside as long as basic shelter, heat lamps, water and shade are provided.



DIET

- FRUGIVORE
- CARNIVORE
- PISCIVORE
- INSECTIVORE
- NECTIVORE
- OMNIVORE
- FOLIVORE
- OTHER

Captive Dietary Needs: Commercial Bird-of-Prey Diet, Fish, Insects (Mealworms, Crickets), Hard-Boiled Egg



LIFE EXPECTANCY

Median Life Expectancy

Maximum
Longevity

Within AZA

20 years

20 years

In the Wild

20 years

20 years



CIRCADIAN CYCLE

- DIURNAL
- CREPUSCULAR
- NOCTURNAL
- OTHER

Additional information here
if needed.

Within AZA	20 years	20 years
In the Wild	20 years	20 years



BREEDING INFORMATION

AGE AT SEXUAL MATURITY



Males: 2 years



Females: 2 years

Incubation period: 22-26 days

Fledgling Period: 30 days



CLUTCH SIZE, & EGG DESCRIPTION



Eggs are white with a pale blue or green tint, measuring 4-4.5 centimeters long by 3-3.5 centimeters wide. Clutch size is 2-5 eggs, depending on area. Replacement clutches will be laid if the first one is lost.

CAPTIVE HABITAT INFORMATION



SOCIAL STRUCTURE

In wild: Large Colonies (especially when nesting)

In Captivity: Large Colonies



COURTSHIP DISPLAYS

Seasonally monogamous. At the pairing stage, the male establishes a territory and proclaims it using calls and displays, such as bill clapping and erection of plumage. During the breeding season, buff coloration will form on the neck, mantle, and crown, while the legs and bill will turn bright red or yellow. Forced copulations have been observed.



NEST SITE DESCRIPTION

Colonial nesters, often nesting alongside other species, generally near water. The nest is a shallow (7-12 cm) cup of reeds, twigs, and small branches, measuring 20-45 cm across. It is usually built in reedbeds or trees, sometimes very close to the ground, sometimes several meters high. It is constructed by both parents, usually



CHICK DEVELOPMENT

Chicks are olive-green skin, turning grey within days of hatching. Partially covered with down at hatching, feathered by 2-3 weeks of age. They are vocal and aggressive, sometimes resulting in weaker siblings starving to death (direct siblicide is uncommon). Within



PARENTAL CARE

Both parents build the nest, incubate the eggs, and care for the chicks.



MIXED SPECIES EXHIBITS

Compatible in mixed species exhibits? YES

NO

Comments: Can be housed with a variety of other birds (herons, ibises, storks, waterfowl), alligators



OPTIMAL HABITAT SIZE

200 Square Feet per Pair

Minimum Group Size: Pair

Maximum Group Size: Large Colonies

MANAGEMENT CHALLENGES

Possible interference or predation on the nests of smaller bird species. Sometimes bullied or harassed by larger birds in aviaries, may benefit from multiple feeding stations, nesting areas to reduce competition.

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

Cattle egrets are largely sexually monomorphic. The plumage is predominately white, with buff coloration appearing on the mantle, crown, nape, and foreneck during the breeding season; some egrets may retain this coloration year round. Also during the breeding season, the normally dark-green legs will turn red or yellow, and the normally yellow bill may turn dark red (a possible cue for pair bonding). Males typically have longer breeding plumes, but only during the mating season. The posture often seems hunched, with short legs and a thick neck. Body length is 46-56 centimeters, with a wingspan of 88-96 centimeters. Weight is 340-390 grams, with males often weighing more than females.

Cattle egrets get their common name from their association with cattle and other large herbivores (they are sometimes also called elephant egret, rhinoceros egret, etc). They will walk alongside grazers and feed on insects (especially grasshoppers) that are stirred up the large mammals. In the absence of ungulates, they will follow tractors or other farm machinery. Opportunistic feeders, they will also prey upon crustaceans, mollusks, reptiles, amphibians, fish, and small mammals. They have also been known to raid the nests of other birds. Cattle egrets are adaptable foragers, sometimes walking or running after prey, sometimes taking prey on the wing. They will also investigate fires, looking for small animals fleeing the flames. They are considered the most terrestrial of herons.

Until 1880, the distribution of the cattle egret was limited to the Old World. In that year, however, cattle egrets were sighted in South America for the first time. The species has since expanded its range, now being found over much of North and South America, becoming established in the United States by the 1950s. It has occupied the environmental niche created by the clearing of forests for livestock pastures, and follows domestic ungulates for the insects they stir up much as the cattle egrets of Eurasia and Africa have always done. Some populations of cattle egret are migratory, others are sedentary, but individuals are still prone to wander, sometimes in excess of 2000 kilometers.

There are three recognized subspecies: the nominate, *B. i. seychellarum*, and *B. i. coromanda*. Cattle egrets are classified as a species of Least Concern by the IUCN and are listed on Appendix III of CITES. It is sometimes considered a nuisance due to the smell and noise generated by the large nesting colonies. Their tendency to feed in agricultural areas leaves them vulnerable to pesticide poisoning.

REFERENCES

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