
Cattle Egret

Bubulcus ibis

Class: *Aves*

Order: *Pelecaniformes*

Family: *Adreidae*

Characteristics:

The cattle egret (also called buff-backed heron) is the only species in the genus *Bubulcus*. It's a small type of heron with a thick neck and stocky appearance, white plumage (golden plumage appears on its head, neck and back during breeding season, the male's plumes being slightly longer than the female's), yellow bill and yellow legs. Juveniles has darker bills and legs ([Arkive](#)).

Behavior:

The cattle egret is generally a quiet bird that spends the majority of its time in fields, not in waterways like most herons. As the name indicates, it forages at the feet of hoofstock (mainly cattle but, depending on the region, camels, elephants, tortoises, kangaroos, etc.) eating bugs kicked up by the feet of the herbivores. They will also stand on the backs of the animals, [picking ticks and bugs](#) off their hides ([All About Birds](#)).

Reproduction:

Cattle egrets nest in large colonies. Breeding takes place near water sources and begins by males competing with each other through animated sexual displays, attracting females. The male will pick one female and they are monogamous for the breeding season. The pair moves to another area where together they build a nest of mixed vegetation on any surface which supports it. Female lays a clutch of 3 to 4 light blue eggs. Which hatch after a 24-day incubation period. Chicks stay in the nest for 14 to 21 days and are dependent upon the parents for food and protection until about 60 days old ([Animal Diversity Web](#)).

Diet:

Wild: Insects, spiders, frogs and worms

Zoo: Feline diet, fish, and softbill

Conservation:

The cattle egret has an incredibly large worldwide range and is not at risk for conservation issues. In fact, their numbers are increasing most likely because of globally growing cattle ranching practices.

FYI:

Some ranchers rely on cattle egrets, rather than use pesticides, to control flies around their herds.



Range & Habitat:

Fields near hoofstock herds



Lifespan: up to 20 years in captivity and in the wild.

Special Adaptations:

Opportunistic feeders that have [mutualistic symbiosis](#) with hooftsock

IUCN Conservation Status:

Least Concern

