



cattle egret

Bubulcus ibis

Kingdom: Animalia
Division/Phylum: Chordata - vertebrates
Class: Aves
Order: Ciconiformes
Family: Ardeidae

FEATURES

An adult cattle egret is 20 inches in length. Both the male and female have white bodies. During the breeding season the male has orange-tan patches on its back, chest and top of the head. This bird has a yellow bill. The mature bird will have coral-colored legs while others have yellow-green legs.

BEHAVIORS

The cattle egret is an uncommon summer resident in Illinois and a common but irregular migrant through the state. It lives on farms, mudflats, airfields, golf courses and marshes. This bird mainly eats toads and insects, especially flies and grasshoppers. It is usually found near cattle and other livestock because they keep insects moving as they feed in the pasture. Like the other herons, its neck is held in an "S" formation during flight with its legs trailing straight out behind its body. This bird nests in colonies with other herons. Spring migrants arrive in March. Four to five pale blue eggs are laid in a nest. The cattle egret is

exotic to Illinois. It is native to Europe, Asia and Africa. It spread naturally to South and North America in the late 1800s. The first Illinois record is from 1952.

HABITATS

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> bottomland forests | <input type="checkbox"/> rivers & streams |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> lakes, ponds & reservoirs | <input type="checkbox"/> swamps |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Lake Michigan | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> temp water supplies |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> marshes | <input type="checkbox"/> wet prairies & fens |
| <input type="checkbox"/> peatlands | |

ILLINOIS STATUS

- | | | |
|--|--|-------------------------------------|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> common | <input type="checkbox"/> endangered | <input type="checkbox"/> threatened |
| <input type="checkbox"/> native | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> exotic | |

ILLINOIS RANGE

Summer resident: statewide. Migrant: statewide.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Illinois Department of Natural Resources. 1999. *Biodiversity of Illinois, Volume I: Aquatic Habitats* CD-ROM.