

## cattle egret *Bubulcus ibis*

Kingdom: Animalia

Division/Phylum: Chordata

Class: Aves

Order: Pelecaniformes

Family: Ardeidae

ILLINOIS STATUS common, nonnative

### FEATURES

An adult cattle egret is 20 inches in length. Both the male and female have white body feathers. During the breeding season the male has orange-tan feathers 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 species 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. 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 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

Aquatic Habitats

lakes, ponds and reservoirs; temporary water supplies

Woodland Habitats

none

Prairie and Edge Habitats

edge

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