

tus forests where dense stands of forest oak and various *Eucalyptus* species occur, also areas of lightly wooded pasture near streams. It has been observed to feed on a wide variety of insect food, perhaps with a preference for hairy caterpillars which frequent the mistletoes of the forest oaks, and white cedars where the larvae of the tussock moth emerge from under the bark. The Oriental Cuckoo also has been observed to feed on stick-insects and cicadas taken from the trunks and limbs of several species of eucalyptus trees. It seems that the cuckoos congregate in small flocks when major food supplies are located, keeping to a relatively small area close to where insects are emerging, and will stay for long periods, not leaving until the emergence cycle is completed and food supply is exhausted. In the Atherton district the moonsoon season (November to April) seems to be the best time to observe this species as at this time the birds are in small flocks.

As is only to be expected, I have no evidence that the cuckoos breed in northern Queensland.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I should like to express my thanks to P. A. Bourke for his assistance with this paper.

REFERENCES

- Broadbent, Kendall. 1910. Birds of Cardwell and Herbert River Districts (N.Q.). *Emu* 10: 233-245.
Zillman, E. E. 1965. Observations on the Oriental Cuckoo at Gin Gin, Queensland. *Australian Bird-watcher* 2: No. 5, 148-151.
P.O. Box 178, Atherton, North Queensland.
Manuscript received February 24, 1966.

Further notes on the Cattle Egret in Tasmania.—Following my notes on the first occurrences of the Cattle Egret, *Ardeola ibis*, in Tasmania (Thomas 1965) some additional notes are of interest. On the same day, April 1965, that birds were reported from Rostrevor, Max McGarvie recorded a bird on King Island (Anon. 1965).

Cattle Egrets have subsequently been seen in pastoral country near Hobart by several observers. The majority of these records are from the Richmond-Cambridge area, with occasional records from New Norfolk, Sandford, Sorell and Tea Tree. Many of these records were of single birds, but a flock of five was seen on several occasions near Richmond. Sighting of this species from the Launceston area reported to R. H. Green of the Queen Victoria Museum showed a similar pattern with a maximum of five birds seen together. J. R. Napier (pers. comm.) states that he is not aware of any birds being seen in the St. Helens-St. Marys district of the east coast.

It is difficult to estimate the number of birds involved in this invasion, but it must have been at least ten and could have been considerably more.

On all occasions that I saw the birds they were within a few hundred yards of stock, but on only one occasion have I seen birds actually perching on stock. Jenkins and Ford (1960) suggest that the symbiosis between Cattle Egrets and buffaloes and cattle is due to the birds feeding on ticks and other insects that parasitise these beasts. Despite the Cattle Egret being popularly known as "tick bird" throughout Africa, this explanation appears to be unlikely. A more plausible reason is that the birds are attracted to the insects that are disturbed by grazing beasts, which are also used as animate perches when the birds are resting after feeding. Such a perch would also form a convenient vantage point. In Africa, the Cattle Egret associates with most large grazing animals including elephant, rhinoceros, buffalo, zebra, eland, and domestic cattle, but particularly with buffaloes and cattle. Both these occur in herds, often large, and are relatively sedentary. They are, moreover, non-selective grazers and do not browse to any extent. Most of the antelopes are highly selective feeders and are both grazers and browsers. The Cattle Egret is a bird of open grassland and associates with those species which, by their feeding action, are most likely to disturb insects. The Cattle Egret is afforded protection in many parts of Africa on account of the number of harmful insects it destroys, particularly locusts.

Some observations obtained while living in Kalulushi, Northern Rhodesia (Zambia) have a bearing on this aspect. This small mine township has, along certain roads, wide grass verges that require constant mowing during the rainy season, October to March. The only records I have of birds visiting the township were obtained immediately following such mowing when small flocks, usually of not more than five individuals, were seen feeding in areas of newly-cut grass.

There can be little doubt that the Cattle Egret did not remain in Tasmania over the breeding season, leaving the island during September. My last record was of a single bird at Rushy Lagoon, Sandford on the eighteenth of that month. No trace of the buff breeding plumes was apparent. No birds were seen during an extensive tour of the State made during January, 1966.

A pair of Little Egrets, *Egretta garzetta*, was seen at St. Helens on several dates during January by J. R. Napier, D. Milledge and myself. Both birds were in full breeding plumage, but we have no evidence as to whether or not they attempted to breed.

Since these notes were written, L. E. Wall has reported a solitary Cattle Egret at Hayes, Derwent Valley, on May 15, 1966. —D. G. THOMAS, Lallaby Road, Moonah, Tas.

REFERENCES

- Anon. 1965. Miscellaneous Notes. *Tas. Nat. Bull.* Sup. No. 1.
Jenkins, C. F. H. and Ford, J. 1960. The Cattle Egret and its symbionts in south-western Australia. *Emu* 60: 245-249.
Thomas, D. G. 1966. The Cattle Egret in Tasmania. *Emu* 65: 205.