

Influx of Cattle Egrets

In the first week of November there have been several sightings of Cattle Egrets (*Bubulcus ibis*), one in the pasture of Janet and Jack Lloyd-Walters, Stories Beach, one at UBC farm (photograph above) at the home of Dave Klassen. Klassen, who has lived in Australia where the Egret is a common resident, was surprised to see one in his backyard, near his holstein calves. The Egret is considered rare to uncommon in B.C. in its winter visitations to the south coast. Its presence is a post-breeding dispersal from its breeding grounds in middle and northern U.S. Ninety-seven per cent of all records are for the period October through February. Usually it is solitary in its northern visits and it will associate with domestic stock such as cattle, sheep, horses and even ducks and chickens. At UBC farm it can sometimes be observed perched on the back of one of the calves or on the back of a horse in a nearby pasture.

(Father Charles Brandt photograph)

“Very rare” cattle egret still a Campbell Riverite

The apparently misguided and ‘very rare’ cattle egret is still around.

The egret was identified and photographed by Father Charles Brandt in a pasture Dec. 23 '91 near a flock of Canadian Geese feeding in a pasture on Woodburn Road just north of Raven Lumber.

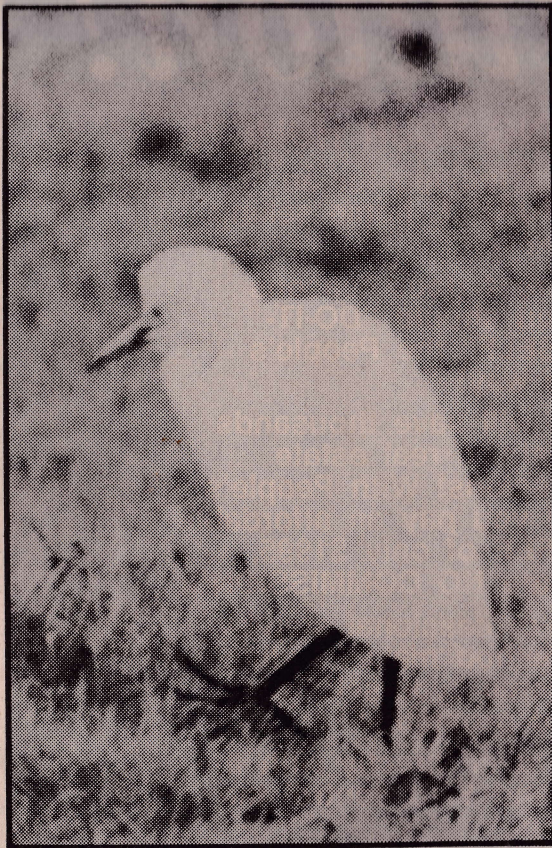
It's usual northern range tops off in California.

Stu Meldrum had seen a “small white bird feeding near the Canadian Geese” and wondered what it was.

The Checklist of Campbell River Birds, published by the Mitlenatch Field Naturalist Society lists the Cattle Egret as vr (Very Rare), i.e., not occurring every year.

Originally an Old World species, it first arrived in the Western Hemisphere in northern South America between 1877 and 1882. According to the Birds Of British Columbia, “... its arrival to the new world is generally accepted as an example of a natural extension of range, that is, expansion unaided by man's activities.

“The bird frequents a wide variety of open habitats, preferring agricultural lands, wet fields, pastures, and cultivated fields where they “associate with domes-



tic stock such as cattle, sheep, horses, goats, bison, ducks and chickens”.

Fr. Brandt, in a discussion with Doug Innis, an ardent birder from Courtenay, learned that several sightings had been made in that area in the past several months.

The birds are

probably being attracted by the El Nino conditions which has provided a much warmer winter than usual. The egret was again sighted in Campbell River Dec. 28 during the Annual Christmas Birdcount, and helped swell the number of species seen.