

# THE CATTLE EGRET AT PORT LINCOLN

by DOUG. BARNES and MAX WATERMAN

One of the authors first obtained a dead specimen which was later identified as the Cattle Egret (*Ardeola ibis*) at Port Lincoln on April 24, 1964. Another bird believed to be of this species was reported from Port Neill on April 23, 1964.

A live bird, one of a pair was caught on May 19, 1964, by Messrs. W. Matheson and K. Bowen near Jamestown, where it was first seen some weeks before. As a result of these reports, M. Waterman decided to pay a visit to Port Lincoln in order to band the species. Together the writers located two of these birds 2 miles North of Port Lincoln, feeding in a paddock alongside the main highway.

We were able to approach within 20 feet of them before they eventually flew and landed approx. 400 yards away behind a patch of Gums.

By the time we arrived there they were feeding again as if nothing had happened.

We decided that this would be an excellent place to set our mist-nets, so we forced them to fly once again, whereupon they immediately returned to the original paddock. Hidden by the Gums, we erected three 60-foot mist-nets at varying heights and angles.

After flushing them once more, the birds retraced their original direction of flight and became entangled in a net.

Unfortunately, one of the birds escaped before we could reach it.

The other bird was banded and liberated; it was seen again a fortnight later in the same area.

Much local interest was aroused in these birds and our activities were publicised by a TV Station and the Editor of the "Lincoln Times."

Then followed a number of reports of having seen the Cattle Egret at various places by local residents. (See below). Both authors agree that, as this species is extremely difficult to identify in non-breeding plumage, and other egrets could occur in the same areas mentioned, some of the reports are open to doubt. Birds reported from Port Lincoln, Port Neill and Arno were checked by one of us (D.B.) who is resident in the area. This author last saw Cattle Egrets in late July or early August, 1964.

## LOCALITIES FROM WHICH "CATTLE EGRETS" WERE REPORTED

Port Lincoln	at least 10 birds.
Port Neill	4 "
Arno Bay	4 "
Cleve	2 "
Warrachie	2 "
Coulta	3 "
Elliston	2 "

## EDITOR'S ADDENDUM—

A cutting has been received from a West Coast newspaper, I think the *Sentinel*, dated June 10, 1964—it is reproduced in full—Cattle Egrets at Ceduna.

Following the discovery of a Cattle Egret at Port Lincoln, several Ceduna residents have reported the presence of the birds in that area.

One has been living in the fowlyard on the property of Mrs. R. E. Borlase of Munjila, 33 miles north-west of Ceduna, for about two months.

Being very tame, it walks amongst the fowls and calves, feeding on grain, and displays no fear of the cats, who do not attempt to molest it.

Another of the species, which is also tame, moves from house to house in the township.

One which spent some time in the yard of Mr. and Mrs. R. J. Bett's home about three years ago, used to ride on the back of a cow in the town. It was caught by a group of boys who put it in a cage where it laid an egg.

It eventually disappeared after its release.  
—B.G.