

IDENTIFICATION OF EGRETS—Identification of the egrets should not present great problems to any but novice observers. I find that most difficulty will be met with if a small egret with a yellow bill is seen standing with the head tucked into the shoulders. I have seen *A. ibis* standing on a post in the middle of water in this position and not until it flew into nearby pig stys, was I able to identify it. This species was, on occasion, also observed wading

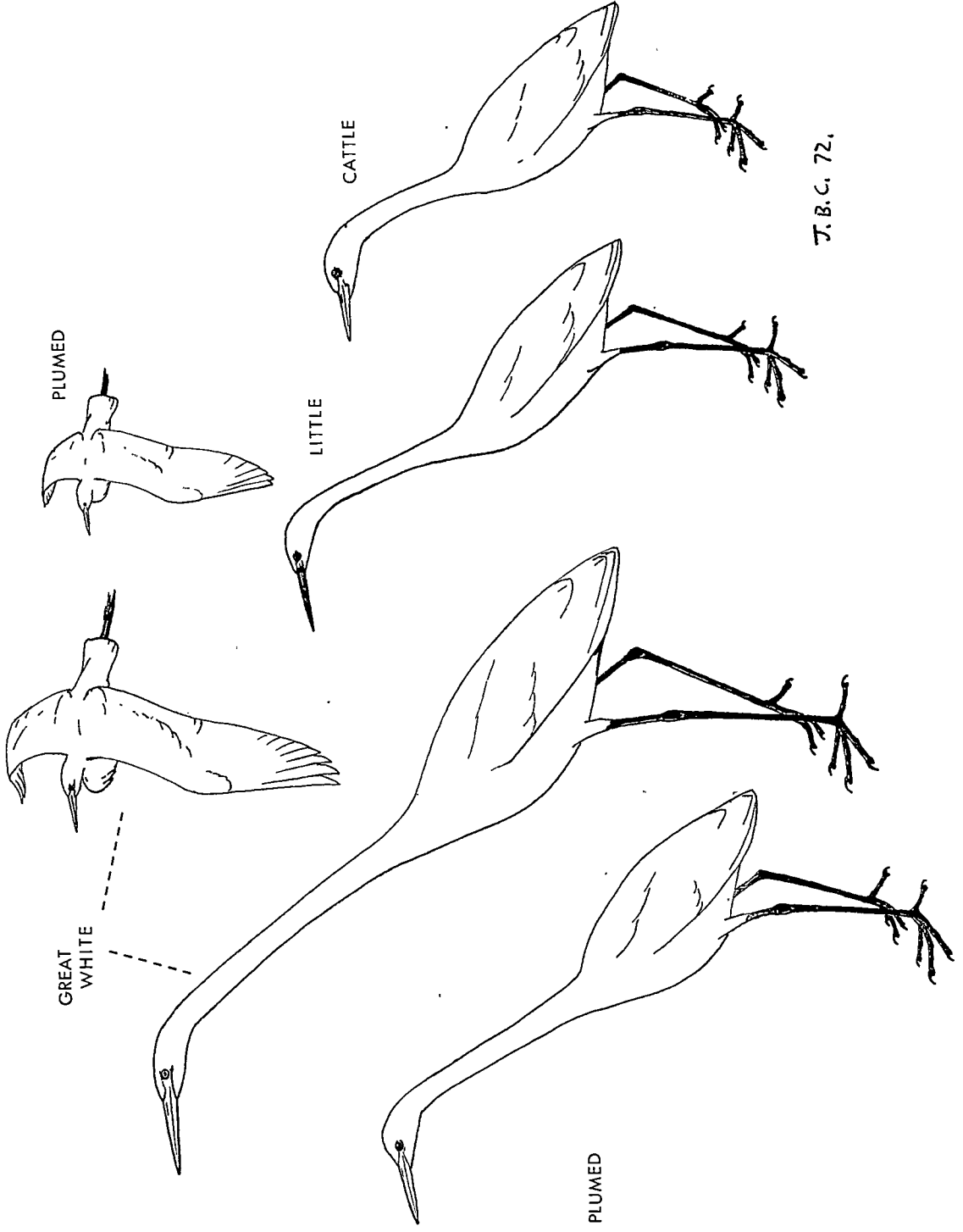
amongst reeds. Observers should beware of calling small egrets with yellow bills *E. intermedia* just because the habitat seems right. Crawford (1972), has already remarked on the flight and head shape of *E. intermedia*. Briefly, I find that the easiest way to identify these birds is:— *A. ibis*, a small, squat white heron with relatively short neck and bill, the bill is yellow. Forehead steep, with the heavy "jowl" to the throat, giving the head a characteristic rounded appearance. *E. garzetta*: a small, slim egret with a black bill. When feeding it is very active, running and flapping with constant sideways lunges. The birds mentioned at Bowhill were at first identified by their actions alone from a distance of over one mile (this was confirmed when they were observed at close range). The crown is flat. *E. intermedia*: a small egret with a yellow bill, crown is rounded, the outstretched neck is as long as the body. *E. alba*: a large egret with a mainly yellow bill, crown flatter than *E. intermedia*, outstretched neck one and a half times as long as the body. The flight of *E. alba* is distinct from that of the small egrets. See outline illustrations on facing page.

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REFERENCE:

Crawford, D. N. (1972), Birds of the Darwin area with some records from other parts of the Northern Territory, *Emu* 72 (4), 121-148.

Shapes of Egrets in Non-Breeding Plumage



J. B. C. 72.