

Order Ardeiformes, Family Plegadidae,
Genus Carphibis.

Carphibis spinicollis (Straw-necked Ibis).

Description—Upper Surface.—Dark brown to black, with a decided bronze tinge; shading from green to purple, the feathers being barred with deep black; upper tail coverts edged with green; tail, white; in the old males short, white feathers cover much of the neck with metallic green feathers on the top; strange straw-like appendages under the neck, resembling feather shafts, under which is a dark, metallic band; the remainder of the under surface, white; bare skin of the head, black; small bare space under the eye, pink; feet, ruddy brown to pink; bill, black; iris, brown.

Measurements.—Total length, 842 m.m.; wing, 384 m.m.; tarsus, 90 m.m.; bill, 192 m.m.:

Distribution—Over the whole of Australia and many of the Islands off the coast, including Tasmania.

Habits—Gregarious, moving about in parties of a dozen to several hundreds, spread over the plains, swamps and grasslands during the day time, but generally make for timber to roost at night. A large party will arrive at the roosting place (large gum trees for preference) in the dusk; circle round once or twice to make sure all is safe, then settle on the branches high up; a few hoarse croaks, and they are perfectly quiet. While walking over the plains they travel fairly fast, but nothing escapes their quick eyes; they turn over manure, sticks, and bark with their bills, and thrust them into the cracks of the soil in search of crickets. They shift about according to the seasons. If protected, become very confiding, but if molested are wary birds.

Nest—If placed in a tree or shrub near water, it generally consists of sticks, of a flattened shape; if in the rushes, flags and reeds, these are bent down to form a platform, and very often a little drift wood is added. As a rule the nests are built in large colonies.

Eggs—Three to five in number, dull white; nearly always much stained, green shade inside shell; measures 60 to 69 m.m.: 42 to 46 m.m.; laid from September to November.

Flight—Powerful, and at times, elegant; they soar round and round in great circles before alighting. At times they rise to a great height and travel long distances.

Food—Grasshoppers, crickets, frogs, mice, and many kinds of insects, terrestrial and aquatic, freshwater snails, etc.

Call—A harsh croaking note, but on the whole they are very silent.

The Ibis is one of the most useful birds, and has been known to congregate in vast numbers in front of a plague of locusts, and to have stopped the progress of these insects. This bird is totally protected in South Australia, under the Animals and Birds Protection Act.
