

CORELLA

Journal of the Australian Bird Study Association

VOLUME 13

MARCH, 1989

NUMBER 1

Corella, 1989, 13(1): 1-8

COLOUR AND FIRST AGE OF BREEDING IN CATTLE EGRETS AS DETERMINED FROM WING-TAGGED BIRDS

MAX MADDOCK

Faculty of Education, the University of Newcastle
and
Shortland Wetlands Centre

Received 1 July, 1988

In a study of marked Cattle Egrets *Ardeola ibis* returning to breeding colonies at the Shortland Wetlands Centre and Seaham Swamp Nature Reserve, New South Wales, first-year birds were classified into four colour categories 'white', 'pale', 'full pale' and 'full coloured', with individuals of each category successfully nesting and raising chicks. Colour did not appear to be a factor affecting capability of breeding as breeding success of these birds was found to be compatible with whole colony results at Shortland and Gatton, Queensland in previous seasons. All second-year birds were found to be full coloured. The majority of returning first-year birds did not nest. Colour and sex appeared to be independent. First-year birds comprized an estimated 13 per cent of birds in the Seaham breeding colony and 57 per cent of foraging flocks in the vicinity of the breeding site.