

asionally, it reaches up and catches something or picks something from the body of the cattle—probably flies or ticks. The cattle do not seem to mind the closeness of the bird. Alexander Sprunt, Jr., writing in a special report for Smithsonian Institute "The Spread of the Cattle Egret" says, "One mannerism never observed in any other heron is a kind of weaving. The bird suddenly stops feeding, stands upright and weaves the upper part of the body in a kind of hula-like motion. Then after a few times resumes feeding."

Comparison with other herons:

	Cattle	American	Snowy	Little Blue
Size	20-27 in.	37-40 in.	20-27 in.	20-25 Immature
Bill	Short, stout, stubby, yellow	Yellow, slender	Narrow, dark	Narrow, dark, bicolor
Legs	Yellow, immature dark	Blackish	Dark	Dark, greenish
Feet	Yellow, immature dark	Dark	Yellow	Dark, greenish
Habitat	Near cattle	Marshes, ponds, lakes	Marshes, ponds, fields, meadows	Marshes, ponds, meadows
Food	Insects, ticks	Aquatic fish, frogs, snakes, lily seed	Aquatic fish, tadpoles, snails, crayfish	Crayfish, frogs, grasshoppers, lizards
Color	White, brushed buff on head, neck and back	White	White	White

All the herons in flight have their necks drawn in, while the cranes fly with their necks extended straight out.

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BARN OWL FOOD HABITS

By JULIAN L. DUSI

A pair of Barn Owls, *Tyto alba pratincola*, have roosted in the tower of Samford Hall, on the Alabama Polytechnic Institute campus at Auburn, for a number of years. This has made easy the study of their food habits by the collecting of the pellets of hair and bones which they regurgitate at the roost.

Pellets were collected from this roost over a period of a year. The pellets were stored in a can in a dark place so that clothes moths could eat the hair. This left an accumulation of bones. The bones were carefully sorted and the skulls and lower jaws removed. These were then identified.

A total of 190 skulls were recovered. Of these, 136 (71.5 per cent) were cotton rats, *Sigmodon hispidus*; 28 (14.7 per cent) were least shrews, *Cryptotis parva*; 8 (4.4 per cent) were house mice, *Mus musculus*; 5 (2.6 per cent) were short-tailed shrews, *Blarina brevicauda*; 4 (2.1 per cent) were old field mice; *Peromyscus polionotus*; 3 (1.5 per cent) were pine mice; *Pitymys pinetorium*; 1 (0.5 per cent) cotton mouse, *Peromyscus gossypinus*, was present; 1 (0.5 per cent) southeastern shrew, *Sorex longirostris*, was present; and 1 (0.5 per cent) Starling, *Sturnus vulgaris*, was present.

Cotton rats were by far the most important food item. They were the largest of the mammals and were most frequently eaten. The next highest percentage eaten was least shrews. These were next to the smallest in size and it is surprising that they were caught so frequently. Of the other mammals eaten, it seems odd that more house mice, old field mice, and cotton mice were not taken since they are usually quite plentiful. These, however, were just a small part of the food eaten. Moles were an unusual item since they spend little time above ground. They are a large animal for Barn Owls to eat, so they made a good addition to the diet of the owls on the nights that no moles were caught. The one Starling eaten must have been roosting on the building near the entrance to the tower. It must have been easily available because Barn Owls seldom feed on birds.

The one southeastern shrew eaten is an interesting addition because it is a rather rare mammal in Alabama. The first record of this shrew was recovered from a Barred Owl stomach by Howell. Several ad-

ditional specimens have been collected by the writer and the specimen taken by these Barn Owls is the fifth record for the state.

The group of mammals that these owls ate confirm the classical habitat preference of Barn Owls, the old field. Around Auburn these mammals are easiest found and found in greatest numbers in old fields, or fields that have been left out of cultivation for several years. These old fields are vegetated by various grasses and annual and perennial woody plants. Usually pine trees are widely scattered through them, making the habitat desirable for pine mice. Fields of this sort occur within a mile of the Barn Owl roost, so a feeding area was easily available for them.

Owl food habits are of interest to ornithologists in their studies of these birds and they are also quite helpful to mammalogists because they do a thorough job of sampling the mammal populations where they feed.

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IBIS RECORDS FROM THE TENNESSEE VALLEY

By THOMAS Z. ATKESON, Biologist

The increase of ibises in Alabama is typical of the responses that many nongame birds have made to the protection afforded by the Migratory Bird Treaty Act of 1915. Howell's *BIRDS OF ALABAMA*, most of the material for which was collected prior to 1922, states that White Ibis is only an accidental visitor to the State, cites only two old records for Wood Ibis and gives no actual records for Glossy Ibis. A review of the present status of these birds indicates a dramatic increase.

In the southern half of the State, wherever suitable habitat occurs, White Ibis are now fairly common during the warm-weather months. The discovery in 1956, by James Keeler and others, of a large nesting colony on a small island in Southfield Lake, Baldwin County, firmly establishes them as Alabama nesters. Even in the Tennessee Valley of northern Alabama, where these birds would seem least likely to occur, they are classed as irregular visitors.

While Wheeler Reservoir was impounded in the fall of 1936, and the Wheeler National Wildlife Refuge was established in 1938, no ibises were noted until 1948. During both 1948 and 1949, large birds were tentatively identified as ibises, but specific identification was not possible. The first accurate record came on July 11, 1950, when four immature White Ibis were noted feeding in a shallow borrow pit. There were no further records for that year, but in 1951 these birds became fairly common with numerous small flocks, usually numbering from 5 to 7 individuals and the majority of which were immature birds, noted regularly from April 17 through September 18. There was only a single record for 1952, an immature bird seen on August 5, and none appeared in 1953. The only record in 1954 was a couple of immature birds noted on July 14 and none reappeared in 1955. In 1956, a small flock of immature White Ibis were seen on September 2 and a small flock of mature birds on September 4. The above records were supplied by Dr. F. J. Buchmann, H. H. Grammer, E. A. Byford, Eugene Cypert, James Keeler, Wayne Colin, David Hulse, Paul Bryan, and J. L. Heflin.

Wood ibis are now regular residents during the warm-weather months in the southern tier of counties and are occasional visitors further inland. Even in the