

## CATTLE EGRETS *BUBULCUS IBIS* AT SEA IN THE SOUTH ATLANTIC OCEAN

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While aboard the icebreaker *Almirante Irizar*, 12 Cattle Egrets *Bubulcus ibis* were observed in the South Atlantic Ocean. Two were seen on 8 March 1995 at 58°31'S, 52°11'W flying north-west about 160 miles from the Argentine coast. On 12 March 1995, a flock of nine individuals were seen flying north at 40°35'S, 61°13'W about 50 miles from the Argentine coast and later a single bird was seen flying south at 40°20'S, 61°16'W (Fig. 1).

The Cattle Egret is a species originally from Africa which has undergone an expansion to the south of South America. The first record for this species in Argentina was made in Santa Fé in 1969 (Olrog 1972). In Chile the species is widely spread from the north to Isla Navarino (Araya & Millie 1986).

In Antarctica, Cattle Egrets have been recorded at the South Orkney Islands (Prince 1981 in Rootes 1988), South Shetland Islands (Schlatter & Duarte 1979, Torres *et al.* 1986, Trivelpiece *et al.* 1987, Lange & Naumann 1990, Favero *et al.* 1991, Silva *et al.* 1995) and Argentine Islands (Prince & Croxall 1983). On Islas Malvinas (Falkland Islands) the species has been reported by Clark (1986) and on South Georgia by Prince & Payne (1979).

A previous record in the South Atlantic Ocean was made on 29 May 1993, 290 nautical miles from Islas Malvinas and 450 nautical miles from South Georgia, at 53°42'S, 50°21'W (Fig.1), when 16 individuals was seen flying towards the east (Orgeira 1995).

The causes of expansions of the Cattle Egret are not well known and several hypotheses attempt to explain the phenomenon (Telfair 1983). Taking into account sightings made to date, it is probable that individuals of this species will occur in Antarctica and South Atlantic Ocean in the future.

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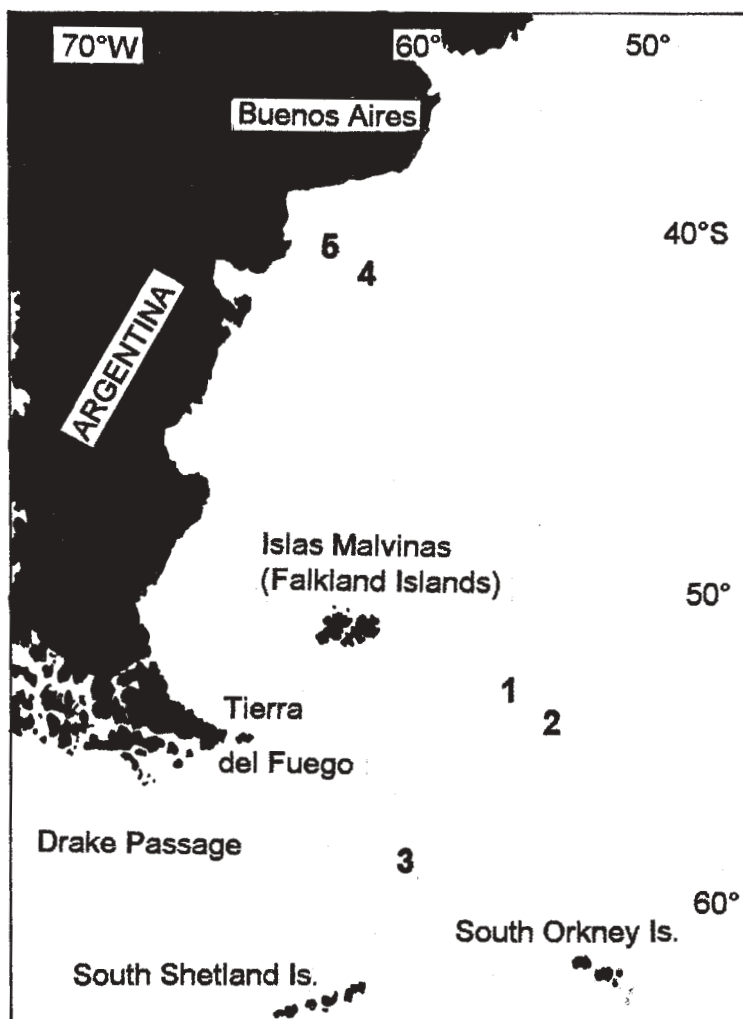


Fig.1. Cattle Egrets *Bubulcus ibis* sightings in the South Atlantic Ocean, 1993-1995, arranged in increasing order of date. 1: one individual; 2: 15 individuals; 3: two individuals; 4: nine individuals, and 5: one individual.

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