THE CATTLE EGRET IN CENTRAL BAJA CALIFORNIA, MEXICO

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The Cattle Egret (Bubulcus ibis) now seems to be established in northern and western México. Zimmerman (Condor 75:480, 1973) reported numerous sightings in Coahuila in 1971 and 1972, and in Chihuahua, Nuevo Leon, and San Luis Potosi in 1972. On the western mainland the Cattle Egret was reported in Sinaloa (Alden, Finding the birds in western México, Univ. Arizona Press, 1969) and Toronto, Ontario Canada, M5S IA1

was reported in Sinaloa (Alden, Finding the birds in Guerrero (Dickerman, Wilson Bull. 76:290, 1964)

paper photograph which showed a lone Cattle Egret


In Baja California the only records we are aware of are those of Hubbs. One, near the southeastern extremity of the peninsula, is a sight record by A. J. Sloan who, in 1964, found the species in a mangrove lagoon near the south end of Isla San José, in the Golfo de California. The other was based on a newspaper photograph which showed a lone Cattle Egret onboard a sport fishing boat off northwestern Baja California near Punta San Isidro in 1967. The nature of these records and the importance of documenting the occurrence of the Cattle Egret for studies on the dynamics of range expansions prompt us to report our observations of this species in Baja California.

NOTES ON NESTING IN THE DOUBLE-STRIPE THICK-KNEE (BURHINUS BISTRIATUS) IN COSTA RICA

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Little is known about the nesting habits of the Double-striped Thick-knee (Burhinus bistriatus) as well as several other members of the family Burhinidae. This paper reports on two separate observations of nesting by the Double-striped Thick-knee in Guanacaste Province, Costa Rica. This cursorial bird inhabits savannas in the savannah-and-forest mosaic of northwestern Costa Rica. The savannas are dominated by almost pure stands of an introduced African grass called "jaragua" (Hyparrhenia rufa) and are dotted with occasional trees and scrubby growth. The savannas, created by extensive deforestation, are used for cattle grazing, and often are burned during the dry season which lasts from December to May. Because of the continuing conversion of forest to pasture, suitable habitat for the Double-striped Thick-knee is increasing in Guanacaste.

Typical of the Burhinidae, this species is monogamous and the young are nidifugous (Lack, Ecological adaptations for breeding in birds, Methuen and Co. Ltd., London, 1968). The only previous notes I have found on nidification in this species are provided by Dickey and Van Rossem (The birds of El Salvador, Zool. Ser., Field Mus. Nat. Hist., 23, 1938) from El Salvador: "The natives say that two eggs are laid and that the shallow depression in the ground which forms the only nest is usually situated in the open field so that the sitting bird may command a view to all sides. However, we have no first-hand knowledge on this point." They further noted that a mated pair which they shot had finished breeding by 7 April and that the male appeared to have done most, if not all, of the incubating. Egg development in the ovaries of females collected in January indicated "that the breeding season was still some weeks distant."

On 30 March 1972, I found a Double-striped Thick-knee nest containing two eggs in Santa Rosa National Park (10.8°N, 85.8°W) near the middle of a small, flat, recently burned "jaragua" savannah surrounded by forest. Before finding the nest, I saw the two parents walking quickly and silently away from its vicinity. The nest consisted of a slight depression 20 to 22 cm in diameter and 1.5 to 2.0 cm deep in the bare, light-brown soil. The pointed-ovate eggs were olive buff with large and small brown blotches and a few greenish gray blotches. The cryptically
colored eggs and inconspicuous nest were difficult to see when I was a few meters from the nest.

At about 11:30 on 25 April, I revisited the nest, and again the adults quickly left the area as I approached. The nest now contained one peeping chick and one unhatched egg. The chick was buff with black markings (fig. 1). It could walk, but not strongly, and remained within 1 m of the nest. The chick, too, was almost indiscernable at a few meters owing to its cryptic coloring. The next day, 26 April, I visited the nest at 07:45 and saw no adults when I approached closely. The bird's departure revealed an egg lying in a slight, unlined depression in an open area rough from the dried hoofprints of cattle. When visited two days later, an adult was still incubating the single egg, its mate standing a few meters away. Again it permitted a close approach, and one member of the pair returned to the egg as soon as Skutch returned to the car. The mate followed but stopped a few meters from the nest. The single egg measured 57 mm by 41 mm in diameter. It was pointed-ovate, dark gray, with large and small blotches of dark brown and pale lilac. Skutch notes, that, in his experience, Double-striped Thick-knees are not shy.

At the nest that I observed, the incubation period of the second egg was at least 27 days. Lack (1968) placed the usual incubation period for Burhinidae at 26 days and the interval between the laying of successive eggs at two days. Thus, it is possible that the second egg had not yet been laid at the nest observed by Skutch. A clutch of two in this species would conform to the normal clutch size of the other seven species in the family, although the two *Esacus* species often lay only one egg (Maclean, Auk 89: 314, 1972).

These observations bear out Lack's (1968) characterization of the nest and parental behavior of Thick-knees.

I thank Robert Howard and my wife, Marge, for helpful comments concerning the manuscript. Accepted for publication 23 May 1974.

GRAY HAWK FEEDING ON WORM LIZARD

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On 30 September 1973, at the end of Gamboa Pipeline Road, Canal Zone, Panama, I startled a Gray Hawk (*Buteo nitidus*) that had been sitting on the ground. On the chance that the bird might have been feeding, I walked to the spot and found the distal portion of a small snake-like creature which I collected for identification.

Later, Professor Eustorgio Mendez, vertebrate zoologist, Corgas Memorial Laboratory (GML), Panama City, Republic of Panama, identified the specimen as a worm lizard (*Amphibia ena fuliginosa*); it is now preserved at GML.

Professor Mendez felt this record was unusual because lizards of this family (*Amphibia enidae*) are subterranean. His specimens of this worm lizard from the same general area were obtained only from fresh road cuts. My specimen was fresh when collected about 10:30, indicating it had just been taken. As there was no construction underway in that area of the Canal Zone, the worm lizard was, for reasons unknown, stranded above ground and captured by the Gray Hawk.

I thank Professor Mendez for the identification of the specimen. Accepted for publication 8 January 1974.