



General Field Notes

James F. Parnell

Adjustment Problems of the Cattle Egret

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The rapidly spreading Cattle Egret seems to accept our domestic farm animals quite readily. Some recent observations at my rural home near Chapel Hill, N.C., suggest that the cattle may not adjust so easily. The house is situated at the edge of a pine woods, adjacent to a small farm pond, with pastures beyond. The latter are inhabited by about 20 black angus cattle. Since Cattle Egrets are not yet common in this area, my regular spring sightings suggest this may be a good resting ground for the species.

The first sighting of the Cattle Egret in the Chapel Hill area was Matt Thompson's on 12 April 1962. The second record of which I am aware is mine of 16 April 1966.

It was my second home sighting of the Cattle Egret that suggested the title of this note. On 13 May 1967 one was seen approaching over the pastures. The cattle appeared greatly agitated as the bird flew overhead and, when it settled nearby, one of the cows ran straight toward it until it was forced to take flight. It alighted again, was threatened a second time, flew to a vantage point several hundred feet distant, surveyed the situation, and then flew away to the northeast. It was not clear whether or not the cattle had intentionally driven the bird away.

Another Cattle Egret visited the farm on 10 May 1968. A calf, rather nonchalantly, approached the bird, which flew over a rise, out of sight. On 26 May I heard a disturbance from the pastures and found the cattle galloping in agitated fashion and an unidentified white heron flying away.

All this was brought into focus by an episode that occurred about a month later. One evening, a farm dog ran across the pasture with a white laying hen in his mouth. About halfway across the hen managed to escape, but was either flightless or injured. She ran easily, however, and fled toward the chicken houses along a route near the cattle. The latter acted much as they had with the Cattle Egrets, but now they were clearly attacking the hen. After surviving several charges, she was finally struck down, and, as

darkness fell, I could see only an occasional fluttering wing emerge from a mass of white feathers, in the middle of a circle of 10 or so cattle.

My subjective impression was that the cattle were badly frightened, but belligerent; and it also seemed likely that a Cattle Egret, slow to fly, would have suffered a similar fate.

Golden Eagle Specimen from Buncombe County, N.C.

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A Golden Eagle (*Aquila chrysaetos*) was found dead on 23 January 1969 by John C. Young and sent to North Carolina State University to be prepared as a study skin. It was found in the NW corner of Buncombe County near Sandymush Bald, about 10.25 air miles W-NW of Leicester, N.C., at an altitude of about 5,000 feet. It proved to be an immature female with ova 2x2 mm in diameter and had a light accumulation of body fat. Several Mallophaga and one Hippoboscoid fly were the only external parasites found. The scapulars and the back were molting heavily; and the breast, abdomen, head, and neck were molting lightly. All of the rectrices were old feathers except No. 1 left and No. 1 right which were about one-third developed. The primaries were also undergoing molt. On the right wing, primaries No. 1, 2, and 3 were new feathers; No. 4 was three-quarters developed; and the remaining ones were old. On the left wing, primaries No. 1 and 4 were broken off at the base (apparently shot), No. 2 and 3 were new feathers, and the remaining ones were old.

The specimen was prepared into a study skin and deposited in the North Carolina State Museum collection as NCSM No. 3937.

[Observations of Golden Eagles in North Carolina are unusual. Most records are probably of immature birds, such as the above, which have wandered east of their usual range—DEPT. ED.]

Nesting of the Bald Eagle in the Charleston, S.C., Region

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During the winter of 1968 and the spring of 1969 S.C. Langston and I made an intensive effort to locate nests of the Bald Eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*) in the area between Georgetown and Beaufort. Most efforts were centered around Murphy's Island and the French Quarter Creek area of the upper Cooper River.

Many abandoned nests were found, some of which were being used by Great Horned Owls (*Bubo virginianus*). Six active nests were located. In addition one known young and possibly two were fledged on Cat Island according to Mr. Wilkinson, manager of South Island Plantation. At Bulls Island on the Cape Romain National Wildlife Refuge, Bald Eagles returned but failed to nest for the first time in many years.

It is believed that on Middleburg Plantation eggs were incubated in the nest, but for the first time in 35 years no young were produced. Four other nests in the French Quarter Creek area also failed to produce.

A new nest on the Wedge Plantation owned by Dr. Dominick was watched closely. Long after the eggs should have hatched they were examined and found to be infertile.

An interesting and new source of food was used by three immature Bald Eagles in the Muddy Bay area near Cat Island. For several years the colony of White Ibis (*Eudocimus albus*) on Pumpkinseed Island in this bay has been banded extensively. During the 1967 season three posts supporting no-trespassing signs were erected to discourage needless molestation of the colony.