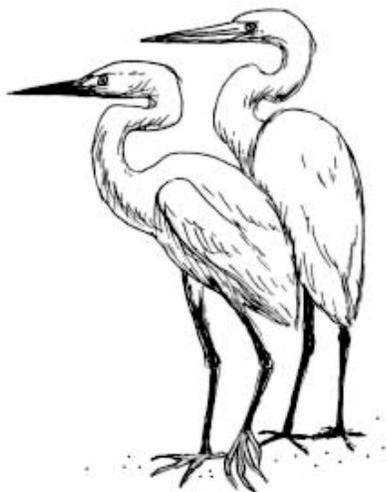


N.C. Plant and Animal Species Fact Sheets



American egret (*Casmerodius albus*)

Introduction

Second in size only to the Great Blue Heron, the American Egret

is a very large heron with all white plumage. It does not sing like a songbird but utters a deep guttural croak. When in the nesting colony, they all squawk loudly.

What do they look like?

The American egret has a yellow bill, black legs and feet.

How big are they?

They grow to be 42-52 inches (107cm-132cm) and weigh 32-40 ounces (900g-1.1kg). Their wingspan can be 55 inches (140cm).

Where do they live?

This wading bird lives in the marshes, ponds, shores, and mudflats.

Who eats them?

They have few natural enemies. The eggs and young are eaten by snakes, crows and raptors.

What do they eat?

The egret stalks its prey slowly and gracefully before striking. They are diurnal, which is being active and feeding only during the day. The young are fed mostly frogs, fish, and crayfish. When first hatched the

nestlings receive the food into their open mouths, but later it is deposited directly into the nest for them to eat on their own.

How do they mate?

Egrets may have plume-like feathers when in breeding plumage and nest in colonies called heronies. They build a stick nest that can be from ground level to the higher tree tops.

What are the young like?

Nests are made with twigs and sticks lined with softer materials. Typically, three bluish-green eggs are laid and incubated by both parents for about 25 days. The young are born downy with open eyes and only a little ability to move. Although the parents guard the young aggressively, babies have their own defense---they regurgitate on intruders.

How long do they live?

They can live up to 22 years.

People Interactions

Humans hunted the egret to near extinction in the late 1890's. They were killed for their feathers which were used in hats. Many egrets use islands made of dredge material to nest as their natural habitat is lost to development.

EstuaryLive

www.EstuaryLive.org

North Carolina National Estuarine Research Reserve

www.ncnerr.org or tel. 252.728.2170

Albemarle-Pamlico National Estuary Program

<http://www.apnep.org/> or tel. 252.946.6481

Carolina Estuarine Reserve Foundation

www.cerf.us



Written by
Colleen & Bo Sosnicki.
Title Illustrations
by Debbie Pagliughi.

