

OCURRENCE OF THE BUFF-BACKED HERON  
(*ARDEOLA IBIS IBIS*) IN NORFOLK.

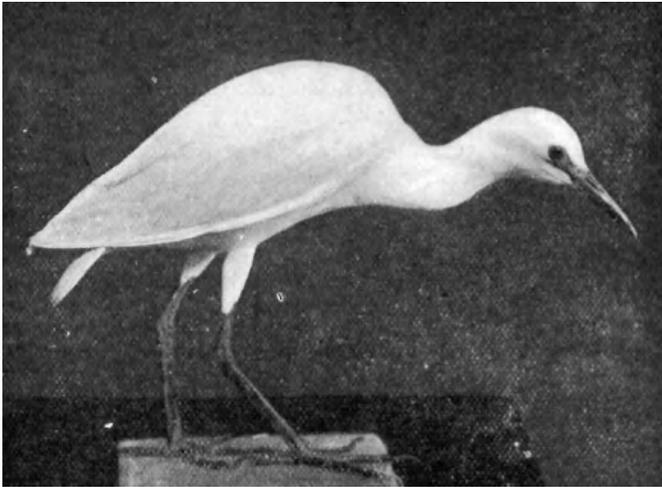
By F. W. SMALLEY, M.B.O.U.

ON October 24th I received a letter from Mr. E. C. Saunders, of Great Yarmouth, asking me to go over to see a locally killed bird which had been brought to him for identification and preservation, and which he considered to be an example of the Buff-backed Heron (*Ardeola ibis ibis*). I, therefore, at once hastened over to Yarmouth, where I saw the bird in the flesh in Mr. Saunders' shop, and found his identification to be correct. The body was, by request, sent to Mr. J. H. Gurney, in order that the sternum might be preserved, and Mr. Gurney writes me that the stomach of the bird contained two good-sized water newts, the larva of a noctuid moth and an example of the fish known as the Miller's Thumb (*Cottus gobio*). The newts, which were sent to me, I submitted to my friend Dr. William Eagle Clarke, of the Royal Scottish Museum, Edinburgh, from whom I learn that they belonged to the species known as the Smooth Newt (*Molge vulgaris*).

The bird in question was shot by one Dan Banham, on Breydon Marshes, on the Norfolk side of the river, on October 23rd, 1917. It was first observed by two boys, who reported a small white bird feeding amongst the cattle on the marsh. All three procured guns, and, surrounding the bird, it fell to the second barrel of Banham's gun.

After being mounted, I took the bird over to Norwich, where Mr. Gurney and I compared it with skins in his collection, but were unable to say definitely whether the bird was an adult or a bird of the year in first winter plumage; the whole of the plumage being white with the exception of the head, which is tinged with buff on the crown. Whilst the primaries, secondaries and tail appear freshly moulted, the rest of the plumage on the wings and back shows considerable abrasion, from which I personally am inclined to consider the bird an adult. There were no signs of any active moult.

The "powder-down puffs" were four in number, one on each flank and one on each side of the breast. It proved to be a ♂ on dissection, and careful measurements taken by me at the time gave: *Length*, 520·5 mm. (20·5 inches); *wing*, 248 mm. (9·75 inches); *culmen*, 56 mm. (2·2 inches); *tarsus*, 82 mm. (3·25 inches). Mr. E. C. Saunders gives the colour of the soft parts as follows: *Beak*, chrome yellow, with a brownish tinge at the base and tip of the upper mandible; *eyes*, golden



BUFF-BACKED HERON (*Ardeola i. ibis*).  
 ♂. Shot on Breyton Marshes, Norfolk, October 23rd, 1917.  
 (Photo. by A. W. Yallop, Great Yarmouth.)

yellow, skin round eyes a duller yellow inclined to grey, edge golden yellow; *legs and feet* brown-black, tibio-tarsal joints and soles greenish cast, toe-nails black.

I believe this bird to be only the second authentic occurrence of the Buff-backed Heron in Great Britain: the first being the immature female from near Kingsbridge (Devon), shot towards the end of October, 1805 (Yarrell, IV., p. 187; Saunders, p. 375), as I do not look upon the evidence for the bird said to have been shot at Martock (Somerset), January 28th, 1909, reported by Mr. Stanley Lewis (*Zool.*, 1915, p. 318; cf. *British Birds*, Vol. X., p. 70) as being satisfactory.