Blowhole across	5.5 mm
Mouth opening	7.5 mm
Angle of mouth to centre of eye	5 mm
Width of the base of insertion of flippers	6 mm
Length of flippers from centre of base of flippers	15 mm
Length of tail from anus to notch of tail fluke	38 mm
Distance from the anterior margin of the genital orifice to the attachment of the umbilical cord	14 mm
Tail fluke across	16.5 mm
Length of tail fluke from beginning to notch	11 mm
Length of umbilical cord	50 mm

Like the present foetus, Dawson's (1959) specimens measuring 93 mm and 98 mm have more or less beakless snout, and the mouth opening is almost vertical, but in the 155 mm long foetus the snout assumed roundish appearance and opening of the mouth became slanted. In Balan's (1976) female juvenile specimen measuring 669 mm long, the snout is completely round and the mouth opening is horizontal as in the adult animal. The colour of the dorsal surface is black while that of the ventral surface is pale. Thus, as the developing foetus grows in age, the colour of the body changes from creamy white to deep greyish black, and the somewhat beak-like appearance of the snout changes to beakless condition as in the adult.

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February 16, 1982.

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7. CATTLE EGRETS (*BUBULCUS IBIS*) FEEDING ON CICADAS ON TREES

On a recent trip to the Borivli National Park (18th April 1982) with Mr. Humayun Abdulali, we stopped to watch a number of cattle egrets (*Bubulcus ibis*) scattered over a large tree (*Garuga pinnata*) which was in fruit and which had many cicadas calling therefrom. As we watched, the egrets were seen to stalk along a branch and when near enough, jab at the cicada after swaying the head two or three times from side to side presenting (as Drs. Salim Ali & Ripley have said in the HANDBOOK 1 p. 67) a comical appearance.

Egrets have been known to feed on bluebottle flies from nectar-yielding flowers of

Salmalia and *Erythrina* and even from toddy pots hung up on date palms, but we do not recall having read of their stalking cicadas along the branches of trees.

The cicadas were extremely numerous calling from many trees and we later saw more egrets in small parties of 3 to 5 perched on trees in different places apparently for the same purpose. Though they were unable to catch the insects settled on the under surface of the branches on which the egrets were perched, this appears to be another instance of the adaptability of this bird which has no doubt helped it to retain its numbers around Bombay, and also to establish itself in different parts of the world.

S. G. MONGA

MADHURIMA SOCIETY,
M. G. ROAD, KANDIVLI (WEST),
BOMBAY-400 067.

PARVISH PANDYA

C/20 KASTUR MAHAL,
SION, BOMBAY-400 022,
August 21, 1982.

8. UNUSUAL PLUMAGE IN A CATTLE EGRET *BUBULCUS IBIS COROMANDUS* (BODDAERT)

On 6th June 1982, while visiting the Borivli National Park with Mr. Humayun Abdulali, we stopped to watch a large number of Cattle Egrets *B. ibis coromandus* (Boddaert) feeding in a semi-flooded grass field by the road. We counted 17 in all-white and 22 in breeding plumage. The latter group included a strikingly coloured bird which had the usual yellowish orange plumes on its head and breast, pale pink legs with the rest of the body a delicate rosy pink, and with absolutely no trace of white anywhere.

A reference to Thomson's DICTIONARY OF BIRDS (1964, page 643) reveals a note to the effect that the plumage of some birds does not depend upon any structural character but on the infiltration of the feathers with chemical substances derived from the natural food of the species, the absence of which in captivity may lead to loss of colour. There is pink suffusion in the plumages of some birds like Flamingos (Phoenicopteridae) and Goosanders (*Mergus merganser*) that live on small aquatic animals.

This phenomena does not appear to have been observed in the Cattle Egret (*B. ibis coromandus*) and it would be interesting to see how long the colour remains and whether it appears in other individuals also. I understand from Mr. Abdulali that he recently noted several species of flamingos at Slimbridge, U.K. which had quantities of "Carotin" included in the food offered to them. Each species acquired the red or pink in that part of the plumage peculiar to itself, the distribution being presumably genetically controlled.

NITIN JAMDAR

27A/1, CIVIL LINES,
NAGPUR,
June 16, 1982.