

Cattle Egret colony at Cundletown NSW

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This note details a Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis* colony at Cundletown near Taree which I have visited 2-3 times each year since November 2013. The colony seems to have established in either 2010-11 or 2011-12.

Location

The colony is in a stand of Broad-leaved Paperbark *Melaleuca quinquenervia* fringing a swamp (“Nulama Ponds”) on the outskirts of Cundletown, near Taree. The GPS coordinates are 31.89°S, 151.50°E. **Figure 1** shows the general location which is close to the junction of the Manning and Dawson Rivers. Most of the colony is on private property associated with the Nulama Ponds retirement village.

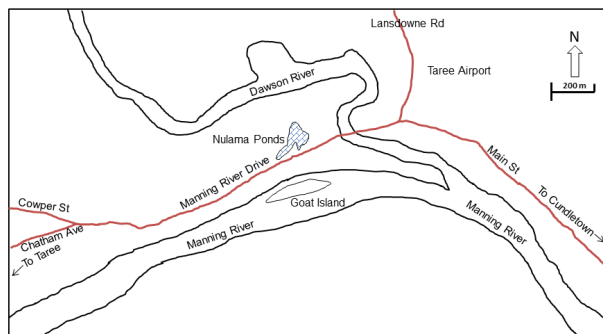


Figure 1. Location of Nulama Ponds near Taree NSW

Chronology of the colony's formation

The colony was not mentioned in a 1994 review of egret colonies in New South Wales (Baxter 1994). It was active in 2011-12, because Alan Morris (pers. comm.) reported nests were present in December 2011 although he did not have the opportunity to count them. Members of the Manning Valley – Great Lakes Birdwatchers Club have often visited the area (A. Carlson pers. comm.). In November 2008 they recorded that three pairs of Little Pied Cormorant *Microcarbo melanoleucos* and a pair of Australasian Darter *Anhinga novaehollandiae* had nests. No breeding

activity had been noted in visits over the preceding ten years. In January 2010 large numbers of Cattle Egret were present and breeding was suspected to be occurring; however only Little Pied Cormorant, Australasian Darter and Pied Cormorant *Phalacrocorax varius* were confirmed to be nesting (A. Carlson pers. comm.).

This chronology suggests that Cattle Egret began to breed at Nulama Ponds in either the 2010-11 or 2011-12 breeding season.

Breeding activities

Because the colony is on private property I have not been able to obtain accurate counts of the number of nests of the various species breeding there. At least 100 Cattle Egret nests were present in November 2012 (A. Morris pers. comm.). My estimates from visits since November 2013 have been of 300-400 nests each season. Other species which I have confirmed to breed at the colony have been Little Pied Cormorant, Australasian Darter, Pied Cormorant and Great Cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo*. There have been maximums of 2-3 nests for each of those species.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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REFERENCES

- Baxter, G.S. (1994). The location and status of Egret colonies in coastal New South Wales. *The Emu* **94**: 255-262.