

A dh'aindeoin 's gu bheil i na gnè Afraganach bho thùs, tha corra-bhàn a' chruidh air an raon aice a leudachadh agus, bho na 1960s, air gluasad a-steach gu cridhe na h-Eòrpa far a bheil i pailt a-nis. Bho sin, stèidhich i tuineachadh-siolachaidh ann an rèidhleanan Somerset an dèidh do dh'aireamh mhòr de dh'èoin tighinn a-steach ann an 2007-08, agus tha i a' neadachadh a-nis ann an caochladh shiorrachdan ann an Sasainn.

Chaidh a' chiad eun Albannach a chlàradh ann an Siorrachd Aonghais ann an 1979 agus thathar ga fhaicinn nas trice agus an fheadhainn Eòrpach a' gluasad gu tuath. A rèir choltais tha e a' cumail ri car an aon tuineachadh ris a' chorra-bhàn bhig (air a bheil gob dubh agus casan dubha le troighean sònraichte buidhe, agus, a dh'aindeoin an ainm a th' oirre, a tha nas motha) ach uaireannan bidh corran-bàna a' chruidh a' sgapadh fada nas fhaide na iad an dèidh dhaibh fionnadh – suas ri 5,000km. Mar thoradh, ann an ràith sam bith faodar am faicinn an ìre mhath ann an àite sam bith, agus a rèir choltais tha iad a' stèidheachadh thuineachaidhean-siolachaidh ùra fada nas luaithe, agus nas fhaide air falbh, na an fheadhainn nas bitheanta dha bheil iad càirdeach. 'S e gnè thuineachail a th' ann an corra-bhàn a' chruidh, ge-tà, agus iad air an tàladh gus neadachadh ann an nid nan corran-bàna beaga a tha stèidhichte mar-thà – a dh'fhaodadh a bhith na adhbhar eile ri luathas an adhartais aca. Tha e doirbh fios a bhith againn an e atharrachadh ginteil no air giùlan a thug air a' ghnè fàs nas sgapte ach is cinnteach gum bi atharrachadh sa ghnàth-shìde agus geamhraidhean nas blàithe air cur ris an t-soirbheachadh aice.

Cattle Egret

Corra-bhàn a' Chruidh

Bubulucus ibis

A' cumail ris an ainm orra, leanaidh corran-bàna a' chruidh beathaichean ag ionaltradh gus biastagan a tha gan dùsgadh às an fheur a thogail. Gu ìre, tha iad a' cumail smachd air faoighichean agus a' lùghdachadh àireamh nan cuileag a bhios a' cur dragh air crodh ag ionaltradh - gu tric gan spionadh dìreach far a' chraicinn orra. Tha iad a' cur romhpa, le roghainn, a bhith a' leantainn bheathaichean a tha a' coiseachd aig an astar as fheàrr dhaibh gus biastagan a thogail (eadar 5 is 15 ceuman sa mhionaid) ach cuideachd leanaidh iad carbadan agus fiù 's itealaichidh iad gu iomall raointean-laighe dìreach an dèidh do dh'itealan dol seachad gus na bìdeagan beaga a thathar air dùsgadh bho fhalach no sèideadh air an tarmac a ghlacadh.

*far an trialladh an sluagh air an àirigh,
dìreach corra-bhàn a' chruidh
's i a' glacadh nam biastagan gu rèidh*

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Originally an African species, the cattle egret has expanded its range and, since the 1960s, has moved into mainland Europe where it is now widespread. From there, it established a breeding colony in the Somerset levels after a large influx of birds in 2007-08, and it now nests in several English counties.

The first Scottish bird was recorded in Angus in 1979 and it is becoming more commonly seen as the European population expands northwards. It seems to be following a similar process of colonisation to the little egret (which has a black bill and black legs with distinctive yellow feet, and, despite its name, is a larger bird) but young cattle egrets will sometimes disperse much further than them after fledging - up to 5,000km. As a result, in any season they can be seen virtually anywhere, and appear to be establishing new breeding colonies much faster, and further, than their more common relative. Cattle egrets, however, are a colonial species and are drawn to nest among the already-established nests of little egrets – which may be another factor in the speed of their progress. It is difficult to know if a genetic or behavioural change has made the species more cosmopolitan but changing climate and warmer winters will certainly have contributed to its success.

Living up to their name, cattle egrets will follow grazing animals to pick up insects that are flushed from the grass. To an extent, they are a biocontrol of parasites and reduce the numbers of flies that bother grazing cattle - often picking them right off their skin. They choose, by preference, to follow animals that are walking at an ideal pace for them to catch insects (between 5-15 steps a minute) but will also follow vehicles and even fly in to the edge of runways just after a plane has passed to catch the small creatures that have been flushed from cover or blown onto the tarmac.

NOTES

Translation note. Little egret = Corra-gheal bheag

White-coloured egrets are generally named as “corra-gheal” in Gaelic but the creamy-pink colour of the cattle egret's summer plumage and a preference among many speakers to use “bàn” for colours in nature settled us on the name we have chosen. As this species advances northwards in England, it is only a matter of time before the ‘pale crane of the cattle’ establishes a breeding population here.

*far an trialladh an sluagh air an àirigh,
dìreach corra-bhàn a' chruidh
's i a' glacadh nam biastagan gu rèidh*

where folk used to go to the shieling, just a cattle egret catches wee beasties on the level ground nae bother