

# Sacred Ibis

## Species Description

**Scientific name:** *Threskiornis aethiopicus*

**AKA:** Crymanbig y deml (Welsh)

**Native to:** Sub-Saharan Africa

**Habitat:** Wide range of mainly inland habitats by lakes and rivers

A distinctive species with a long, down-curved bill, white body and black head and neck.

Sacred ibis is popular in captivity in both the UK and Europe. Escaped birds have been recorded in the wild in Europe since the 19th century, however since the 1970s, free-flying birds in zoos and parks have established several feral breeding populations. The largest feral colonies currently exist on the French Atlantic coast. The species has yet to be recorded breeding in the wild in the UK.

The sacred ibis is an opportunistic feeder and will predate on eggs and young of other birds. In France, predation of tern colonies has been observed, as well as the nests of mallards and a variety of other waterbirds. The species is dominant at multi-species bird colonies and can outcompete other species for nest sites. Their large size represents a bird-aircraft strike hazard.

For details of legislation go to [www.nonnativespecies.org/legislation](http://www.nonnativespecies.org/legislation).



## Key ID Features



# Identification through the year

Sacred ibis do not vary in colouration during the year.

# Distribution

A small number of feral or escaped sacred ibis have been recorded in Britain though there are no records of breeding pairs.

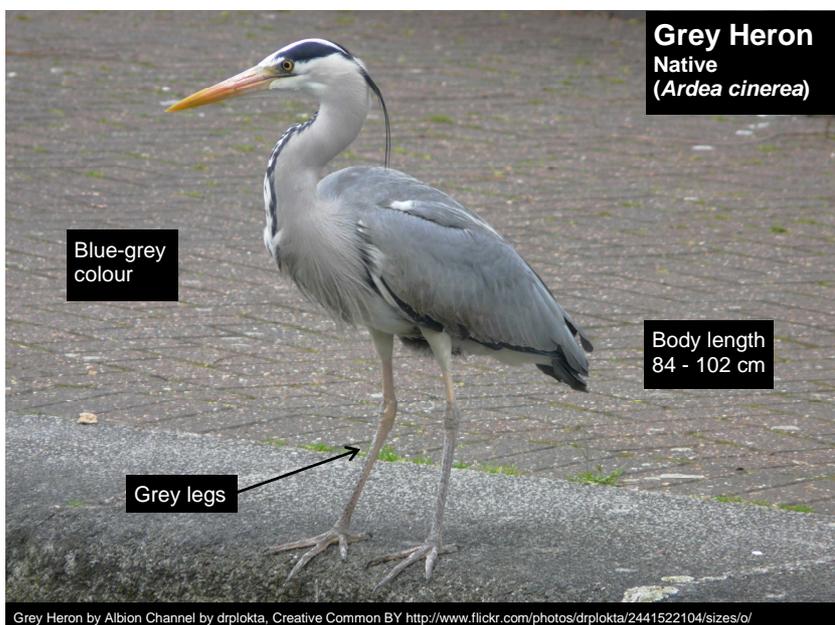
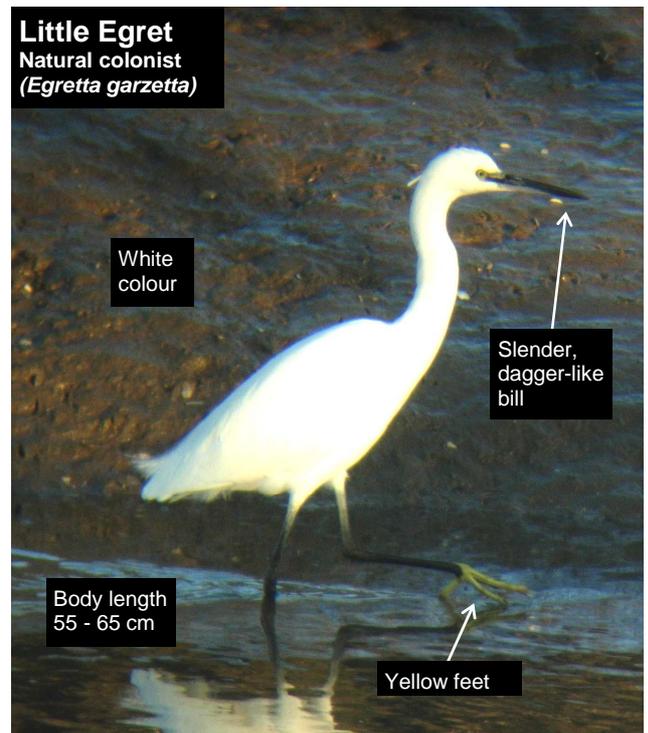
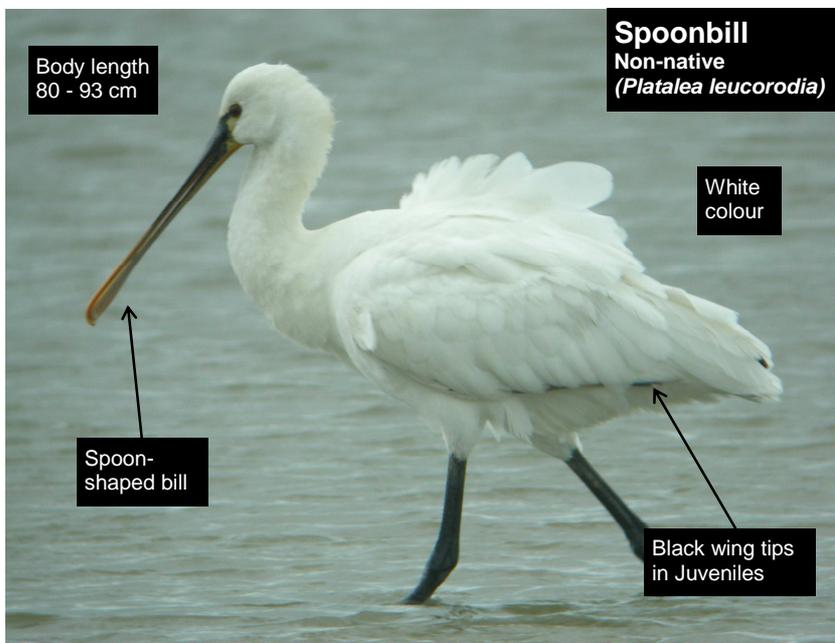
# Field Signs

- Call - Generally silent.
- Behaviour - In Europe often found in flocks on coastal estuaries, but individual birds can join flocks of other waterbird species e.g. Herons. Breeding season is March to May.
- Nest - Colonial breeder, the nest forming a platform made from sticks and any other available materials.
- Eggs - 2 - 4 in a clutch. Dull white with a faint blue tinge.
- Fledglings - Once the chicks have fledged they can form large crèches.

Sacred ibis, if clearly seen, are unlikely to be confused with any other species that regularly occurs in the UK. It should be noted that individual birds may well join multi-species flocks of waterfowl making their detection and identification difficult if only seen from a distance.

Herons, spoonbills and little egrets have a similar body-shape to sacred ibis.

# Similar Species



## References and further reading:

Lever, C (2005) "*Naturalised Birds of the World*". T & A D Poyser

Mullarney, K, Svensson, L, Zetterstrom, D and Grant, P J (2001) "*Bird Guide*". HarperCollins

Snow, D W and Perrins, C M (1998) "*The Birds of the Western Palearctic*". Oxford University Press

Yesou, P and Clergeau, P (2005) Sacred Ibis: a new invasive species in Europe. *Birding World* **18**, 517-526

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