
A Guide To
Identifying
Waterbirds At
Chase Lake

Black-crowned Night-Heron (BCNH)

Young Birds

Egg Color

Eggs are smooth and non-glossy, greenish-blue in color, but they are the greenest on the first day (fade thereafter); thus, color can be used to assign laying order up to one day after clutch completion (Custer 1991). According to Gross (1923), the color of the freshly laid egg approaches “glaucous-green” (Ridgway 1912).

Condition At Hatching

Chick can raise its head shortly after hatching; on day after hatching, Gross (1923) reported that chick is active, sits up in an erect position, and gives faint food-begging calls; mass about 24 g, length about 10 cm (for detailed measurements of two birds, see Gross 1923). Natal down of head, neck, and dorsal parts are various shades of gray; distal three-fourths of the crown filaments are white; ventral parts are mostly lighter shades of gray; crown filaments are 2.8–3.0 cm and back filaments are 1.5–1.7 cm. White down on femoral tract; skin shades of pink, bill dark tipped, egg tooth present; mouth lining shades of pink; tarsus and toes shades of bluish on top, lighter on toes, yellowish under toes; nails pinkish ivory (McVaugh 1972; see McVaugh’s color illustrations and extensive descriptions of plumage and color of unfeathered parts).



Black-crowned Night-Heron chick identification is straight-forward.







Adult and Juvenile BCNH

Cattle Egret (CAEG)

Young Birds

Condition At Hatching

Back, head, and sides covered with down, crown especially bushy; feather tracts visible; body skin blue-gray (plumbeous of Smithe 1975, color #78) to olive green (#46). Iris straw yellow (#56). Bill, legs, and lores pale tan (yellow ocher #123C), horn (#92), yellowish green (#58), or olive green; legs darker in front (Skead 1966).

Hatchlings

Covered with white down about 21 mm long on head and back, 10 mm on wings. Down also present on sides. Down absent on nape, throat and along spine (Skead 1966).

Juvenal Plumage

Pin feathers emerge by 6 d; most down lost by 14 d. Plumage covers body by 1321 d. Body plumage nearly complete by 7 wk, and flight feathers full grown by 8 wk (Siegfried 1971f). Entirely white except for a little buff plumage on forehead, crown and nape acquired 1020 wk (Palmer 1962, Siegfried 1971f), Maddock 1989, contra Skead 1966). Not clear whether acquisition of buffy color is part of Prejuvenal molt or Prebasic I molt. Lacks more extensive buffy, yellowish and/or orangish feathers and plumes acquired during subsequent molts. Color plates in Cramp (1977), Marchant and Higgins (1990); photographs and description of 1, 3, 5, 10, 15, 20, and 26 d old chicks by Singh et al. (1988).











Snowy Egret (SNEG)

Young Birds

Condition At Hatching

Leg and mandible color variable from yellow to grayish to black; tarsi always darker than toes. Mouth lining pink; iris generally pale gray.

Hatchlings

At hatching, body skin generally grayish, with pinkish and greenish tints and dark blue area around eyes. Bill pale pinkish gray, becoming darker distally, with black tip, and either yellowish base or dark gray “saddle” at base of upper mandible. By 1 wk, bill black, legs gray but more pinkish or greenish above and toes gray but more greenish to reddish pink above. Mouth lining pale pink, iris pale gray to buffy gray, eye-ring gray; legs always darker than toes; bill gradually darkens to black in some, while becoming yellowish with darker tip in others (which also have yellowish eye-ring and lores). By 34 d, toes yellow-green and iris off-white (McVaugh 1975). For additional details on development of bare part colors from hatchings through the first month, see McVaugh 1975 .

Juveniles

By fledging, bill black, legs dark, becoming paler greenish yellow posteriorly, and feet dull yellowish.







Note:
Front of legs are darker than feet.





Little Blue Heron (LBHE)

Condition At Hatching

Bill length 11.1–12.7 mm, tarsus length 19.0 mm, body length 76.2–88.9 mm (McVaugh 1972). Hatchlings are covered with sparse white down on all feather tracts. Upper mandible pinkish gray basally and pinkish blue distally, lower mandible mostly pinkish, egg tooth light colored and present until at least 12 d of age; mandibles are noticeably more pinkish by day 5 (McVaugh 1972). Eyes partially open; iris light gray to whitish gray. Skin, tarsus, and toes pinkish gray to medium gray (McVaugh 1972).

Bill And Gape

Hatchling upper mandible pinkish gray basally and pinkish blue distally, lower mandible mostly pinkish, egg tooth light colored and present until at least 12 d of age; mandibles noticeably more pinkish by day 5 (McVaugh 1972).

Iris

Hatchling light gray to whitish gray (McVaugh 1972).

Legs And Feet

Nonbreeding legs and feet pearl gray to grayish green; breeding adult black; subadult greenish yellow to pale gray (Rodgers 1980c); hatchling tarsus and toes pinkish gray to medium gray (McVaugh 1972).

Natal Down

Present primarily Apr–Jul in North America, in nest. Semialtricial at hatching; covered with very pale gray to dark brownish gray down dorsally, longer tawny-tipped filaments on forehead and crown; down sparse ventrally (Palmer 1962, McVaugh 1972). Down appears white by day 7 (Bent 1926, McVaugh 1972).

Juvenal (First Basic) Plumage

Present primarily Jun–Oct in North American populations. Plumage completely white except outer primaries (p8-p10) show dull brownish gray to bluish gray tips (McVaugh 1972, Pyle 2008).







Great Egret (GREG)

Young Birds

Condition At Hatching

Covered dorsally with long white down, but down sparse ventrally. Eye-ring gray; iris off-white; pupil black. Body dark gray. Upper mandible warm pale gray; tip black; egg tooth visible. Lower mandible pinkish yellow to grayish yellow. Tarsus and toes pale pink with bluish cast. Nestling can hold head up just after hatching.

Bare Parts

Bill And Gape

Culmen gray to black at hatching, gradually becoming yellow during nestling period, dark gray-black streak extending from under eye to one half length of bill. Whitish egg tooth visible along culmen near tip in hatchling. In the Americas during courtship (Jan-May), bill becomes orange-yellow, returning to yellow during incubation and nonbreeding periods (May-Dec).

Facial And Gular Skin

In hatchling pale gray-blue, darker dorsally than ventrally. Orbital region changes from pale gray-blue to yellow by age 7 d. Eye-ring changes from gray to grayish yellow by age 14 d and to yellow by age 21 d and thereafter. During courtship, lores and eye-ring become lime-green, brighter in males than females, becoming duller during laying and incubation.

Iris

Iris dull or pale yellowish at hatching; yellow thereafter.

Legs And Feet

At hatching, tarsus and toes pinkish with bluish cast, becoming gray to greenish gray by age 7 d to darker gray by age 21 d. Scales initially form around age 7 d on tarsi and toes. In the Americas, legs and feet become shiny black during courtship, returning to duller black during incubation period.





Great Egret Chick with Eggs in Nest





Nest of Great Egret Chicks >2 weeks old



Great Egret Chick < 1 week old



Great Egret Chicks ~ 2 weeks old


Cattle Egret
~50 days old


Snowy Egret Juvenile
Recently fledged


Great Egret Chicks
20 days old


Cattle Egret Chick
>10 days old


Snowy Egret Chick
9 days old


Great Egret Chicks
<2 wks. old


Snowy Egret Chick
< 2 days old
Note:
Dark blue area around eye.
Note:
Black-tipped bill up to 1 wk old.


Cattle Egret Chick
Note:
Light color distally on bill.


Snowy Egret Chicks
12 days old


Cattle Egret Chicks
~12-days-old
Skin is bluish gray to olive green


Cattle Egret Chick
<1 week old


Cattle Egret Chicks
~7-10 days old


Cattle Egret Nestling


Cattle Egret Adult
Breeding Plumage


Cattle Egret
~50 days old
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Cattle Egret Nest
© R.C. Telfair


Snowy Egret Juvenile


Cattle Egret


Snowy Egret Chick


Cattle Egret


Cattle Egret


Snowy Egret


Cattle Egret


Snowy Egret

Snowy Egret Juvenile
Recently fledged

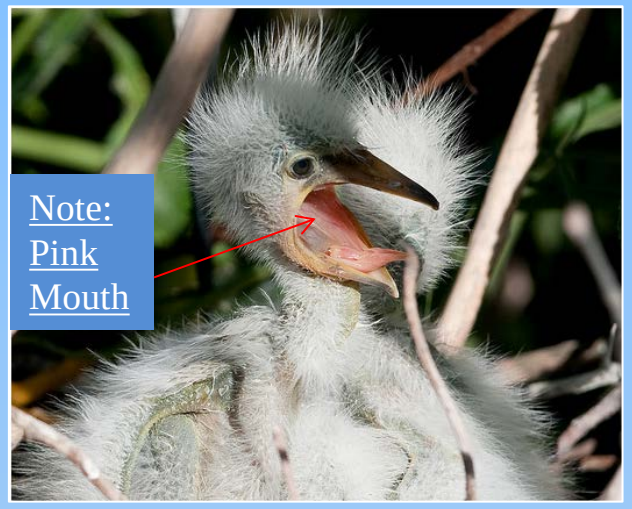


Cattle Egret
App. 50 days old



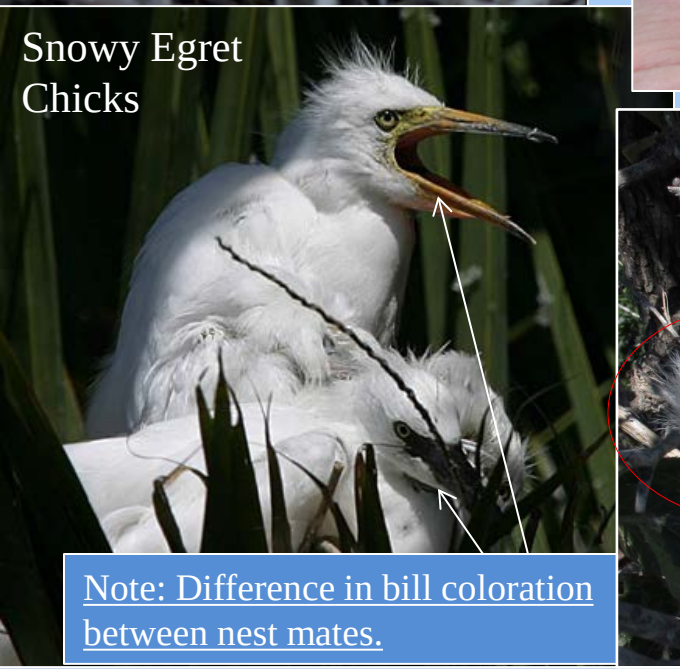

Snowy Egret Adult
w/hatchlings


Snowy Egret Hatchlings


Note:
Pink
Mouth


<2 days old




Snowy Egret
Chicks
Note: Difference in bill coloration
between nest mates.



Snowy Egret Chicks










Adult Little Blue Heron
Breeding Plumage


Adult Little Blue Herons
Breeding Plumage


Little Blue Heron Juvenile
Transitional Plumage
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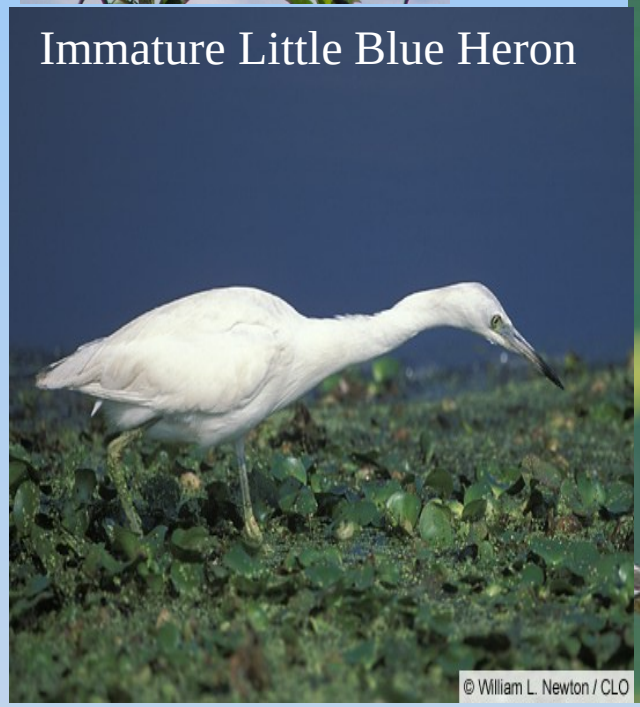
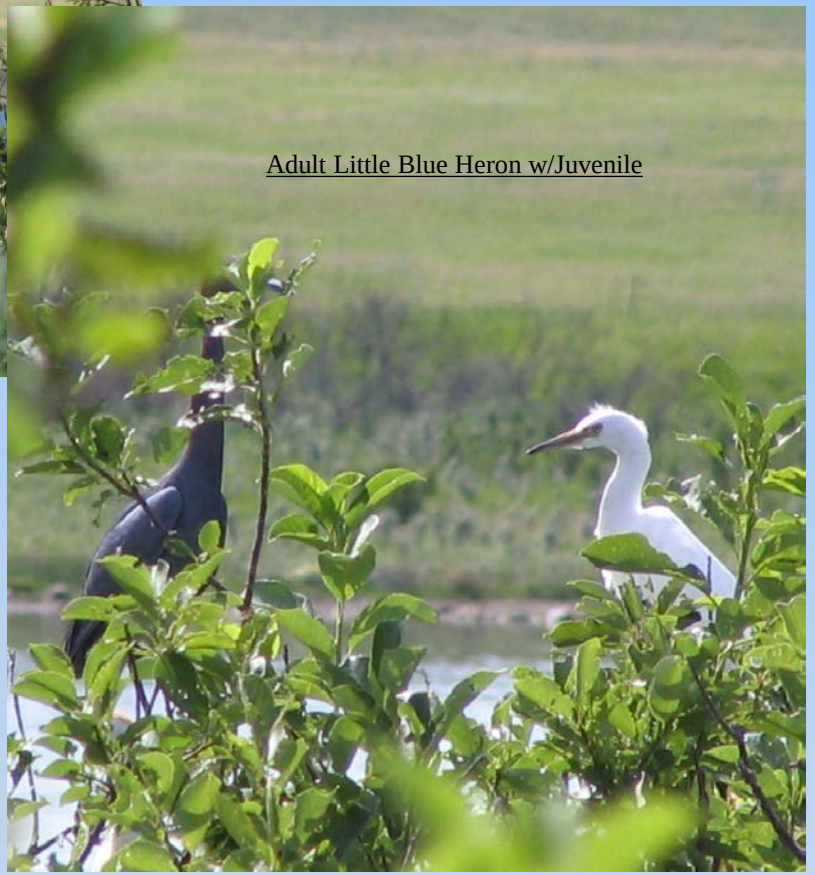

Immature Little Blue Heron
© William L. Newton / CLO


Note: Dusky
Wingtips

Adult Little Blue Heron And Cattle Egret Adults



Adult Little Blue Heron w/Juvenile




White-faced Ibis chicks
July 29, 2008


Adult White-faced Ibis
© Arthur Morris / Birds As Art


White-faced Ibis chicks
August 5, 2008


White-faced Ibis hatchling
July 24, 2008


White-faced Ibis chicks
August 8, 2008

Cattle Egret Nest





Snowy Egret Nest





Great Egret Nests











One Little blue Heron w/Cattle Egrets






Great Egret Nestlings 12-June




Great Egret Nests and Chicks









