

Our wildlife

Ibis and egrets

Wetland birds

Hundreds of waterbirds make their home in the lagoons and surrounds of the Bundaberg Botanic Gardens, and it continues to be a popular birdwatching location.

The Bundaberg Botanic Gardens is home to a large ibis and egret population. While Council works to mitigate the impacts of these populations on people within the gardens and provide an enjoyable visitor experience we must also ensure the gardens remain an urban sanctuary for our native wildlife. Everyone who visits the gardens can help to play a vital role in supporting this wetland bird population.

Long-lasting bonds

You can observe ibis and egret breeding in the Gardens from October through to March. Noise increases during this time as male ibis communicate vocally when courting females and driving off other males. The musky smell unique to this species can be heightened in colonies.

Ibis and cattle egrets build shallow dish shaped nests in trees and can be seen flying past with sticks in their beaks. Ibis and cattle egrets stay with their breeding partners, with ibis forming long lasting pair bonds.

Both species have colour changes during breeding with ibis flashing red patches under their wings and egrets sporting an orange head, neck and breast and a bright red bill.

Discover more about the Bundaberg Botanic Gardens by following us on Facebook and visiting discoverbundaberg.com.au

Population management

In Queensland all native wildlife, including ibis and cattle egrets are protected under the *Nature Conservation Act 1992*. Ibis and cattle egret populations in the Gardens are managed to a level that allows for mutual benefits between birds and humans. Management of nests, eggs and tree pruning is authorised under a permit issued to the Botanic Gardens by the Department of Environment and Science (DES).

When to help

Natural causes including strong winds, sibling dominance, starvation and genetic weakness can lead to deaths among young birds including ibis and cattle egrets in the Gardens. This is nature's way of controlling population numbers. For some visitors this can be upsetting to see and Gardens staff take care, where possible, to remove deceased birds.

Visitors often report young birds on the ground. Please do not handle young birds as they are learning to fly and will often be fed by parents on the ground. Injured birds can be taken to a wildlife care group or local vet for assessment.

You can help all waterbirds

and the water quality of our lagoons by **not feeding wildlife human food** and placing your waste in the bins provided.

More information >





Discover more about these wetland birds

Ibis and egrets

The Gardens are home to established breeding colonies of the native Australian White Ibis (*Threskiornis Molucca*) and Cattle egrets (*Ardea ibis*). Ibis are homing birds and while they can fly long distances, just like our marine turtles they return to their original nest sites. Cattle egrets, originally found in Africa, Europe, and Asia colonised Australia in the 1940s and are now found on nearly every continent.

Many traditional breeding grounds for ibis in the inland waterways of Queensland and New South Wales have been destroyed or experienced altered waterflow to support agriculture. Damaged nest trees following bushfires, drought and poor water quality due to human contamination have created significant habitat challenges forcing ibis into urban areas.

Wetland health

Ibis are an important indicator of the good health of a wetland ecosystem as breeding relies on the quality and amount of water and availability of food. The Gardens wetlands support a range of food eaten by ibis and egrets including frogs, worms, fish and crickets.

Habits and lifestyle

Ibis and egrets are social birds and can be seen roosting and nesting with waterbirds such as spoonbills and darters. They are active during the day, feeding by walking, with ibis probing the ground for food simultaneously helping aerate Garden beds and grassed areas. Scientists on the Gold Coast have observed ibis feeding on introduced cane toads 'washing' their toxin out before swallowing them whole. With toads impacting native wildlife in the Gardens this is welcome news.

