Part I
BREEDING BIOLOGY
The Cattle Egret, *Bubulcus ibis coromandus* (Boddaert) is a representative of order Ciconiiformes, family Ardeidae. Linnaeus (1758) described it for the first time naming it as *Ardea ibis*. Since then there has been a constant controversy over the generic name; recently most of the taxonomists have placed this species under the genus *Bubulcus* Bonaparte rather than *Ardeola* Boe. Following Gruson (1976), Blake (1977), Cramp and Simmons (1977) and Ali and Ripley (1983), the species is included under the genus *Bubulcus* in the present study.

The Cattle Egret is a polytypic species having two subspecies, viz. the nominal subspecies *ibis* (Linnaeus) and subspecies *coromandus* (Boddaert). Subspecies *coromandus* has longer average length of tarsus, slightly longer and thicker bill and less feathers on tibiae than the subspecies *ibis*. *Bubulcus ibis ibis* is distributed in Africa, South West Asia, South Europe, North and South America whilst *Bubulcus ibis coromandus* occupies East Asia from Baluchistan to Japan and Australia. Voous (1960) put the Cattle Egret under the faunal type Indian-African i.e., belonging to the fauna which is now largely discontinuous geographically but in late Tertiary and Pleistocene might have extended continuously from South Asia to North and Central Africa. According to him, the Cattle Egret had Asian origin.

Various workers have carried out studies in different countries reporting aspects of breeding of *B.i.ibis*, such information regarding the asian subspecies *B.i.coromandus* remained obscure as no comprehensive research paper on its


*Due to the controversy of generic name Almond (1955), Skead (1966), Siegfried (1966, 1971a and 1971b), Blaker (1969a) published their works on Cattle Egret under the generic name Ardeola. In the present study the name has been corrected.*
The present study on *B. i. coromandus* is aimed to give a comprehensive picture of different aspects of breeding biology of the asian subspecies. Mukherjee (1972) described *B. i. coromandus* as benefactor to agriculture as it devours many insect pests. This leads to the possibility of its use as a biological control for insect pests of agriculture. But before taking up such a study, it is important to understand the breeding biology in order to have a complete knowledge of reproductive output of this species. Above all, study of its ethology and bionomics will help to clarify the evolutionary relationships in the family Ardeidae.