The breeding territory is acquired by male with the onset of breeding season in case of *Bubulcus ibis* Coromandus. Male occupies an old nest or selects a new site for nest building and starts defending that domain. From the onset of breeding season to the pair formation stage, male is the solo defender of breeding territory. After the pair formation takes places, both sexes stay together for few hours to one day and defend territory. During nest building period before egg-laying, the males are on material collecting trips while the female which remains most of the time on nesting site, defends the territory. During egg-laying, incubation and brooding, both male and female defend the territory alternately. After brooding the parents leave the nest for feeding trips and nestlings are the sole defenders of territory.

Out of the four breeding territories explained by Welty (1970), *B.i.coromandus* falls in the category of 'narrowly restricted nesting territory' i.e. the territory where birds defend the immediate surrounding of the nest. The minimum distance between the centres of two adjacent nests was 77 cm. at Bharaunjian colony. Blaker (1969a) reported the distance of less than 60 cm. between the centres of two nearest nests of *Bubulcus ibis ibis*. Above variation between the territories can be correlated with the size of colony. The colony where Blaker (1969a) worked had the number of nests in thousands whereas the colonies in the present study never exceeded 200 nests. It can, therefore, be stated that higher congregation of breeding egrets can lead to the minimum
possible territory i.e. the sphere of distance between the centre of incubation patch to the tip of beak.

The agonistic display observed during territorial fights is Forward Display. This display is performed by both the sexes but before pair formation only male performs this display because the female is dominated by fear tendency and tries to flee from any kind of encounter. This display comprises the following components. The egret moves towards the intruder and gives a forward-stab by extending its neck, beak slightly open, wings half spread to fully open, crest feathers semi to fully erected and scapular plumes slightly raised. "Thonk" call was associated with 12 out of 73 such displays observed in unpaired males. Blaker (1969a) reported the association of "thonk" call with Forward Display of B.i.ibis but in the present study most of the displays were silent. The cause of this reduction in vocalization is explained in Chapter 6 (Bb).

The biological significance of this display is to maintain individual distance. Hence it is the chief distance increasing display of B.i.coromandus which checks the intrusion by other individuals.