

Threskiornis aethiopicus



Taxon	Family / Order / Class / Phylum
<i>Threskiornis aethiopicus</i> (Latham, 1790)	Threskiornithidae / Ciconiiformes / Aves / Chordata

COMMON NAMES (English only)

Sacred ibis

SYNONYMS

Tantalus aethiopicus Latham, 1790

SHORT DESCRIPTION

This large white bird (around 1.4 kg) has a black head and neck. It is mostly found in wet areas in meadows and inland wetlands to coastal areas, and is gregarious, often forming large groups. It is carnivorous with a tendency to omnivory. The diet is based on terrestrial and aquatic insects, fishes, batrachians, molluscs and crustaceans. It can also feed upon small mammals and bird eggs and on animal and vegetable refuse.

BIOLOGY/ECOLOGY

Dispersal mechanisms

Nomadic species able to change its breeding sites to suit environmental conditions. In the introduced range, there is regular exchange between colonies, with nomadic individuals moving up to several hundred kilometres from colonies.

Reproduction

Colonies up to several thousand pairs (one colony of over 1,000 in France), sometimes with other ciconiiformes and herons. Nests often closely aggregated in trees, bushes and on the ground near water. 2-4 eggs give 1-2 chicks. Breeding success in France appears to be higher than in Africa.

Known predators

Carnivorous mammals in some colonies.

Resistant stages (seeds, spores etc.)

None.

HABITAT

Native (EUNIS code)

D: Mire, bog and fen habitats (large wetland), E: Grassland and tall forb habitats, B: Coastal habitats, I: Regularly or recently cultivated agricultural, horticultural and domestic habitats.

Habitat occupied in invaded range (EUNIS code)

D: Mire, bog and fen habitats (large wetland), E: Grassland and tall forb habitats, B: Coastal habitats, I: Regularly or recently cultivated agricultural, horticultural and domestic habitats.

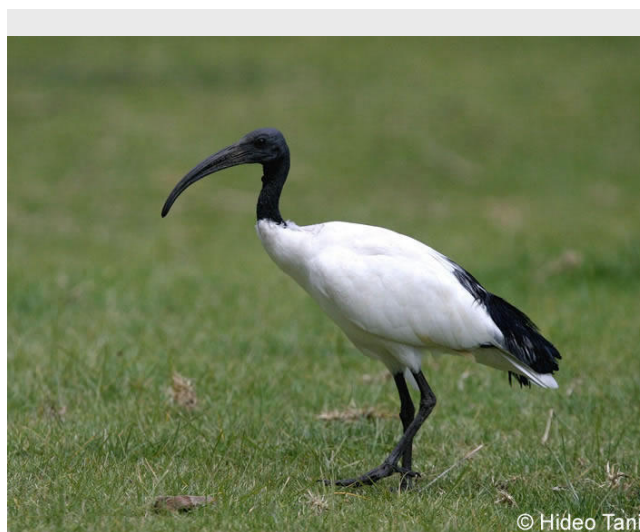
Habitat requirements

Large tolerance to various landscapes but presence of water essential.

DISTRIBUTION

Native Range

Africa south of Sahara, also populations in Southern Iraq, Madagascar and Aldabra Island.



Threskiornis aethiopicus is a large white bird with a black head and neck.

Photo: Hideo Tani

Known Introduced Range

Several spots around the world, in West and South Europe, Arabian Peninsula, Taiwan, Florida. In Italy and Netherlands only some pairs and in Canary Islands about 30 pairs.







Trend

Stable around 10s individuals in most cases; in western France, feral population raised over 5000 ind. in 30 years from a single source, and in south France 200 ind. in 6 years.

MAP (European distribution)



Legend

	Known in country		Known in CGRS square		Known in sea
	Eradicated		Eradicated		Extinct

INTRODUCTION PATHWAY

From zoos where ibises were breeding and allowed to fly freely.

IMPACT

Ecosystem Impact

Predation on several threatened species (insects, batrachians, etc.) and especially on protected colonies of terns and herons in France. Vegetation rapidly affected at breeding sites. Both competition and breeding facilitation relative to other ciconiiformes poorly documented.

Health and Social Impact

Epidemiological role suspected since foraging ibises frequently visit rubbish dumps and slurry pits.

Economic Impact

Not documented, but destruction of salt pans structure has been observed.

MANAGEMENT

Prevention

In most cases, no action has been undertaken against ibises. However, the feral population in Barcelona, Spain, has been culled in 2001.

Mechanical

In France, decision-making is in progress, aiming at removing the majority of ibises in western and southern areas by shooting them at roost, feeding places or colonies.

Chemical

Unknown.

Biological

Unknown.

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