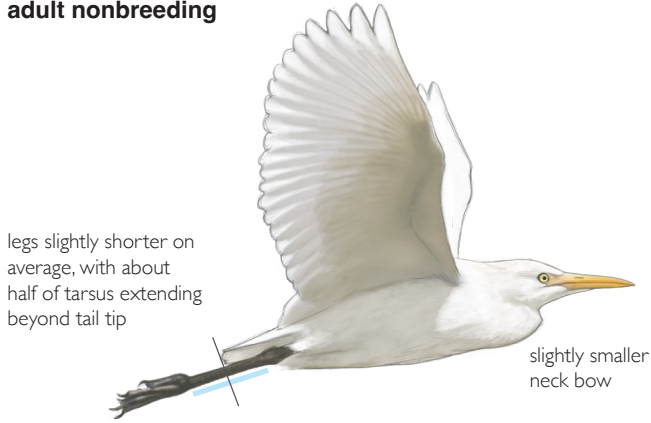


Distinguishing Eastern and Western Cattle Egret

Western is found throughout the Americas, as well as Africa and Europe. Eastern is found in Asia and Australia (recorded once in the western Aleutians, at least once in western Hawaiian Islands). Readily identified only in breeding plumage by extent of buff color and possibly by crest shape. Birds in non-breeding plumage might be distinguishable sometimes by longer legs and neck but differences are small and measurements overlap. The often-reported difference in bill size is not useful; bill of Eastern averages only 5% longer and not thicker.

Western

adult nonbreeding

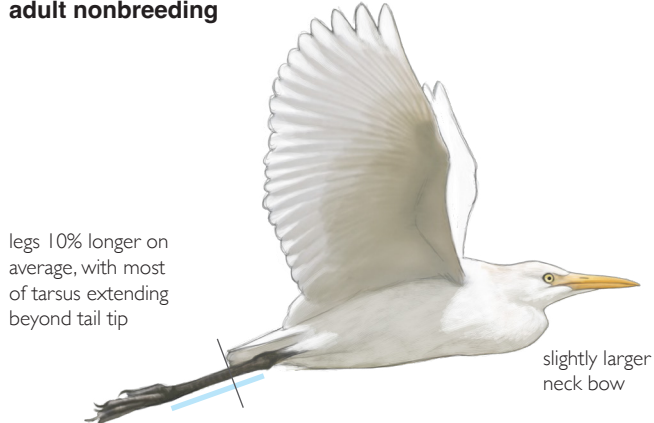


legs slightly shorter on average, with about half of tarsus extending beyond tail tip

slightly smaller neck bow

Eastern

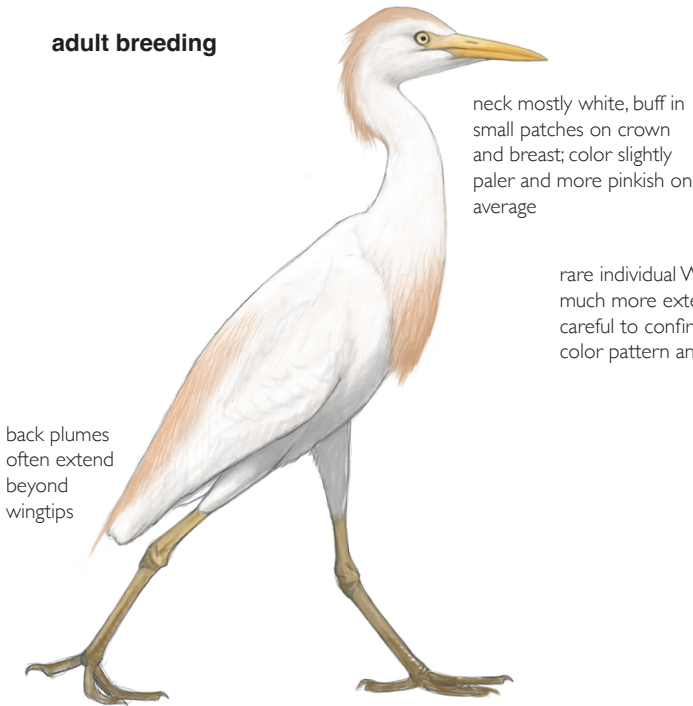
adult nonbreeding



legs 10% longer on average, with most of tarsus extending beyond tail tip

slightly larger neck bow

adult breeding

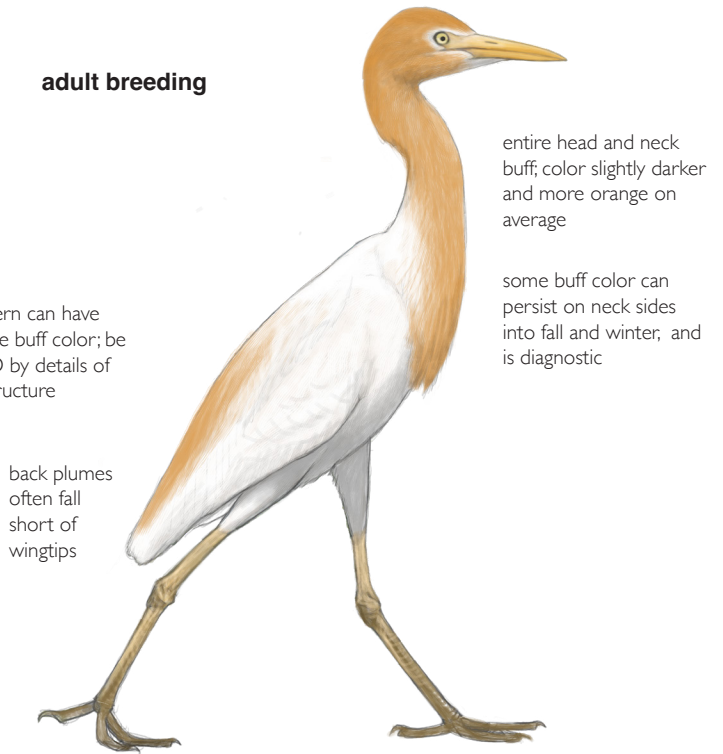


neck mostly white, buff in small patches on crown and breast; color slightly paler and more pinkish on average

back plumes often extend beyond wingtips

rare individual Western can have much more extensive buff color; be careful to confirm ID by details of color pattern and structure

adult breeding



entire head and neck buff; color slightly darker and more orange on average

some buff color can persist on neck sides into fall and winter; and is diagnostic

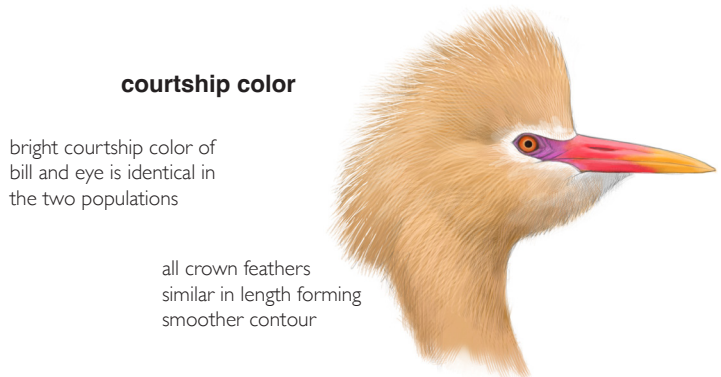
back plumes often fall short of wingtips

courtship color



some crown feathers distinctly longer forming shaggy crest

courtship color



bright courtship color of bill and eye is identical in the two populations

all crown feathers similar in length forming smoother contour

