

## **Egret Excitement**

We are all now getting used to the idea of Little Egrets – yet it was only in the early 80s that they started to appear in the UK. They are now widely spread over southern Britain, though visitors to our area from further north are often excited to see them at the Gann. Although quite common in Pembrokeshire it is currently not known if they breed here. They make a nest in a tree or a reed bed and like to nest communally, so they often choose to nest with Grey Herons. However we only have a few small heronries locally and so far those do not appear to have Egret nests. I am sure it is only a matter of time.

On 16th October we were alerted to the fact that there was a strange egret on the Gann saltmarsh, described as “larger than a Little Egret and with a swan-like neck”. We immediately thought that it sounded like a Great Egret – a bird we have often seen on our travels. On the morning of 17<sup>th</sup> October at high tide, there it was, feeding with the Little Egrets quite near to Mullock Bridge. And it was indeed a Great Egret. Nearly the size of a Grey Heron with a very long neck and a yellow bill. What excitement! It was only the third record of this bird in Pembrokeshire! We took some photos and some notes and then went back home to spread the word. An hour later it had gone from the saltmarsh, but may have spent an hour or so on Pickleridge Pools before disappearing and never being seen again. The crowds of eager birdwatchers who arrived to see it went away disappointed.

However some of these disappointed birdwatchers searched Sandy Haven for the Great Egret – and found instead a Cattle Egret! This is a common bird throughout the world which has colonised most countries and is very likely to colonise the UK soon. It has been seen recently in some numbers in other parts of the UK, but this was only the fourth record for Pembrokeshire!

Did they arrive together? Was the weather somehow just suitable for wandering egrets? We shall never know. But two rare egrets on one day was definitely an amazing occurrence.

*Rosemary Royle*

*(Thank you to Yvonne Evans and her father for alerting us to the presence of the Great Egret)*