

Intermediate Egret *Egretta intermedia*: first record for Qatar

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Whilst counting herons and cormorants at Abu Nahkla, Qatar's premier grey water lagoons, on 22 January 2014, I noticed a white heron (Plates 1–4) being mobbed by two Grey Herons *Ardea cinerea*. The white heron was trying to join the Grey Herons in a particularly productive feeding area at the edge of the reedbed. The white heron would try to land and then be chased off by the Greys. It was immediately apparent that the white heron was significantly shorter in stature and less bulky than the Greys, and sported a relatively short orange bill. My first thought was Intermediate Egret *Egretta intermedia*, though this was not on the Qatar List. I spent a few minutes taking photographs and comparing the size and structure of the bird with its sparring partners. Along with the bill, I noted long black legs and feet, and an obvious long kinked neck, hence quickly ruling out Little



Plates 1–2. Intermediate Egret *Egretta intermedia* at Abu Nahkla, Qatar, 22 January 2014. © Neil G Morris



Plates 3–4. Intermediate Egret *Egretta intermedia* at Abu Nahkla, Qatar, 22 January 2014. © Neil G Morris

E. garzetta, Indian Reef *E. gularis* and Cattle Egrets *Bubulcus ibis*. The jizz, especially the head and bill shape, also seemed to rule out a runt Western Great Egret *Egretta alba*. I also discounted an early juvenile heron/egret, given the clean white plumage, uniform bill colouration and also leg colour. Confident of the identity as Intermediate Egret, I put the news out to local birders.

Eventually, after a few successful though brief touchdowns, the Intermediate Egret gave up trying to land in the reeds and flew to the main stone causeway on which dozens of Grey Herons, Western Great Egrets, Little Egrets, Indian Reef Herons, Great Cormorants *Phalacrocorax carbo* and a solitary Cattle Egret were resting. I was pleased that this direct comparison confirmed my identification. With Western Great Egrets alongside, the compact head and shorter rather stubby bill shape was most evident. Unfortunately, the Intermediate Egret was not seen again until I relocated it on 29 January, and Jamie Buchan relocated it a final time on 31 January 2014. We were the only two observers. This is the first record for Qatar and has been accepted into category A of the Qatar List by the Qatar Birds Records Committee (www.QatarBirds.org).

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