

WHITE IBIS

The Australian White Ibis is naturally a bird of freshwater wetlands, swamps and tidal mudflats and similar areas. Its natural diet includes all sorts of bugs and insects, grasshoppers, small fish, small reptiles and ants. Ibis were historically known as farmers' friends because of the large quantities of insect pests they consumed.

All this has changed because of our modification of the landscapes and our determination to supply them with great amounts of "easy to obtain" foods in the form of left overs and throw aways.

Their long beaks are ideal for digging food from soft soil in wetlands, from garbage dumps and from open rubbish bins.

Like any sensible being they appreciate a free feed and this is what we have provided by way of food left over from our picnics, workday lunches and scraps dropped off outdoor café tables. Rubbish dumps are especially attractive to Ibis as each day tons of food scraps are deposited there for Ibis to scavenge.

White Ibis, like people, congregate where services are best. Most Australians live in cities and so do White Ibis. If we wish to see White Ibis numbers reduced we must stop providing for them. Reduce food litter, install Ibis-proof rubbish bins and convince our councils to better manage dumps.

It's up to each one of us to manage the problem rather than just complain about it.

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