

garzetta), the little-known Intermediate Egret (*Egretta intermedia*), and the puzzling eastern race of the Great Egret (*Egretta alba*). The results are dazzling views of the life and times of these and the other herons of Japan. Although written in Japanese, the author has available an English translation of much of the text.

The author's studies covered ten years of observation of Japanese herons. He features the three white *Egretta*, called Sirasagi, that nest together in colonies, called Sagi-yama. The preface notes how to identify the white *Egrettas*, not always an easy task as they all have black bills in the breeding season. The author carefully describes differences in the critical soft-part colors and provides color photos of their facial and plumage characteristics.

The photographic portfolio of 195 color plates composes much of the book. It is divided into sections on Daily Life, Spring, Summer, Autumn, Winter, and Dance, the latter primarily being photos of herons in flight. Daily Life includes views of preening, vocalization, foraging, walking, fighting, and flocking. Spring includes arrival, courtship, nest building, egg laying, and incubation. Summer includes hatching, brooding, feeding, and development.

Every photo brings the observer into the life of the species illustrated. One can dwell many minutes, gaining an increasing appreciation of the biology of the subject. The photos of fights, mating, and foraging far surpass in information content the passive portraiture usually published. Yet some photos of sedentary birds are extremely instructive, revealing for example the posture of birds in a rain storm, facing a cold wind, in a roost at night, or standing in water in a snowstorm. And their personalities are revealed, such as the "determination" in the eyes of an incubating bird and the "nastiness" of little egrets in their many fights.

Some photographs are pure art: a flying great egret quartering the setting sun with its wings, neck and legs; an egret flock against a half moon at dawn, the slow shutter speed exposing wing tracks against a violet background; birds returning to roost at night, evoking the descending darkness; the juxtaposition of a cherry tree in blossom and a perched Little Egret; or

White Egret.—S. Itoh, MD. 1986. Yamatokelkoku Co. (Address: 1-1-33 Shibadaimon Minato-Ku, Tokyo 105 Japan). 197pp. ISBN 4-635-88511-9. Cloth, 9,800 Yen.—This book is the finest photographic portfolio of herons ever produced. The author chose his subjects wisely concentrating on the startling species of white heron including one of the most fetching of herons, the Little Egret (*Egretta*

a photo of egrets, roosting at midnight, in which white ovals ornament barely visible trees. Some are striking in their life-drama, such as series showing Little Egrets fighting over a snow-bound feeding site. Included as appendices are the author's studies of pre-roosting assemblages and the effects of weather on roosting behavior. In the former paper, he identifies three types of pre-roosting assemblages; and in the latter paper, he concentrates on the effects of temperature and light intensity. These reports, as is typical of technical papers in Japanese journals, have English summaries and table and figure captions.

For those who know herons, this book will bring back memories of ephemeral moments observed but lost. For those who just like birds, it provides an entre to the lives of fascinating species. For those who appreciate nature photography, it is a lesson on how to turn biology into art. It is a book I will return to repeatedly for the lessons and enjoyment it offers.—**James A. Kushlan**, Department of Biological Sciences, East Texas State University, Commerce, Texas 75428 USA.

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