

REDDISH EGRETS

NATURE NOTES BY
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PHOTOS BY
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Presentation and photos:©2017 Peggy & Pete Romfh, Houston
Cradle of Texas Master Naturalist

TAXONOMY

Order:

Pelicaniformes

Family: Ardeidae

(herons and egrets)

Genus: Egretta

Species: rufescens

RAREST ARDEIDAE



DESCRIPTION

HT: 30 inches

WT: 25-30 oz

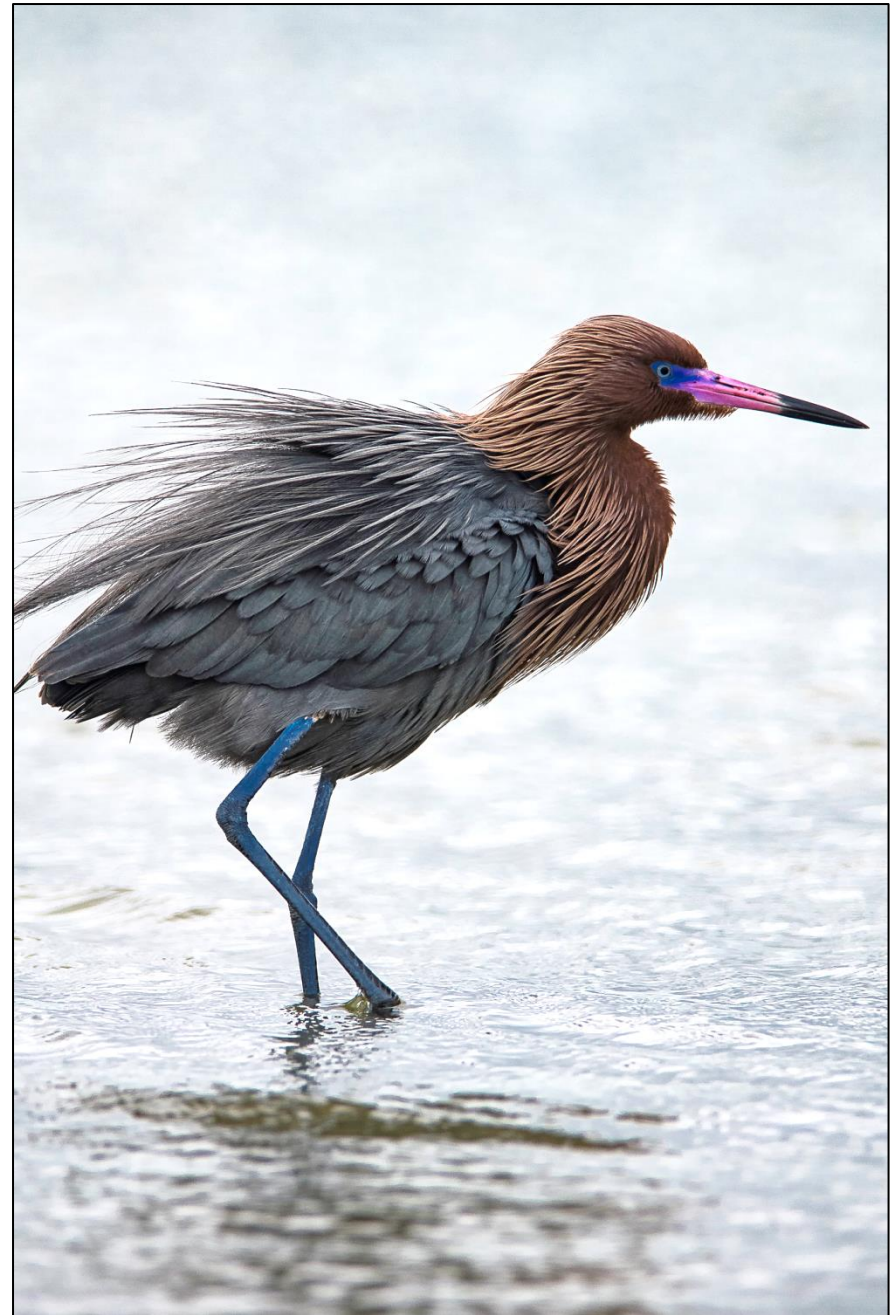
Dark form: all dark gray with a rusty red head and neck

White form: all white and dark gray legs

Both - Bill pink with black tip

Breeding plumage:

pink or flesh-colored lores, slate blue-gray legs, and shaggy plumes



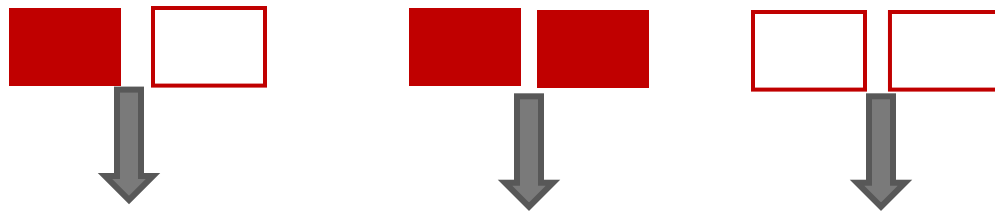
WHITE MORPH



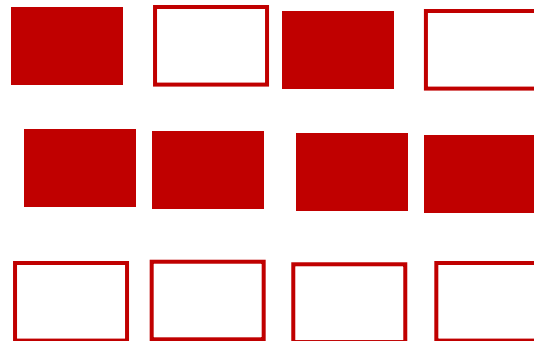
DIMORPHIC - DARK AND WHITE

MATED PAIR COMBINATIONS

- Dark morph predominates in USA and Mexico
- White morph more common in the Bahamas and Greater Antilles.



OFFSPRING - either or both morphs



COMPARISON TO IMMATURE LITTLE BLUE HERON

Little Blue Heron
– Immature has
greenish legs,
dark-tipped bill
with a grayish
base, neck is
more slender



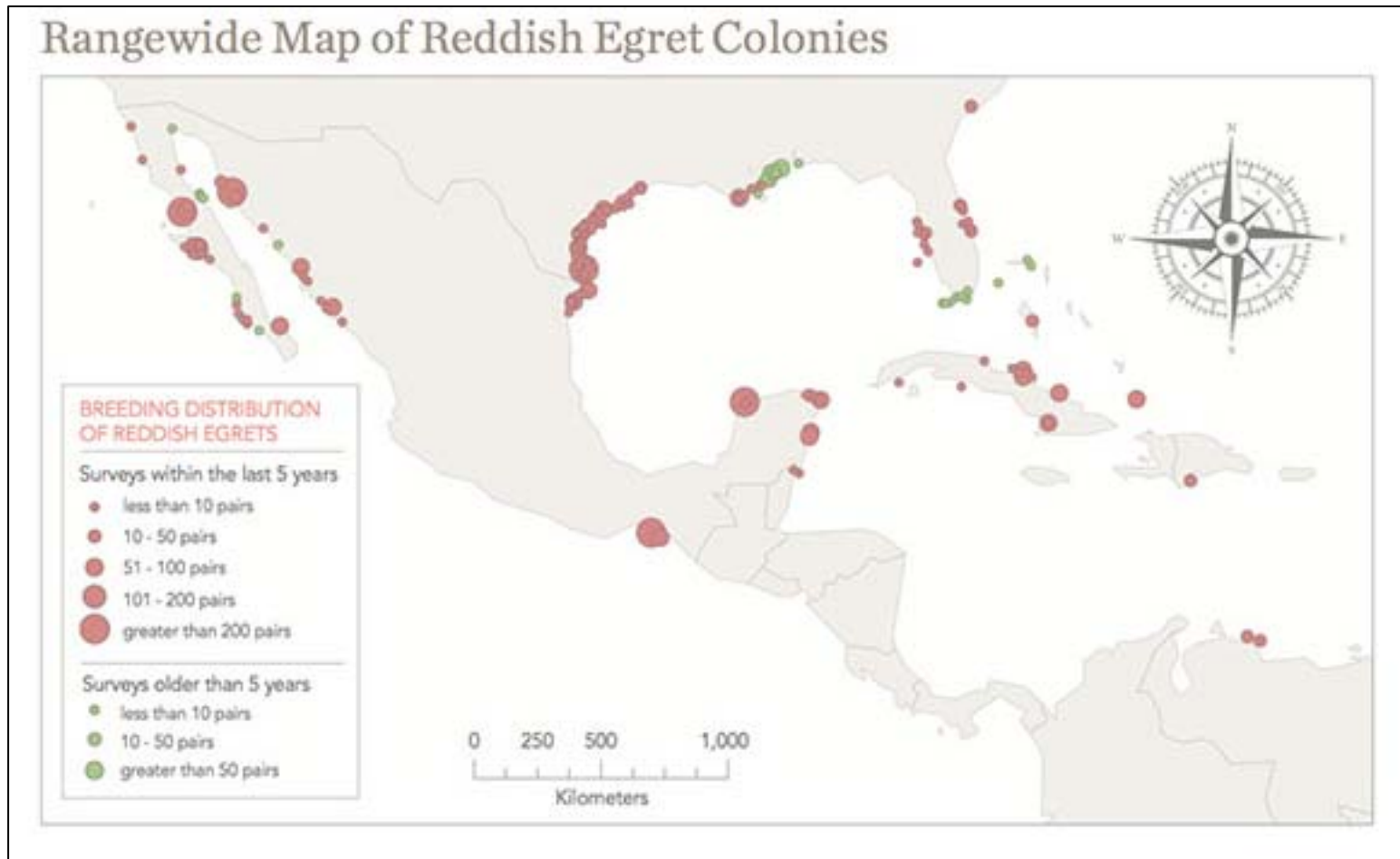
HABITAT – SALINE; COASTAL AREAS OF THE GULF STATES

“Whether it may ever betake itself to fresh water I cannot say, but I never found one in such a situation....These birds remain on the flats...until the advance of the tide forces them to the land.” John James Audubon, 1843: 140-141 The Birds of America

Local Hangouts (coastal tidal flats, salt marshes, shores, lagoons)

- **Bryan Beach**
- **Surfside/Blue Water Highway**
- **Brazoria NWR**
- **Galveston**

HABITAT

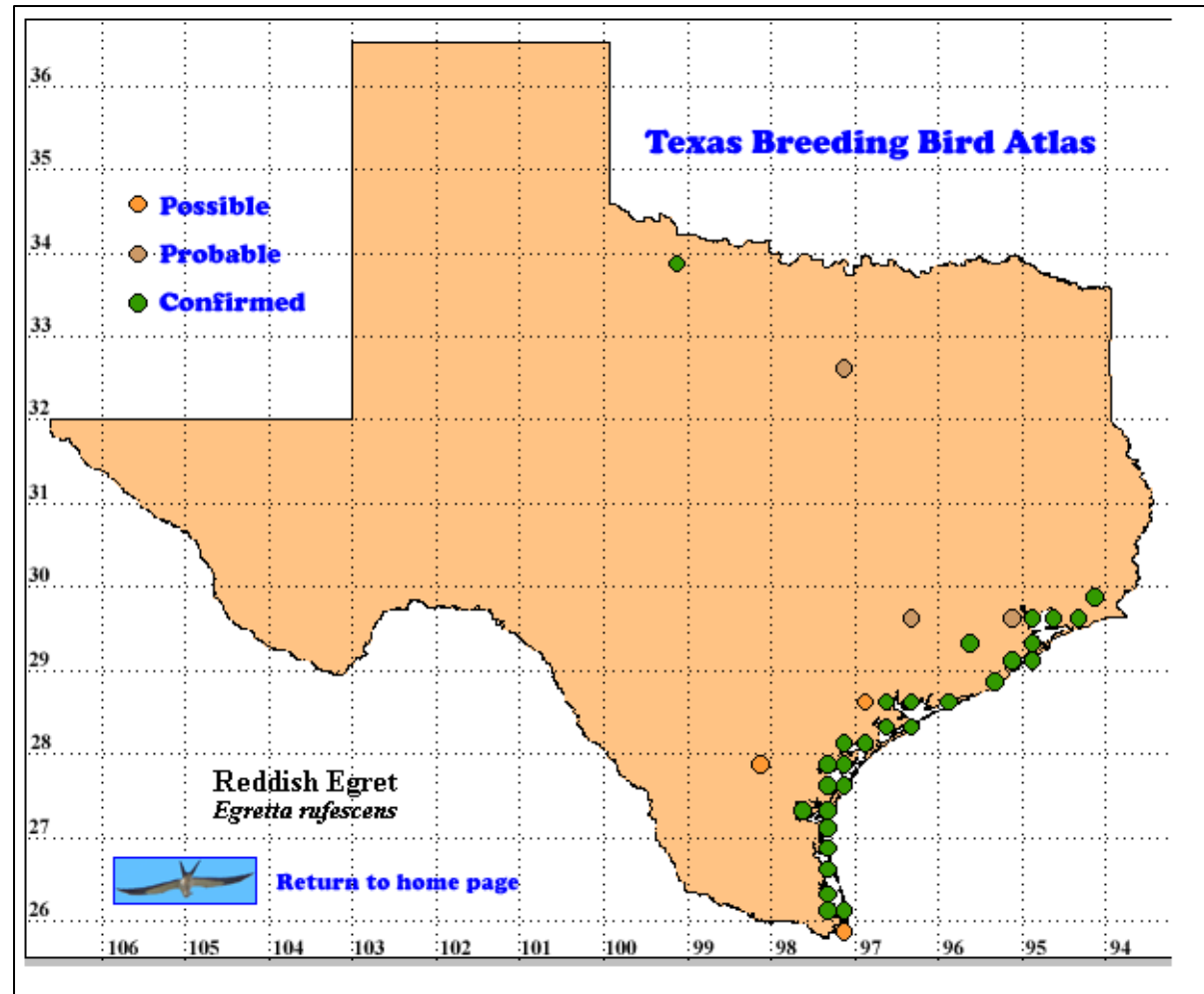


Source: http://www.reddishegret.org/species_migration.php

MIGRATION AND BREEDING

**Weakly
migratory**

**Breeds in
spring in
Texas**



Source: Texas Bird Breeding Atlas
(<http://txtbba.tamu.edu/species-accounts/reddish-egret/>)

FISHING STRATEGY OF OTHER HERONS/EGRETS - SLOW STALK



FISHING STRATEGY REDDISH EGRET - EXTREMELY ANIMATED FORAGING BEHAVIOR

- **Erratic running, hopping, dashing, staggering, jumping, flying**
- **Open-wing techniques to create 'shade' for schools of small fish**



FORAGING DANCE



FORAGING DANCE



FORAGING SUCCESS

STAB



SWALLOW



GRAB



THREATENED SPECIES

1900: species was nearly extirpated from the United States by plume hunters in late 1800s.

Today:

- **2000 breeding pairs in USA (Sources: birdsna.org; audubon.org; TPWD)**
- **Listed as a species of greatest concern on several watch lists and as a threatened species in Texas**

Reddish Egret Working Group

<http://www.reddishegret.org>

- **Sponsored by USFWS and Texas State University**
- **Band and track reddish egrets**
- **See their report form on line to report banded bird sightings.**