

Oasi di Bolgheri

The African sacred ibis (*Threskiornis aethiopicus*)

A new species for the Bolgheri Bird Sanctuary

Historically the distribution of the species has affected the sub Saharan and the North African desert belt, as well as southern Spain and the Middle East.

Sighted for the first time in Italy in 1989 in the Regional Park of the Lama Sesia in Piedmont, the species has gradually expanded to the Po valley.



The first report of the presence of the species in Bolgheri consisting of 4 individuals was recorded by the WWF guide of the Bolgheri Bird Sanctuary Paola Visicchio during a guided tour on the 8th of November 2014.

I confirmed the reporting on the 10th of November 2014 by photographing 12 individuals, including some young, recognizable by the black sooty coloring of the neck and head unlike adults, who are not distinguishable by sex and have a shiny black head and beak.

The species was again observed on 14.11.2014 in the marshy pastures of Le Cioccaie (9 individuals) and on the 15th of November during the opening of the Bolgheri Bird Sanctuary visits (4 individuals).



The African sacred ibis graze in gregarious form in search of food consisting mainly of invertebrates and small vertebrates, just like the cattle egrets. The curved beak allows them to probe the muddy ground of the bird sanctuary to identify potential prey.

The myth of the sacred ibis

In the representations of Egyptian hieroglyphics, the deity Thoth is mostly depicted with the mask of a sacred ibis, the large bird of the Nile.

The Egyptians associated the big beak with the moon. The ibis was regarded as one of the earthly representatives of Toth.

Egyptian mythology, Thoth was the god of the moon, the god of wisdom, time measuring and inventor of writing and numbers.

It is credited with devising the standard 365 days / year.

Toth was described in symbol combining the solar disk the crescent moon above his head, in words reminiscent biblical adoration heavenly lord, the Egyptian inscriptions legends attributed to Thoth the power of computing knowledge of the heavens and projects on the ground.

Paolo Maria Politi 23/11/2014

