



# **Everything Egrets**

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Snowy egrets are beautiful, white birds that live in shallow waters. Their grace and small size is quite a sharp contrast to their loud calls when they are near their nesting colonies.





Full-grown snowy egrets are all white except for the yellow **lores**, markings between their bill and eyes, their black legs, and yellow feet. Their lores turn red during the **breeding season**. Their long, fluffy plumes are called **aigrettes**. Baby snowy egrets have greenish-colored legs.





This egret is on the hunt. But, long ago, egrets used to be hunted for their feathers which put in women's hats as decoration. That decreased their population dramatically. Now, under the **Migratory Bird Treaty Act**, egrets are protected by U.S. law. Thankfully, their populations have rebounded.





Right now, this snowy egret is intently searching for fish or other **prey**. But, it also always has to be on the lookout for **predators**, who might eat it! Other birds, like hawks and owls, reptiles like poisonous snakes, and mammals like raccoons eat snowy egrets and their young.





The snowy egret lives in salt marshes, wetlands, riverbanks, lakesides, **estuaries** and even pools! They are not usually found in the mountains. This beautiful bird is native to North, Central and South America. It **migrates**, or flies south for the winter, and breeds in California, Nevada, Utah, Colorado, Arizona, New Mexico, Texas, Louisiana and Mississippi.





When the snowy egret  
flies, it holds its head back  
with its neck tightly curved.  
It takes flight with fast wing  
flaps and flies in flocks  
when going home to roost  
in the evening.





Snowy egrets eat worms, snails, frogs, fish, tiny reptiles and **crustaceans**. Standing in shallow water, they follow their prey by moving their feet, shaking their heads, making vibrations with their bills, or flapping their wings.





Sometimes, they hover, or "dip-fish," by dangling their feet as they fly just above the water surface. Snowy egrets can also stay very still and wait to surprise their prey.





You might see them standing on one foot sometimes. They are not trying to balance. They use one foot to stir up the mud and water in order to find prey. Their habitat of shallow ponds and marshes, or remote islands, have lots of worms, fish and reptiles.

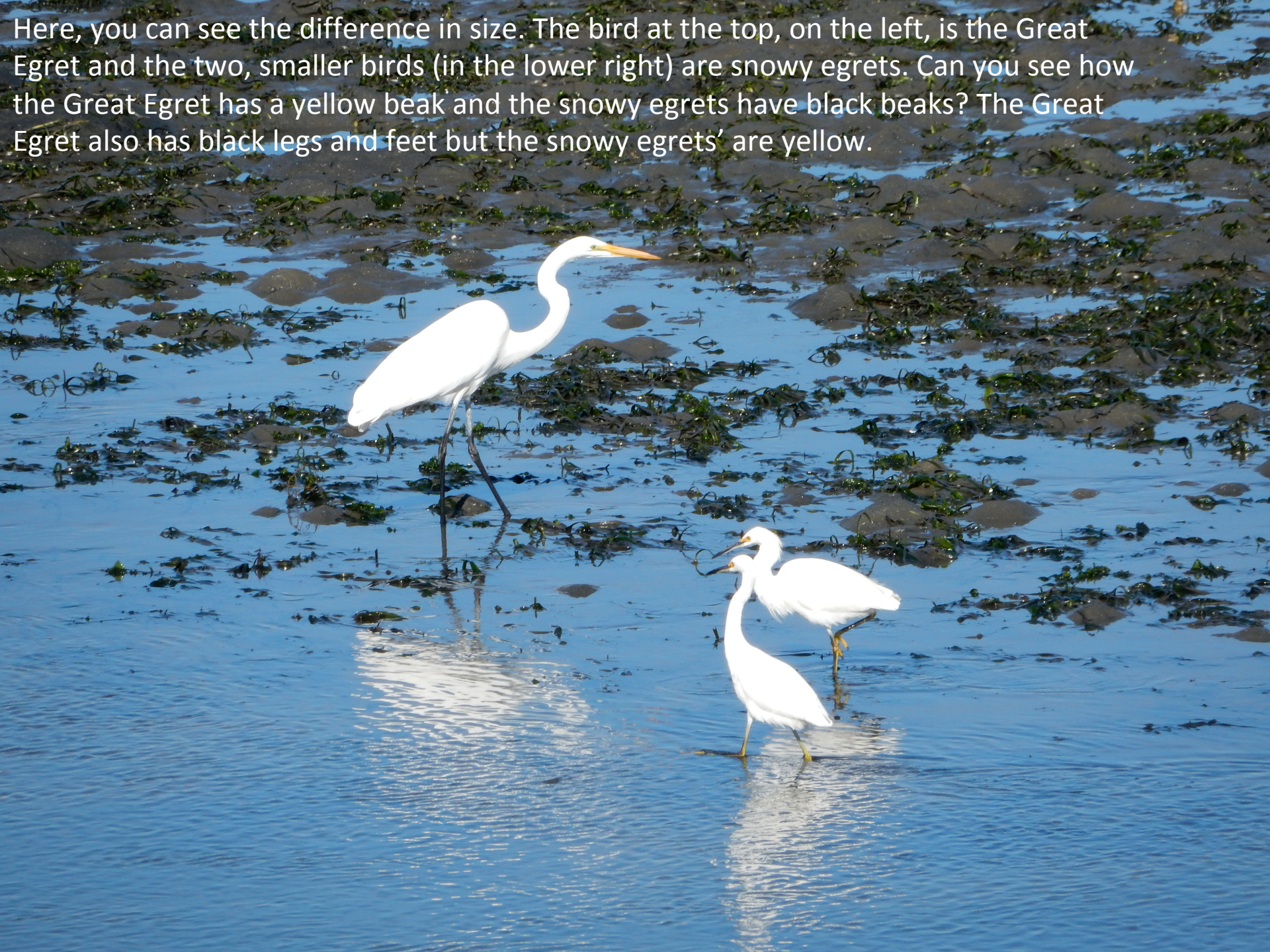




This big bird is not a snowy egret but, rather, a Great Egret. It is larger than the snowy egret and also long, white feathers its back during breeding season. Its graceful, S-shaped neck and white plumes look similar to the snowy egret.







Here, you can see the difference in size. The bird at the top, on the left, is the Great Egret and the two, smaller birds (in the lower right) are snowy egrets. Can you see how the Great Egret has a yellow beak and the snowy egrets have black beaks? The Great Egret also has black legs and feet but the snowy egrets' are yellow.




Egrets live and breed in mixed colonies, called **rookeries**, alongside herons, ibises and spoonbills. A male builds its nest in a tree, among vines or in thick undergrowth. Then, he does a type of dance to attract a female. He dips up and down, raises his bill, and dives through the air making a **mating call**.



Great Heron



A white egret stands in shallow, rippling blue water. The bird is facing slightly to the right, with its long neck extended upwards. Its long, thin legs are visible, and its long, straight beak is a pale yellowish-orange. The water is dotted with dark green seaweed and small, dark rocks. The background is a continuation of the water and seaweed, creating a natural, coastal setting.

The female he finds helps finish building the nest with twigs, grasses and moss brought by the male. The nest can be up to 15 in (38 cm) wide. The female will lay 3-6 pale bluish-green eggs which take about 24 days to hatch. The fledglings learn to fly 25 days after being born but do not leave the nest until a couple of months later.



The snowy egret can grow to about 26 inches high (66 centimeters) and has a 39 inch (100 centimeters) wingspan. The Great Egret can be 37.0-40.9 in (94-104 cm) tall and have a wingspan of 51.6-57.1 in (131-145 cm).





Egrets sometimes feed in the water and, other times, they hang out in open fields. They follow cattle, like cows, to get insects that the animals attract.





The scientific name for snowy egret is *Egretta Thula*. Adults grow those flowing feathers in the spring and summer on their heads, necks, and tails to attract mates.





Egrets move around a lot during the day but stay in their nesting ground in the evenings.  
That is everything about egrets!

