



### All About Bitterns

**Family:** Ardeidae, Herons, Egrets, Bitterns

*Coyote said "You shall stand around in the lake and whenever there are big schools of fish coming out of the lake into the creeks, you shall cry, 'It's dikubuhu.' Your name shall be Dikubuhu..."*

Dikubuhu (di – gu – ba - hu) not only feed on fish, but they alert people to when the fish are running up the creeks to spawn in the Spring. Native people caught great numbers of fish during these runs, and then dried and stored them to eat throughout the rest of the year. *Diigubuhu* provided an important service to human beings.

**Description** 23-34" (58-86 cm). American Bitterns are well camouflaged. Their streaked earth-toned bodies blend with the tules in which they live, as they stand motionless, awaiting the approach of unwitting prey. *Dikubuhu* holds its bill horizontally. When another animal approaches, it camouflages its presence by pointing its beak straight into the air. Its body, with feathers purposefully compressed, takes on a relatively slender appearance. While in this position, *diigubuhu* either stands still like a sentinel, or gently sways, apparently attempting to look like tules blowing in the breeze.

The American Bittern has a remarkable, though rarely seen courtship display. The male arches his back, exposing whitish plumes, shortens his neck, dips his breast forward, and "booms" at the female. Both members of the pair engage in a complicated aerial display flight. Bitterns spend most of their lives in concealment, stepping slowly and methodically through the reeds in search of food.



At close range adults show long black stripe down side of throat. Note that young night-herons are similar but stockier, with shorter necks and more rounded wings without dark tips; they lack the secretive habits of bitterns and are often confused with adult bitterns.

**Habitat** is freshwater and brackish marshes and marshy lakeshores; regular in salt marshes during migration and winter. 2-6 buff or olive-buff eggs placed on a platform of reeds concealed in a marsh. Does not nest in colonies.

**Range** Breeds from southeastern Alaska, Manitoba, and Newfoundland south to California, New Mexico, Arkansas, and Carolinas. Winters from coastal British Columbia, Southwest, Illinois, and along Atlantic Coast to Long Island (occasionally farther north), and south to Costa Rica (rarely) and Greater Antilles.



Bittern (30 in. long)

**Voice** On breeding grounds, a guttural pumping sound, oong-KA-chunk! repeated a few times and often audible for half a mile. Flight call a low kok-kok-kok. If you are lucky, you may hear these sounds in the Laguna. To hear the bittern's unusual sounds anytime, go to:

<http://www.birds.cornell.edu/AllAboutBirds/>

[BirdGuide/American\\_Bittern.html#sound](http://www.birds.cornell.edu/BirdGuide/American_Bittern.html#sound)

**"These were woven by adults for the children."**

from "Material Aspects of Pomo Culture "

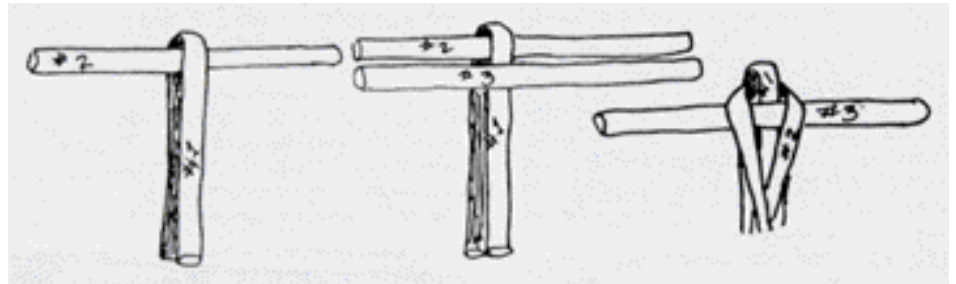
by S. A. Barrett, 1952

### Tule Bittern



1. Cut two 16", and eight to fourteen 8" tules, and flatten them.
2. Center a short tule (#2) over the middle of a long tule (#1), then fold the long one in half.
3. Center a 2nd short tule (#3) over the folded #1, just below #2.
4. Fold both halves of #2 over #3.

5. Continue with #4, as with #3, folding #3 over #4, then #4 over #5, #5 over #6, #6 over #7 until all the short tules are used.



6. When the last short tule is ready to fold down, place one end of the 2nd long piece over the doll, then fold down both sides of the short tule, locking it in place. Then use the long end remaining to wrap the lower part of the doll. Tuck the end of the tule under the last wrap and pull tight. Trim the ends.

