

THE ARBORETUM AT PENN STATE



GREAT BLUE HERON

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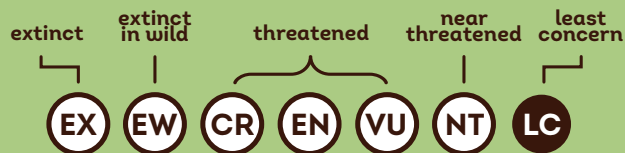
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Corner of Park Ave. and Bigler Road • University Park, PA 16802
arboretum.psu.edu 
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NAME: *Ardea herodias*

CONSERVATION STATUS:



SIZE: 5.5–6.5 feet

WEIGHT: 4.5–7.3 pounds

GROUP TERM: siege; colony

NUMBER OF YOUNG: 2–6

HABITAT: still, open water

LIFESPAN: 2–5 years

DISTRIBUTION:



GREAT BLUE HERON

DESCRIPTION

A beautiful but shy waterbird, the Great Blue Heron is the largest and most common heron in North America. This long-legged, slate-colored bird can be easily identified by its elongated bill, distinctive “S-shaped” neck, and tasseled breast feathers during the breeding season. Like many wading species, it can regularly be found near wetlands and other fish-bearing waters. Often seen quietly lurking against the shoreline, the Great Blue Heron will take flight if disturbed or startled.

DIET

The Great Blue Heron often spears and swallows fish, snakes, crabs, and other aquatic creatures by wading into the shallows, waiting for prey to move within striking range of its long neck.

THREATS

Although juvenile birds may be eaten by raccoons, bears, and avian raptors, adult herons are primarily threatened by human destruction of wetland habitats.

DID YOU KNOW?

- The Great Blue Heron spends approximately 90% of its waking hours stalking its prey.
- Considered by some to be a nuisance, this bird is known to frequent fisheries and backyard fish ponds.
- Flocks of herons (along other waterbirds, including egrets) nest in large colonies called “heronries,” often numbering in the hundreds.

“Great Blue Heron (*Ardea herodias*).” Arkive, n.d. Web. 22 June 2017.

“Great Blue Heron.” All About Birds. The Cornell Lab of Ornithology, n.d. Web. 22 June 2017.

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