



About Our Cover

The great blue heron (*Ardea herodias*), also referred to as “blue crane,” is the largest and most well known heron in North America. The bird’s distribution reaches through the United States and most of Canada, but it is also common to many other places in the New World. It is easily distinguished from other birds by its large size, bluish body, and long yellow bill. Great blue herons can be found in a range of open-water and wetland habitats in both fresh and salt waters. Marshes, sloughs, mangrove swamps, flooded meadows, and shorelines are but some of the habitats in which these birds can be found. They feed on small fish, invertebrates, amphibians, reptiles, small mammals, and birds. Characterized as monogamous, colonial breeders, great blue herons group together in heronries of dozens to hundreds of birds and build stick nests lined with twigs and leaves in trees that are typically 10–30 m tall. Less often, nests are found in low shrubs, rock ledges, or cliffs, or on the ground. Eggs are 5–7 cm long and are pale blue or light bluish-green in color and are laid in clutches of 2–7. Incubation is 3–4 weeks, and the young remain in the nest for up to 90 days. The species is listed as vulnerable in some parts of its range; habitat destruction and human disturbance can affect its ability to breed and raise young. Interestingly, however, some populations have become habituated to humans, as is the case for the bird photographed here at Lost Lagoon, near the entrance to Stanley Park, Vancouver, British Columbia, where great blue herons have been nesting for over 75 years. This photograph was taken by Biology Instructor Roy Rea of the University of Northern BC, with a Canon 5D and 300mm f/2.8 lens.

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