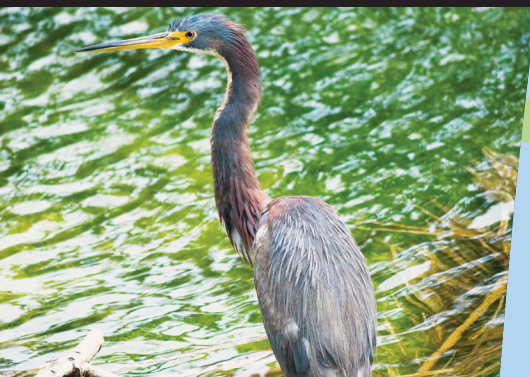


THE AMERICAN BIOLOGY TEACHER



About Our Cover

The tricolored heron (*Egretta tricolor*) is a common wading bird found along the Gulf Coast and the Southern Atlantic states. Like many other birds of its family, this heron is a very efficient, and patient, stalking predator. It will stand in shallow water like a statue for long periods, waiting for small prey items to travel within striking distance. It then spears into the water with its lance-like bill and snatches the creature before swallowing it whole. Most of its diet consists of fish, but it is a rather opportunistic predator and will readily feed on crustaceans, arthropods, amphibians, and small reptiles.

Although this is still a species of least concern, its numbers have seen a decline in some localized populations, as well as a significant northward and inland expansion of its traditionally coastal range. Like many predators of estuaries, swamps, and coastlines, it is especially susceptible to certain ecology-influencing factors such as water pollution, runoff, and fluctuations in marine temperatures and chemistry. As coastal biomes decline, this species and many others will likely continue their push into other habitats.

This photo was taken at Long Key Nature Center in Davie, Florida, by Ben Holdridge, a zoology student at Cal Poly Pomona and former wildlife biologist for the Frost Museum of Science in Miami. The photo was taken with a Nikon D5300 and Nikkor 55-200mm 5.6f at ISO 100, f/5.6, 1/250sec.

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