

Birds of Coastal Georgia



Created by Lindsay Bertch (2009)



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Large Wading Birds

UGA Marine Education Center & Aquarium
www.marex.uga.edu/aquarium

Great Blue Heron (*Ardea herodias*)



Photos courtesy of Lindsay Bertch

Size: 4' from beak to tail tip

Description: A tall, blue-gray bird with long neck, legs, and bill. White head with black eye stripe and long black plumes.

Similar Species: None. Large size and distinct color markings separate the great blue heron from other large wading birds.

Behavior: May be seen wading in the salt marsh and tidal creeks as well as flying overhead with its neck pulled in. Nests in colonies.

Great Egret (*Ardea alba*)

Photos courtesy of Lindsay Bertch



Size: 38" from beak to tail tip

Description: A large white bird with a yellow bill, long black legs, and black feet.

Similar Species: The **snowy egret** is smaller with a black bill, black legs, and yellow feet. The smaller immature **little blue heron** has a dark beak. The larger **wood stork** has a black head. The smaller **white ibis** has a curved, pink bill and pink legs. The smaller **cattle egret** is stockier and usually not found in salt water.

Behavior: May be seen wading in the salt marsh and tidal creeks as well as flying overhead with its neck pulled in. Nests in colonies.

Snowy Egret (*Egretta thula*)



Photos courtesy of Lindsay Bertch

Size: 20-27" from beak to tail tip

Description: A small white heron with a black bill, yellow feet, and yellow around the eyes.

Similar Species: The **great egret** is larger with black feet and a yellow bill. The immature **little blue heron** has dark feet. The larger **wood stork** has a black head. The **white ibis** has a curved, pink bill and pink legs. The **cattle egret** has a yellow bill.

Behavior: May be seen wading in the salt marsh and tidal creeks as well as flying overhead with its neck pulled in. Shakes feet in the water to scare fish while hunting. Nests in colonies.

White Ibis (*Eudocimus albus*)

Adult



Photo courtesy of Lindsay Bertch

Immature



Photo courtesy of Fran Lapolla

Size: 22-27" from beak to tail tip

Description: The adult is all white with a pink legs, face, and long, curved bill. Black wingtips visible during flight. The immature is dark with a white belly.

Similar Species: The **snowy egret** has a black bill, black legs, and yellow feet. The larger **great egret** has a yellow bill and black legs and feet. The **wood stork** is much larger with a black head. The smaller immature **little blue heron** has a dark bill and legs. The **cattle egret** has a yellow bill.

Behavior: Commonly seen wading in the salt marsh probing the ground for food or flying overhead with neck outstretched. May also be found feeding in open grassy fields after rain. Nests in colonies.

Wood Stork (*Mycteria americana*)



Photos courtesy of Fran Lapolla

Size: 5 ½' wing span, up to 40" tall

Description: A very large white bird with black legs, head, and heavy bill. Large black patches on wings and black tail visible during flight.

Similar Species: The smaller **great egret** has a white head and yellow bill. The **snowy egret** is much smaller and has a white head and yellow feet. The immature **little blue heron** is much smaller with a white head and dark legs and bill. The smaller **white ibis** has a curved, pink bill and pink legs. The **cattle egret** has a yellow bill.

Behavior: Endangered species. May be seen flying overhead with neck outstretched or wading at the edge of freshwater marshes with its head down searching for food. Nests in colonies.

Little Blue Heron (*Egretta caerulea*)

Adult



Photo courtesy of Lindsay Bertch

Immature



Photo courtesy of Fran Lapolla

Size: 24" from beak to tail tip

Description: A medium sized heron mostly dark blue/gray with a red/brown neck. Legs and bill are dark. Immature is all white with yellow/green legs and a dark beak.

Similar Species: The immature little blue heron resembles the **snowy egret** in size but does not have the snowy's bright yellow feet. The **great egret** is much larger and has a yellow beak. The larger **wood stork** has a black head. The **white ibis** has a curved, pink bill and pink legs. The **cattle egret** has a yellow bill.

Behavior: May be seen wading in the salt marsh and tidal creeks as well as flying overhead with its neck pulled in. Nests in colonies.

Green Heron (*Butorides virescens*)



Photo courtesy of Lindsay Bertch

Size: up to 19" tall

Description: A small, dark heron. Blue/green back and rusty red neck. Bill is dark and legs are green/yellow.

Similar Species: Small size distinguishes it from any other herons.

Behavior: May be seen perched on wires and ropes near the water. Has been observed using "bait" (placing pieces of grass on the surface of the water) to attract fish. Often nests in residential areas.

Tricolored Heron (*Egretta tricolor*)



Photos courtesy of Lindsay Bertch

Size: 26" from beak to tail tip, 36" wing span

Description: A medium-sized heron with a white belly and white neck stripe. Legs are yellow; back is dark blue and neck is dark brown.

Similar Species: The **little blue heron** has dark legs and lacks white markings.

Behavior: May be seen wading in the salt marshes, estuaries, or freshwater wetlands, and flying overhead with its neck pulled in. Nests in colonies.

References

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