



Wildlife Window: Great Blue Heron & Tricolored Heron

By the Rivendell Ponds & Preserves Committee

[Woodlands Word – August 2021]

7.1.21

Great Blue Heron <i>(Ardea Herodias)</i>	Meet Our Herons	Tricolored Heron <i>(Egretta tricolor)</i>
 <p>(Nancy Dobias photo)</p>	<p>Which Heron Is Which?</p>	 <p>(Sheila Pies photo)</p>
<p>This stately Great Blue Heron with its subtle blue-gray plumage often stands motionless as it scans for prey or wades belly-deep with long, deliberate steps. They may move slowly, but this Heron can strike like lightning to grab a fish or snap up a gopher. In flight, look for their widespread heron's tucked-in neck and long legs trailing out behind.</p>	<p>Appearance</p>	<p>The Tricolored Heron is a sleek and slender heron adorned in blue-gray, lavender, and white. The white stripe down the middle of its sinuous neck and its white belly set it apart from other dark herons. Tricolored Heron fly with legs extended and head drawn back to the shoulders using strong, steady, evenly spaced wing beats.</p>
<p>Frequent visitors in Rivendell along our pond shorelines, this tall, slow-moving heron is also found long river banks, edges of marshes, estuaries, and lakes across much of the U.S. Great Blue Herons also feed in meadows, farmland, and other open fields.</p>	<p>Habitat</p>	<p>This fairly small heron wades through coastal & pond waters in search of small fish, often running and stopping with quick turns and starts, as if dancing in a ballet. It builds stick nests in trees and shrubs, often in colonies with other wading birds.</p>
<p>Great Blue Herons can hunt day and night thanks to a high percentage of rod-type photoreceptors in their eyes that improve their night vision.</p>	<p>Unique Trait</p>	<p>Their white belly readily separates them from Little Blue Herons and Reddish Egrets. Their active foraging style separates them from the slow and more methodical Great Blue Heron.</p>
<p>These herons have specialized feathers on their chest that continually grow and fray. Great Blue Herons comb this "powder down" with a fringed claw on their middle toes, using the down like a washcloth to remove fish slime & oils from their feathers as they preen.</p>	<p>Fun Fact</p>	<p>Angry teenagers are not just a human phenomenon. As Tricolored Herons get older, they often lunge and snap at their parents when they arrive at the nest with food. To appease the youngsters, parents greet them with bows.</p>

Protect their Habitats. Let's keep our ponds and preserves healthy and attractive for these majestic Herons and all our wildlife friends. We can enjoy them, enhance our quality of life, and keep our property values strong. We remind you to view the amazing P&P Wildlife Photo Gallery.

[Visit: rivendellcommunity.com/ponds & scroll down to the Gallery.]