

## GREEN HERON

updated March 2017



<b>Range</b>	Eastern United States to northern tip of South America. Migratory: eastern breeders migrate via Florida, the Gulf Coast, and the Caribbean; while western breeders head through Mexico.
<b>Habitat</b>	Wooded ponds, marshes, rivers, reservoirs, and estuaries
<b>Diet (wild)</b>	Carnivorous, mainly eating fish and invertebrates
<b>Diet (captivity)</b>	
<b>Description</b>	Length: 16–18 inches; wingspan: 24 inches; weight: 8½ ounces. Adults have a glossy, greenish-black cap, a greenish back and wings that are gray-black grading into green or blue, a chestnut neck with a white line down the front, gray underparts and short yellow legs. The bill is dark with a long, sharp point. The neck is often pulled in tight against the body. Female adults tend to be smaller than males, and have duller and lighter plumage, particularly in the breeding season.
<b>Lifespan</b>	About 6 years
<b>Reproduction</b>	Incubation of 3–5 eggs lasts 19–21 days; nestlings fledge at about 17 days. Both the male and female brood and feed the chicks, which may stay with their parents for more than a month after leaving the nest as they learn to forage. The male begins building the nest before pairing up to breed, but afterward passes off most of the construction to his mate. The nest is nest 8–12 inches across, with a shallow depression averaging less than 2 inches deep, usually in a large fork of a tree or bush.
<b>Behavior</b>	Each breeding season, green herons pair up, performing courtship displays that include stretching their necks, snapping their bills, flying with exaggerated flaps, and calling loudly. They defend breeding areas from each other and from birds like crows and grackles that prey on their nests.
<b>Our animals</b>	1 male. Born: 2010
<b>Cool stuff</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Green herons are distinctive in flight, with slow beats of their rounded wings making them look a bit like a tailless crow.</li> <li>• Green herons are one of the world's few tool-using bird species. They create fishing lures with bread crusts, insects, earthworms, twigs, feathers, and other objects, dropping them on the surface of the water to entice small fish.</li> <li>• Green herons usually hunt by wading in shallow water, but occasionally they dive for deep-water prey and need to swim back to shore—probably with help from the webs between their middle and outer toes.</li> </ul>

Phylum  
ChordataClass  
AvesOrder  
PelecaniformesFamily  
ArdeidaeGenus  
Butoridesspecies  
*B. virescens*