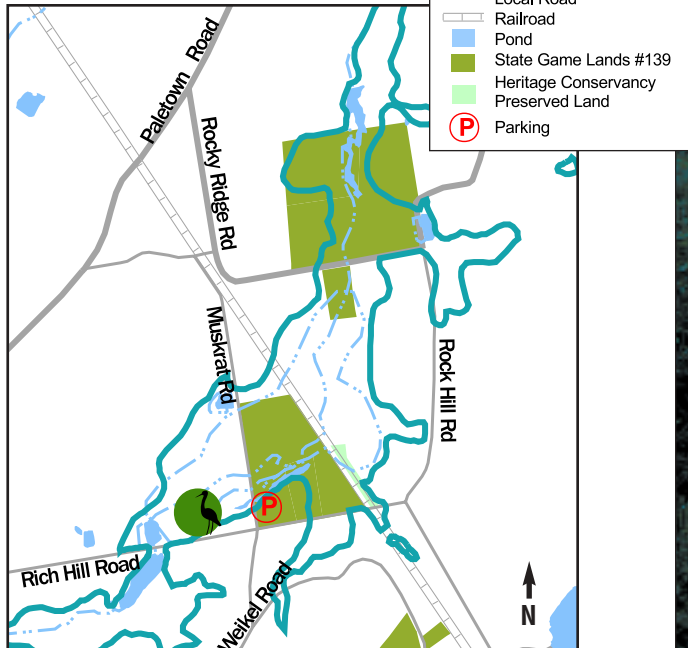


Quakertown Swamp and the Great Blue Heron

Quakertown Swamp... is the largest inland wetland in Bucks County and is designated by the Audubon Society as an Important Bird Area. The swamp is located 2 miles southeast of Quakertown along Bog Run and is 518 acres in size. Home to more than 91 bird species, the swamp also hosts the largest great blue heron colony in eastern Pennsylvania.

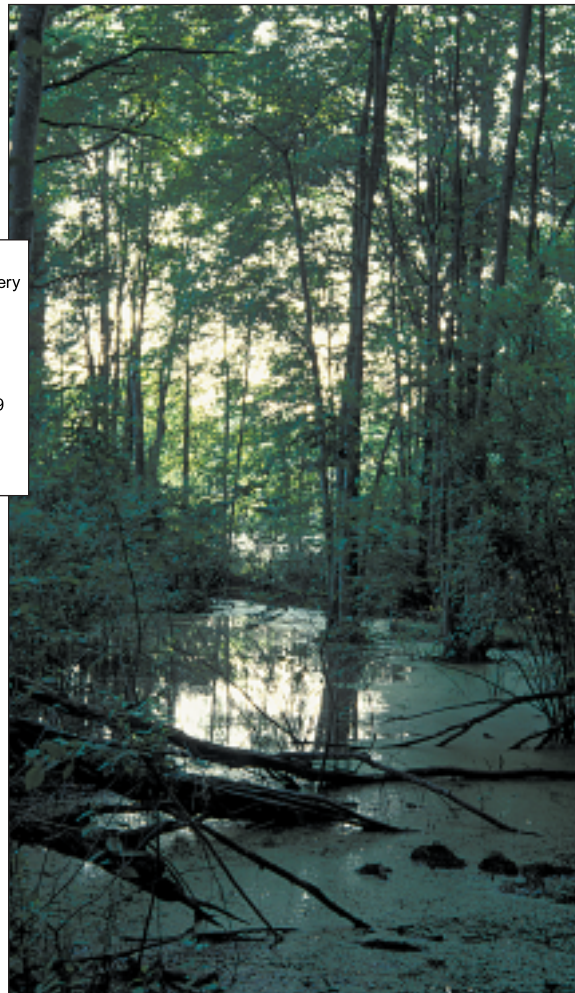
Although herons can be seen at the swamp throughout the year, the best viewing time is in early spring during breeding season. Visitors can stop in the small State Game Lands parking lot along Muskrat Road near the intersection of Rich Hill Road. Turn right out of the parking lot and walk 50 yards down Muskrat Road to view the colony of herons on the left. When you return to the parking lot, take a 10-minute walk beyond the gate to see other wildlife and view the shrub-scrub wetlands on the far side of a man-made pond.



Conservation Issues

A century ago, herons were killed for their feathers that were used to make clothing, especially hats. Although the Migratory Bird Treaty Act now protects them, herons are still at risk as wetland habitats are lost to development. You can help Heritage Conservancy sustain the great blue heron by supporting its efforts to protect the Quakertown Swamp and respecting heron nesting sites.

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Quakertown Swamp...

...A Home for Herons



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Thanks...

to the National Audubon Society, Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology, USGS Patuxent Wildlife Research Center, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Chesapeake Bay Field Office, NatureServe, Diane Allison and Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources for providing information for this brochure.

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For more information on the Quakertown Swamp, contact Heritage Conservancy at:



85 Old Dublin Pike, Doylestown, PA 18901
215-345-7020

or visit our website at:

<http://www.heritageconservancy.org>



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The Great Blue Heron (*Ardea herodias*)



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Identifying Characteristics

A white crown and a long, yellowish bill highlight a heron's head. A black plume starts behind its yellow eyes and extends partway down its S-shaped neck. The body is blue-gray with "shaggy" feathers at the base of the neck and on its back. The bend in the wing is marked with a black patch. Although its tail is short and blunt, its brownish legs are long and thin. Male and female birds have similar coloring.



© MARIE READ

Height: 3' – 5.5'

Weight: Approximately 5 pounds

With a wingspan of 6', herons can reach speeds of up to 20 to 30 miles per hour. They fly with a crooked neck, creating a silhouette that is distinctive from other birds.



Heron



Canada Goose

Habitat

Hérons live in wetland areas, like the Quakertown Swamp, where there is an ample supply of food and water and vegetative cover for their nests. They spend almost all of the day looking for food and are especially active at dusk and dawn. Herons dine on fish, salamanders, frogs, snakes, rodents, insects and small birds. They catch their prey by walking slowly to stalk an animal and then quickly lunging to capture their meal. Occasionally, they may choke trying to eat something too large to swallow.



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Breeding

In March and April, male and female herons take part in mating rituals and bond into pairs. Typically, hundreds of these pairs gather in a colony or rookery to nest in dead trees (called snags) using sticks to create a large platform that they cushion with moss, needles, and grass.

Hérons lay a clutch of 2 to 6 pale blue eggs that hatch after 28 days. Both "Mom" and "Dad" feed regurgitated fish to the young. As the little birds grow, they walk around the nest to test their wings. After 6-8 weeks, they leave the nest, taking short practice flights before leaving home.

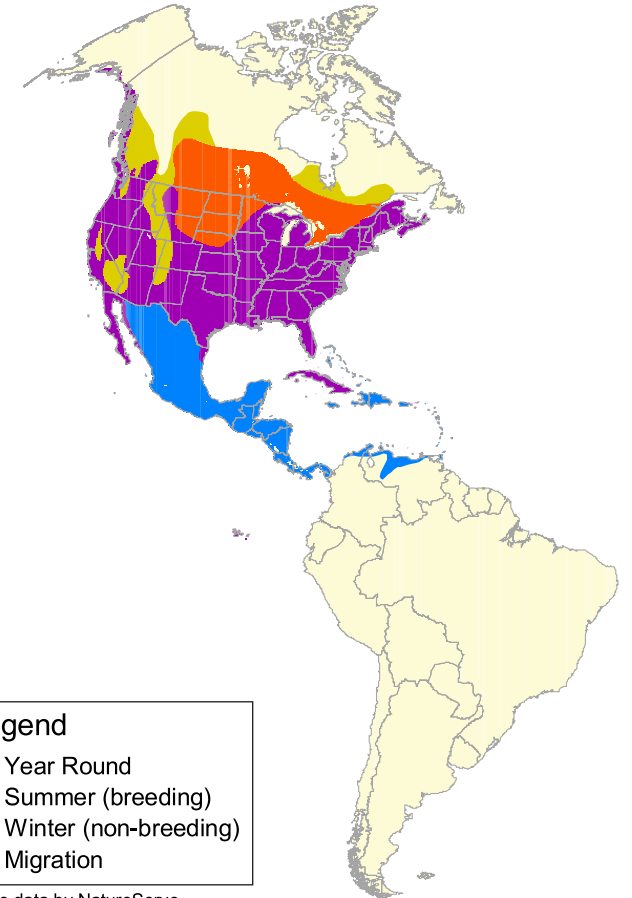


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Survival

Many juvenile herons do not survive the first year, but those that do may live as long as 15 years. They return, year after year, to the same rookery to breed, often repairing and reusing old nests. By raising their young in colonies, herons work together to protect their flock from predators like raccoons and birds of prey.

Great Blue Heron *Ardea herodias*



When the heron takes to flight, what a change in size and appearance!... There go two great undulating wings pinned together, but the body and neck must have been left behind somewhere."

– Henry David Thoreau