

Having great blue herons around shows we have a healthy fish population and a healthy Elizabeth River.



## Great Blue Heron

### *Ardea herodias*

**Size:** Up to 4.5 feet tall with a wingspan of up to 6.5 feet. **Lifespan:** 15 years

**Habitat:** The Elizabeth River and shorelines, marshes, wetlands, and open waters.

**Range:** Found near wetland communities all over most of North and Central America as well as the Caribbean and Galapagos Islands.

**Diet:** Most of their diet is made up of small fish, but they will also eat shrimp, crabs, rodents and other small mammals, amphibians, reptiles, and even other small birds. To catch fish they will often be seen to spread out their wings to create a shadow over the water to lure out fish and the herons will strike out very fast to grab their food.

**Appearance:** Great blue herons have blue-gray flight feathers (the ones on their wings and back used to fly and glide) and white feathers on their breast and head. Their most unique look is the long black plume on the back of their heads. When walking or flying the heron keeps their long neck pulled in but extend it out when hunting.

**Predators:** The only real predator of adult great blue herons, because of their size, are bald eagles. Hatchlings and eggs are eaten by a lot of different animals including raccoons, red-tailed hawks, turkey vultures, and ravens.

**Flight:** Great blue herons can be identified in flight by their broad pointed wings and their slow but steady wing beats.

**Voice:** Squawking *roh-roh-rohs* when coming into their nests. Will also communicate with each other by clacking their bills together. [https://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/Great\\_Blue\\_Heron/sounds](https://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/Great_Blue_Heron/sounds)

**What can you do?** Keep marine debris and trash out of the Elizabeth River. Properly dispose and recycle trash, never release balloons, and clean up litter, especially plastic.

### On-Line Resources

[https://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/Great\\_Blue\\_Heron/overview](https://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/Great_Blue_Heron/overview)

<https://www.audubon.org/field-guide/bird/great-blue-heron>

<https://www.nationalgeographic.com/animals/birds/g/great-blue-heron/>



[www.elizabethriver.org](http://www.elizabethriver.org)