

THE LITTLE BLUE HERON IN UPSTATE NEW YORK

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On 18 April 1975, my attention was drawn to an adult Little Blue Heron (*Florida caerulea*) feeding in shallow water in Rice Creek only 70 meters from the Rice Creek Biological Field Station laboratory, Oswego, Oswego County. The identification was confirmed by Carol Wernick and five other birders. The rich, slaty-blue plumage, dark legs, and the blue-grey, dark-tipped bill were easily seen through 7 x 35 binoculars and a 15x spotting scope. The bird fed in Rice Creek for 5 hours before departing.

This is the sixth report from Region 5 in the past 20 years (F. G. Scheider, pers. comm.). Three of the birds were in adult plumage and three in the white immature plumage. The previous sightings were at the Howland's Island Game Management Area, at Phoenix, and at Derby Hill. The appearance of the birds in this region appears to be correlated with tropical storms to the south and with advancing warm fronts accompanied by southerly or southwesterly winds. One of the immature birds appeared as a result of Hurricane Bertha on 10 August 1957 and another immature appeared on 27 September 1970 as tropical storm Greta generated high winds over south Florida. The adults appeared only in spring on warm south or southwest winds funneled northeastward by low pressure systems advancing from west to east along the gulf coast states. These same conditions are ideal for migratory flights along the Atlantic and Mississippi flyways.

The Little Blue Heron has established small nesting colonies at present only on Long Island (Region 10) at five locations: Canarsie Pol, Jamaica Bay, Kings Co.; Lawrence Marsh (6 pairs in 1968) and Tobay Pond, Nassau Co.; and Oak Beach and Gardiner's Island, Suffolk Co. (Bull, 1974, *Birds of New York State*, p. 79). The Gardiner's Island colony is the northernmost nesting locality of the Little Blue Heron in New York and probably in North America.

All sightings reported from upstate are of non-breeding birds, with both extreme dates reported from Region 3: 23 March at Branchport, an adult, and 23 October at Ithaca, an immature (*The Kingbird* 18: 34 and 97, 1968). Table 1 summarizes the sightings of Little Blue Herons in upstate New York since 1957.

Table 1.
Recent sightings of the Little Blue Heron in New York outside of Region 10.

Region	No.	Plumage	Location	Date	Authority*
1	1	Adult	Angelica, Allegany Co.	30 Aug 64	15:26, 1965
	1	Imm.	Bear Lake Outlet, Stockton	3 May 70	20:183, 1970
	1	Adult	Iroquois N.W.R.	18 May 74	24:129, 1974
2	1	Adult	Hamlin	1 May 73	23:195, 1973
	1	Adult	Braddock's Bay	3 Jun 73	23:195, 1973
	1	Adult	Braddock's Bay	22 Apr 76	Taylor, Tetlow,
					Perrigo pers. comm.
	1	Adult	Is. Cottage Woods, Greece	2 May 76	Listman, Skelly,
					Perrigo pers. comm.
3	1	Adult	Millport	27 Apr 57	7:56, 1957
	7	Imm.	Montezuma N.W.R.	Summer 57	7:93, 1957
	1	Adult	Montezuma N.W.R.	24 Apr 60	10:62, 1960
	1	Imm.-Pied	Montezuma N.W.R.	11 Jun 63	13:21, 1963
	1		Dryden Lake	4 Apr 64	14:163, 1964
	1	Imm.	Montezuma N.W.R.	21 Oct 66	17:32, 1967
	1	Imm.	Ithaca	23 Oct 67	18:34, 1968
	1	Adult	Branchport	23 Mar 68	18:97, 1968
	1	—	Spencer	17 May 69	19:152, 1969
	1	—	Masonville	25 Sep 60	10:180, 1960
4	1	Imm.	Howland's Island G.M.A.	10 Aug 57	7:97, 1957
5	1	Adult	Phoenix	19 May 59	9:89, 1959
	1	Imm.-Pied	Howland's Island G.M.A.	25 Jul 65	15:238, 1965
	1	Imm.	Derby Hill	27 Sep 70	21:26, 1971
	1	Adult	Derby Hill	22 Apr 74	24:145, 1974
	1	Adult	Rice Creek B.F.S.	18 Apr 75	This note

Region	No.	Plumage	Location	Date	Authority*
6	1	Adult	Watertown	9 May 65	15:157, 1965
7	(No reports)				
8	1	—	Westerlo	6 Sep 61	11:226, 1961
	1	Adult	Old Chatham	22 Aug 64	15:49, 1965
	1	—	Albany	16 May 70	20:147, 1970
	1	Imm.	Muitzeskill Creek	10 Oct 72	23:62, 1973
9	1	—	Cruger's I., Dutchess Co.	Apr 60	10:77, 1960
	1	Adult,	Harmon	13 Aug 64	14:237, 1964
	2	Imm.			
	1	Imm.	Poughkeepsie	14 Aug 64	14:237, 1964
	4	Imm.	Newburgh	8 Aug 64	14:237, 1964
	6	—	Newburgh	9 Aug 65	15:251, 1965
	1	—	Lake DeForest, Rockland Co.	23 Jul 65	15:251, 1965
	3	Imm.	Newburgh	22 Aug 65	16:56, 1966
	1	—	Mt. Kisco	28 Mar 66	16:182, 1966
	1	—	Rockland Lake	27 Apr 66	16:182, 1966
	4	Adult,	Katonah	17 Aug 66	17:55, 1967
	1	Imm.			
	1	Adult	Vanderberg Cove, Dutchess Co.	17 Apr 69	19:178, 1969
	2	Imm.	Pine Plains	17 Aug 70	20:202, 1970
	1	Imm.	Poughkeepsie	23 Aug 70	21:38, 1971
	1	—	Cruger's I., Dutchess Co.	17 May 71	21:175, 1971
	1	Imm.	Cruger's I., Dutchess Co.	10 May 72	22:151, 1972
	1	Adult	East Park	21 Jul 73	23:211, 1973
	1	Imm.	Cornwall Bay	21 Jul 73	23:211, 1973
	1	—	Cruger's I., Dutchess Co.	24 Apr 74	24:156, 1974
	1	Imm.	Piermont Pier, Rockland Co.	21 Jul 74	24:209, 1974
	1	—	Roosevelt Cove, Hyde Park	24 Sep 74	25:54, 1975

* References are to *The Kingbird* unless otherwise noted.



Little Blue Heron

JFK Sanctuary, Oyster Bay, L.I.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

George R. Maxwell, II is a native of West Virginia and he received both an AB and an MS in biology from West Virginia University. After teaching in Texas, he attended Ohio State for his Ph.D. in Zoology, and then moved on to teach in South Carolina. He finally made it to New York State in 1966 and is the present Director of The Rice Creek Biological Field Station at SUNY Oswego, and a Professor of Zoology. He is at present involved in a survey of bird populations along the St. Lawrence River in Jefferson and St. Lawrence Counties, for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Eaton (1910, *Birds of New York*, pt. 1, p. 260) called the Little Blue Heron an "accidental summer visitant" and all records were from Long Island except for upstate sightings at Oneonta in 1899 and Binghamton in 1900. Bull (1974, *Birds of New York State*, p. 76) reported a rare status for the heron except in 1929-30, 1936 and 1948 when larger flights occurred. The recent reports summarized here indicate that sightings do seem to be on the increase, especially in Region 9. Immatures continue to outnumber the adults; 32 immatures vs. 19 adults are reported in Table 1. The Little Blue will probably remain a rare to uncommon summer visitant in upstate areas for several years, with increases in sightings in Region 9 continuing to be reported.