

Little Blue Heron - 2 immatures
Willow Slough, NE Mills County, Iowa

Aug 1, 2, 3, 6, 7, 8, (9, 10), 1977

Description: A shining white heron that comes up to the shoulder of a ~~Great Blue~~ Great Blue when standing near the larger bird. Plumage all white. Legs, feet, + bill light. When I got close to the bird, I ~~to~~ could tell the legs + feet were dull yellowish green. The bill was light gray with a black tip.

Behavior: Not overly social. Though the birds sometimes roost + fly together, they feed + often roost apart, sometimes at opposite ends of the slough. Feeds in shallower water than the Great Blues, and moves away if they approach. Sometimes disappears in weeds. More active feeds than the Great Blues, swaying the neck + head, sometimes swaying the whole body from the heels. Spend a lot of time preening. One tried to land ^{on} floating plants, sank up to its body, and flew to a branch to preen. Rather tame. Walks around when feeding.

Habitat: shallow lake + marsh that is Willow Slough.

Similar species: this heron resembles every other white Heron or egret.

Albino Heron: this is what I thought it was at first, but it turned out to have color in bill + legs.

"Great white Heron" can be eliminated by size and range

Snowy Egret: has black legs + bill

Great Egret: has yellow bill w/out black tip, + dark legs

Cattle Egret: has yellow to orange bill ~~with~~ without black tip. has yellow to dark (not green) legs, + is sociable, + wouldn't spend over a week in a marsh.

Reddish egret: has a similar bill, but with base flesh-colored rather than gray. Has bluish, not green, legs, ~~and~~ has a shaggy neck, and is unlikely to be found in Iowa.

The white primaries eliminate other white large birds. The only thing left is immature Little Blue Heron.

Distance, light: usually seen from half way or farther across the slough, but on August second I waded through the muck on the east side of the slough and got within 30 yards (even less?) of the bird. All the wood ducks near it flushed, but I got a clear view of legs + bill w/ 8.5x Binoculars. alternate sun + shade from clouds. little wind. The bird was North of me at noon.

Aug 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31

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W. Lawrence County, Iowa

Experience: I never seen a young Little Blue Heron before, but
I've seen Snowy + Great Egrets often.

Books: None August 1. That night I consulted Birds of North
America and the eastern Peterson so I would know what to
look for August 2.

Written August 9 from notes taken in the field, mainly the notes from
August 1 and 2.

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Similar species: This heron resembles every other white heron
or egret.
All in heron this white heron is a heron, but it turned out
I have seen a bill + leg.
"Great white heron" can be identified by size and shape
Snowy egret: has black legs + bill
Great egret: has yellow bill + yellow legs
Cattle egret: has yellow bill + yellow legs + would
have yellow back (not green) legs + waxy + would
open over a week in a marsh
Little blue heron: has a similar bill, but with blue feet + neck
rather than gray. Has blue, not green, legs + has
shaggy neck, and is unlikely to be found in marsh.
The white heron resembles other white large birds. The
only bird left is immatures Little Blue Heron.
Distance, light: it was all seen from top of a fence across the
shrub, but on August 2 I was in a wooded thicket through the marsh of the
east side of the shrub and got within 30 yards (see below) of
the bird. All the wood ducks were to be found, but I got a clear
view of legs + bill w/ 8.2 x binoculars. Attempts were made
from above. Little blue. The bird was back of me at a noon