

Ardea herodias (Great Blue Heron)

Priority 2 Species of Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN)

Class: *Aves* (Birds)

Order: *Pelecaniformes* (Peleicans, Herons, Ibises, And Allies)

Family: *Ardeidae* (Bitterns, Egrets, Herons, And Night-herons)

General comments:

Steady decline in coastal breeding population since early 70s; confirmed by 2009 census. Coastal island breeding population declined 73% from 1983-2013. In 2009, 83 active colonies statewide hosting 1,071 pairs. Far too large of a population to list above SC.

Species Conservation Range Maps for Great Blue Heron:

Town Map: [Ardea herodias Towns.pdf](#)

Subwatershed Map: [Ardea herodias_HUC12.pdf](#)

SGCN Priority Ranking - Designation Criteria:

Risk of Extirpation: NA

State Special Concern or NMFS Species of Concern:

Ardea herodias is listed as a species of Special Concern in Maine.

Recent Significant Declines:

Great Blue Heron is currently undergoing steep population declines, which has already led to, or if unchecked is likely to lead to, local extinction and/or range contraction.

Notes:

Coastal island breeding population declined 73% from 1983-2013. [1983: 1208 prs on 20 islands; 2013: 330 prs on 10 islands.]

Regional Endemic: NA

High Regional Conservation Priority: NA

High Climate Change Vulnerability: NA

Understudied rare taxa: NA

Historical: NA

Culturally Significant: NA

Habitats Assigned to Great Blue Heron:

Formation Name Agricultural

Macrogroup Name Agricultural

Habitat System Name: Pasture-Hay **Notes:** *Forage for small mammals and/or reptiles.*

Formation Name Boreal Upland Forest

Macrogroup Name Boreal Upland Forest

Habitat System Name: Acadian Low Elevation Spruce-Fir-Hardwood Forest **Notes:** *Nesting colonies*

Habitat System Name: Acadian Sub-boreal Spruce Flat **Notes:** *Nesting colonies*

Formation Name Cliff & Rock

Macrogroup Name Rocky Coast

Habitat System Name: North Atlantic Cobble Shore **Notes:** *Foraging area*

Formation Name Coastal Scrub-Herb

Macrogroup Name Coastal Grassland & Shrubland

Habitat System Name: Northern Atlantic Coastal Plain Dune and Maritime Grassland **Notes:** *Foraging area*

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Formation Name	Developed
Macrogroup Name	Maintained Grasses and Mixed Cover
Habitat System Name:	Urban & Recreational Grasses Notes: <i>Forage for small mammals and/or reptiles.</i>
Formation Name	Freshwater Marsh
Macrogroup Name	Coastal Plain Pond
Habitat System Name:	Northern Atlantic Coastal Plain Pond Notes: <i>Nest in snags and live trees on edges; forage in wetland.</i>
Macrogroup Name	Emergent Marsh
Habitat System Name:	Laurentian-Acadian Freshwater Marsh Notes: <i>Nest in snags and live trees on edges; forage in wetland.</i>
Macrogroup Name	Modified-Managed Marsh
Habitat System Name:	Modified-Managed Marsh Notes: <i>Nest in snags and live trees on edges; forage in wetland.</i>
Macrogroup Name	Wet Meadow-Shrub Marsh
Habitat System Name:	Introduced Wetland and Riparian Vegetation Notes: <i>Nest in snags and live trees on edges; forage in wetland.</i>
Habitat System Name:	Laurentian-Acadian Wet Meadow-Shrub Swamp Notes: <i>Nest in snags and live trees on edges; forage in wetland.</i>
Formation Name	Grassland & Shrubland
Macrogroup Name	Lake & River Shore
Habitat System Name:	Laurentian-Acadian Lakeshore Beach Notes: <i>Forage where shallow water.</i>
Macrogroup Name	Ruderal Shrubland & Grassland
Habitat System Name:	Ruderal Upland - Old Field Notes: <i>Foraging area</i>
Formation Name	Intertidal
Macrogroup Name	Intertidal Gravel Shore
Habitat System Name:	Lower Intertidal Notes: <i>Foraging area</i>
Macrogroup Name	Intertidal Mudflat
Habitat System Name:	Freshwater Tidal Marsh Notes: <i>Foraging area</i>
Habitat System Name:	Non-Vascular Mudflat Notes: <i>Foraging area</i>
Habitat System Name:	Submerged Aquatic Vegetation Notes: <i>Foraging area</i>
Macrogroup Name	Intertidal Sandy Shore
Habitat System Name:	Sand Flat Notes: <i>Foraging area</i>
Habitat System Name:	Submerged Aquatic Vegetation Notes: <i>Foraging area</i>
Macrogroup Name	Intertidal Tidal Marsh (peat-forming)
Habitat System Name:	Acadian Coastal Salt Marsh Notes: <i>Foraging area</i>
Habitat System Name:	Coastal Plain Tidal Marsh Notes: <i>Foraging area</i>
Formation Name	Northeastern Upland Forest
Macrogroup Name	Central Oak-Pine
Habitat System Name:	North Atlantic Coastal Plain Maritime Forest Notes: <i>Nesting colonies</i>
Macrogroup Name	Northern Hardwood & Conifer
Habitat System Name:	Laurentian-Acadian Pine-Hemlock-Hardwood Forest Notes: <i>Nesting colonies</i>
Habitat System Name:	Laurentian-Acadian Red Oak-Northern Hardwood Forest Notes: <i>Nesting colonies</i>

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Formation Name		Northeastern Upland Forest	
Habitat System Name:		Northeastern Coastal and Interior Pine-Oak Forest	Notes: <i>Nesting colonies</i>
Macrogroup Name		Plantation and Ruderal Forest	
Habitat System Name:		Ruderal Forest - Northern and Central Hardwood and Conifer	Notes: <i>Nesting colonies</i>
Formation Name		Northeastern Wetland Forest	
Macrogroup Name		Northeastern Floodplain Forest	
Habitat System Name:		Laurentian-Acadian Floodplain Systems	Notes: <i>Nesting and foraging.</i>
Macrogroup Name		Northern Swamp	
Habitat System Name:		North-Central Appalachian Acidic Swamp	Notes: <i>Nesting Colonies</i>
Habitat System Name:		Northern Appalachian-Acadian Conifer-Hardwood Acidic Swamp	Notes: <i>Nesting colonies</i>
Formation Name		Subtidal	
Macrogroup Name		Subtidal Bedrock Bottom	
Habitat System Name:		Kelp Bed	Notes: <i>Forage at low tide</i>
Macrogroup Name		Subtidal Coarse Gravel Bottom	
Habitat System Name:		Kelp Bed	Notes: <i>Forage at low tide</i>
Macrogroup Name		Subtidal Mud Bottom	
Habitat System Name:		Submerged Aquatic Vegetation	Notes: <i>Forage at low tide</i>
Habitat System Name:		Unvegetated	Notes: <i>Forage at low tide</i>

Stressors Assigned to Great Blue Heron:

Stressor Priority Level based on Severity and Actionability		Moderate Severity	High Severity
	Highly Actionable	Medium-High	High
	Moderately Actionable	Medium	Medium-High
	Actionable with Difficulty	Low	Low

IUCN Level 1 Threat **Biological Resource Use**

IUCN Level 2 Threat: Logging and Wood Harvesting

Severity: Moderate Severity **Actionability:** Highly actionable

Notes: Upland heron colonies very vulnerable to logging of nest trees as well as disturbance associated with logging activities. BMPs with timing restrictions and no-harvest buffers can prevent colony loss and abandonment.

IUCN Level 1 Threat **Biological Resource Use**

IUCN Level 2 Threat: Hunting and Collecting Terrestrial Animals

Severity: Moderate Severity **Actionability:** Moderately actionable

Notes: Beaver flowages are prime nesting habitat; by removing beavers completely from individual wetlands, contribute to nesting habitat loss and the need to relocate colony.

IUCN Level 1 Threat **Human Intrusions and Disturbance**

IUCN Level 2 Threat: Recreational Activities

Severity: Moderate Severity **Actionability:** Moderately actionable

Notes: Outdoor recreation can cause disturbance to nesting birds; would need to restrict activities within and adjacent to colonies during nesting.

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IUCN Level 1 Threat Invasive and Other Problematic Species, Genes and Diseases

IUCN Level 2 Threat: Problematic Native Species-Diseases

Severity: Moderate Severity **Actionability:** Moderately actionable

Notes: Raccoons known to cause complete colony failure at individual colonies - may be a widespread issue; can prevent with predator guards on nest trees?

IUCN Level 1 Threat Other Options

IUCN Level 2 Threat: Lack of knowledge

Severity: Moderate Severity **Actionability:** Moderately actionable

Notes: Cause of coastal decline still unknown, although possibilities include forage base and/or predators. More research needed.

IUCN Level 1 Threat Residential and Commercial Development

IUCN Level 2 Threat: Commercial and Industrial Areas

Severity: Moderate Severity **Actionability:** Moderately actionable

Notes: Disturbance associated with human activity in developed areas can cause colony abandonment.

IUCN Level 1 Threat Invasive and Other Problematic Species, Genes and Diseases

IUCN Level 2 Threat: Problematic Native Species-Diseases

Severity: Moderate Severity **Actionability:** Actionable with difficulty

Notes: Bald eagles increasingly known to discourage heron nesting in areas; also known to attack and kill juveniles and adults.

Species Level Conservation Actions Assigned to Great Blue Heron:

None. *Only species specific conservation actions that address high (red) or medium-high (orange) priority stressors are summarized here.*

Guild Level Conservation Actions:

This Species is currently not attributed to a guild.

Broad Taxonomic Group Conservation Actions:

Relevant conservation actions for this species are assigned within broader taxonomic groups in Maine's 2015 Wildlife Action Plan: Element 4, Table 4-1.

Habitat Based Conservation Actions:

Additional conservation actions that may benefit habitat(s) associated with this species can be found in Maine's 2015 Wildlife Action Plan: Element 4, Table 4-15. Click on the Habitat Grouping of interest to launch a habitat based report summarizing relevant conservation actions and associated SGCN.

The Wildlife Action Plan was developed through a lengthy participatory process with state agencies, targeted conservation partners, and the general public. The Plan is non-regulatory. The species, stressors, and voluntary conservation actions identified in the Plan complement, but do not replace, existing work programs and priorities by state agencies and partners.