

Wading Birds: Our Wetland Neighbors

White Ibis (*Eudocimus albus*)



The White Ibis has bright red legs and a long red bill. In flight, its black wing tips are visible. It feeds on small aquatic animals by probing its bill into the wetland floor. It flies up to 15 miles a day looking for food and can live in colonies of thousands of birds in wetlands, coastal marshes and swamps.

Fact: The White Ibis is the mascot of the Miami Hurricanes, due to the bird's reputation as the last to leave before a hurricane and the first to return.

Green Heron (*Butorides virescens*)



When feeding, the Green Heron is intolerant of other birds. It is active at dusk and dawn, taking shelter during the day. It feeds on small fish, frogs, and aquatic arthropods. This bird is hard to spot as it remains still waiting for prey to come by. Keep an ear out for its loud squawking "kyow".

Fact: The Green Heron sometimes drops bait, such as small leaves or twigs, onto the water's surface to attract prey, such as small fish.

Wood Stork (*Mycteria americana*)



The Wood Stork, with its bald, featherless head, feeds on small fish. It breeds in Florida in late winter, when dry spells cause fish to concentrate in small pools. When hunting, the Wood Stork will leave its bill slightly open in the water keeping very still. When a fish touches its bill, it snaps shut in less than one hundredth of a second!

Fact: The Wood Stork is the only stork that breeds in the United States.

The Little Blue Heron can be found foraging for small fish along the border of marsh wetlands. The bird captures prey, usually fish, by stalking it and quickly grabbing prey in its bill. Juveniles are completely white, and turn dark blue as adults.

Little Blue Heron (*Egretta caerulea*)



Fact: The Little Blue Heron is the only heron that looks completely different as a juvenile versus as an adult.

What are Wading Birds?

Wading birds get their name from their long legs, which they use to wade in shallow water to feed.

Why is NATL habitat good for these birds?

NATL provides wading birds with good wetland foraging habitat, water, and shelter.

The Snowy Egret is a small white heron, around two feet tall, with black legs and yellow feet. It lives in large inland and coastal wetland colonies with other wading birds. The bird feeds on fish, crustaceans, and insects by stalking prey in shallow water.



Snowy Egret (*Egretta thula*)

Fact: The Snowy Egret was hunted almost to extinction in the early 1900's for its beautiful feathers which were used to make ladies' hats.



Great Blue Heron
(*Ardea herodias*)

The Great Blue Heron is the largest heron to visit NATL, usually measuring over four feet tall. The bird is characterized by a very long neck and is largely gray. This heron prefers to nest in dead trees with other birds. The Great Blue Heron uses its neck and beak to feed by stabbing prey.

Fact: The Great Blue Heron makes a very deep croaking noise that sounds like "fraaahnk."

The Great Egret nests in colonies with other species of wetland birds. It feeds on fish, invertebrates, amphibians, reptiles, small birds, and small mammals. When hunting, the Great Egret folds its neck back and quickly extends it when prey is spotted.

Great Egret (*Ardea alba*)



Fact: The Great Egret is the symbol of the National Audubon Society, which was founded to protect birds from being killed for their feathers.