

## TRICOLORED HERON

*Egretta tricolor*

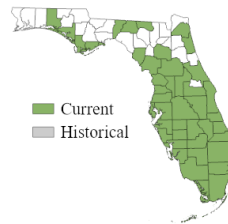
**Order:** Pelecaniformes

**Family:** Ardeidae

**FNAI Ranks:** G5/S4

**U.S. Status:** none

**FL Status:** Threatened



**Description:** Medium-sized heron with a slender neck. Body color appears two-toned with dark slate coloration on head, neck, and body that contrasts with white rump, belly, and undertail. A reddish-brown and white streak extends along the front of the neck. During breeding season, adults have white head plumes and rufous to whitish shoulders. Young birds (<1 year) have more reddish-brown on head, neck, and mantle; otherwise similar to adults.

**Similar Species:** Little blue heron (*Egretta caerulea*; see species account) and reddish egret (*E. rufescens*; see species account) have solid dark colors; great blue heron (*Ardea herodias*) is larger and has white streak down neck but dark belly and underparts. Great blue heron also has a dark swath that extends back from eye and contrasts with lighter colored top of head.

**Habitat:** Most nesting colonies occur on mangrove islands or in willow thickets in fresh water, but nesting sites include other woody thickets on islands or over standing water. Prefers coastal environments. Feeds in a variety of permanently and seasonally flooded wetlands, mangrove swamps, tidal creeks, ditches, and edges of ponds and lakes. Seasonal variation in water levels are particularly critical to nesting success, so alteration of wetlands used during breeding season can have negative consequences.

**Seasonal Occurrence:** Permanent resident and found throughout Florida in all seasons, except rare in winter in western Panhandle. Also somewhat less common inland in recent years, particularly during winter.

**Florida Distribution:** Most numerous along coast. Generally becoming less numerous in northern tier of counties (Alachua County northward). Nesting in Panhandle and northern interior more variable and restricted leading to few inland

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reports in Panhandle.

**Range-wide Distribution:** Occurs during breeding season from California to Texas and along northern Gulf coast; along Atlantic coast to Maine; south to central Brazil; leaves northern portion of range in winter.

**Conservation Status:** Once described as the most abundant heron in the state, but now much less common in interior. Long-term population trends are uncertain, but apparently declining. Need information on marked individuals to document in more detail the species' movement and wetland utilization patterns.

**Protection and Management:** Approximately 25 percent of nesting colonies occur in disturbed water impoundments or dredge-material islands, so management opportunities exist. Create new nesting sites or stabilize established sites through management. Survey and monitor to document population trends.

**References:** Poole and Gill (eds.) 1997, Robertson and Woolfenden 1992, Rodgers et al. (eds.) 1996, Runde et al. 1991, Stevenson and Anderson 1994.



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