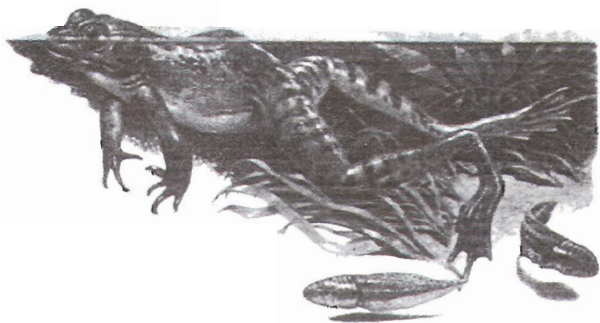


Tioga Great Blue Heronry

Range: The Great Blue Heron can be found breeding from Alaska and Canada south to Mexico. They winter from southern Canada to the northern part of South America. One can expect to see an occasional Great Blue at any time of the year as long as there is some open water for finding food.

Size: The Great Blue Heron stands close to four feet and has a six-foot wingspan. They weigh as much as five pounds and have a five-inch bill. It is the largest of all the North American herons. Our other common heron is the smaller Green-backed Heron.

Food: The Great Blue feeds primarily on aquatic organisms. These include fish, frogs, tadpoles, crayfish as well as snakes, turtles, salamanders



and the occasional bird or mouse. The Great Blue is a stalker which moves slowly in the water's shallows and, with a quick strike of its long neck, spears its prey.

Migration: Most of our Great Blues move south or to the coast for the winter season, but most start returning in March as the ice goes out and they prepare for nesting.

Nesting: By April the Great Blues are nest-building or reconstructing their nest, as the herons usually return to the same nesting colony (called a heronry). The nests are made of twigs and are about 3 feet across. Most nests are placed from 40 to 100 feet above the ground. Usually the nests are placed in deciduous trees such as Sycamore, Maple, Elm or Ash. By late April the nests should have a clutch of 3 to 6 blue eggs, the usual number being 5. Toward the end of May, some will have nestlings. By the end of July the fledglings will begin leaving the nests.



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