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Kale, H. W., II, B. Pranty, B. M. Stith, and C. W. Biggs. 1992. The atlas of the breeding birds of Florida. Final Report. Florida Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission, Tallahassee, Florida.

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Tricolored Heron *Egretta tricolor*

The Tricolored Heron, formerly known as the Louisiana Heron, is a slim, medium-sized heron. It is dark slate-blue on its head and upper body and has a purplish chest. It nests north along the Atlantic coast to Massachusetts and westward in coastal lowlands around the Gulf of Mexico and Caribbean, including the West Indies, to northern Brazil. It also nests between central Baja California and Ecuador on the Pacific coast.

Habitat. The Tricolored Heron is most numerous in saltwater and brackish-water habitats. It often forages alone in both freshwater and saltwater habitats, using a variety of capture techniques to glean small fish.

Tricolored Herons usually nest in colonies with other heron and ibis species. Platform nests of sticks are built in trees or bushes on islands or over standing water, or nests of flattened vegetation are built on the ground on salt marsh islands. Three to 4 blue-green eggs hatch in about 22 days, and the young fledge at about 16 to 21 days of age.

Seasonal Occurrence. Breeding for this species occurs from February through August. Spring migration has been documented in March and April; fall migration, in September and October.

Status. The Tricolored Heron breeds inland and along the coast, most commonly in the southern peninsula. Colonies become uncommon to rare in the northern peninsula. In the Panhandle, west to Okaloosa County, Tricolored Herons are confined largely to coastal breeding. Their numbers have decreased from approximately 35,000 breeding birds, in 1976-78 statewide surveys, to less than 16,000 in 1986-89 surveys (Runde et al. 1991). Probable causes of the decline are loss and degradation of wetlands and human development in the coastal zone.

The Tricolored Heron is designated a Species of Special Concern in Florida (Wood 1991).

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Sponsored by Claude and Eleanor Kleckner



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Tricolored Heron

