

Grey Heron

Ardea cinerea

Bird · Resident · here all year



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A tall, long-legged, dagger-billed grey bird — one of the largest and most conspicuous birds along the Nith and the Solway shore. Adults have a white head with a black eye-stripe extending into a drooping crest, and fly with the neck folded back into an S and the legs trailing, on slow, deeply bowed wings. Herons are present all year and can turn up on any pond, ditch or garden fishpool.

BEHAVIOUR

Hunting is a study in patience: the heron stands motionless in shallow water, or stalks with exaggerated slowness, then straightens its neck in a strike too fast to see clearly, taking fish, eels, frogs, voles and even ducklings. Herons nest colonially in treetop heronries, building bulky stick nests and laying very early — eggs are often in the nest by February, well before the leaves.

WHEN TO SEE IT

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QUICK FACTS

FAMILY	Herons (Ardeidae)
SIZE	90–98 cm · wingspan up to 1.95 m
UK STATUS	Green-listed

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