

43 Grey Heron

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Grey Heron. Adult (12-III).

GREY HERON (*Ardea cinerea*)

IDENTIFICATION

90-98 cm. Grey upperparts and wing coverts; white head, with black supercilium; white neck with two black lines; pale underparts; yellow bill; green or reddish legs.



Grey Heron. Pattern of upperparts and head.

SIMILAR SPECIES

Confusion only possible with **Purple Heron**, which has chestnut head, neck and underparts.



Purple Heron



SEXING

Plumage of both sexes alike; size can be an useful character in extreme birds (only **adults**): **male** with wing longer than 475 mm; bill longer than 125 mm; **female** with wing shorter than 430 mm; bill shorter than 109 mm.

AGEING

4 age groups can be recognized:

Juvenile with grey forehead, crown and nape; upperparts without ornamental feathers; upper mandible dark; with one age of very fresh flight feathers.

1st year winter/2nd year spring with grey crown, striped dull black; dull black nape with ornamental feathers shorter and less glossy than **adults**; upper mandible dark; with one age of **juvenile** flight feathers.

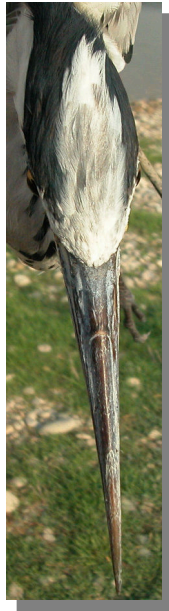
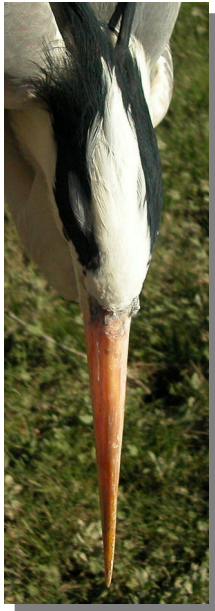
2nd year autumn/3rd year spring similar to **adults**, but with grey forehead and only some white feathers on crown; ornamental feathers shorter than in **adults**.

Adult with uniform grey upperparts with pale grey ornamental feathers on mantle and scapulars; pure white forehead and crown with black borders; long and glossy ornamental feathers on nape; upper mandible yellow-orange (mainly in spring).

CAUTION: some **adults** may have grey crown, but always have white nape.

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Grey Heron. Ageing. Pattern of crown and bill colour: left adult; right 2nd year autumn.



Grey Heron. Ageing. Pattern of crown and bill colour: left 2nd year spring; right juvenile.

PHENOLOGY

I	II	III	IV	V	VI	VII	VIII	IX	X	XI	XII

STATUS IN ARAGON

Resident, very scarce breeder with records in the Ebro river and Sariñena; more common wintering in the Ebro and tributaries.



Grey Heron. 2nd year autumn (10-IX)



Grey Heron. 2nd year spring (24-III)

MOULT

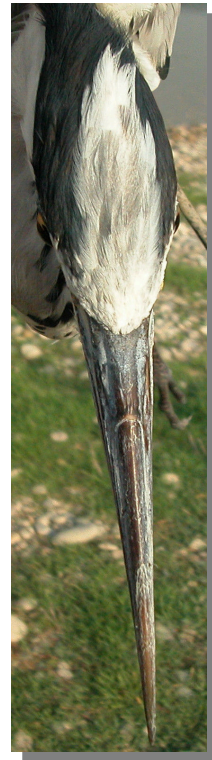
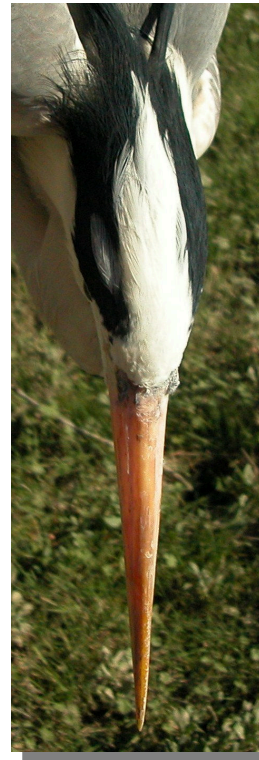
Complete **postbreeding** moult, usually finished in November. Partial **postjuvenile** moult confined to most of the body feathers and rarely some wing coverts; flight feathers remain unmoulted till their **2nd year**; some birds still moulting in February.

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Grey Heron. Juvenile (27-VII).



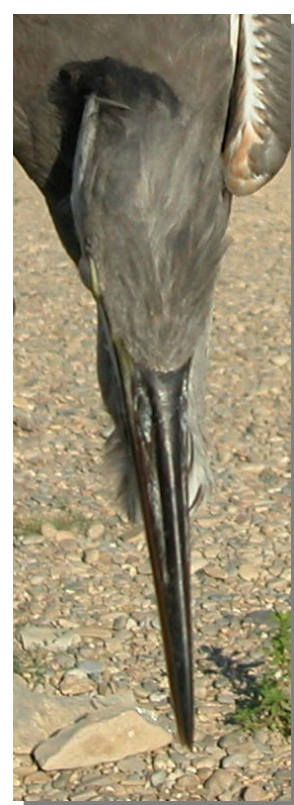
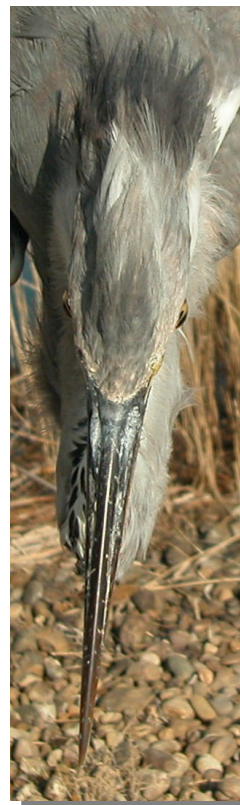
Grey Heron. Crown pattern: left adult (12-III); right 2nd year autumn (09-IX).



Grey Heron. Pattern of head and ornamental feathers on crown: top adult (12-III); bottom 2nd year autumn (09-IX).



Grey Heron. Pattern of head and ornamental feathers on crown: top 2nd year spring (24-III); bottom juvenile (27-VII).



Grey Heron. Crown pattern: left 2nd year spring (24-III); right juvenile (27-VII).

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Grey Heron. Nape pattern: left adult (12-III); right 2nd year autumn (09-IX).



Grey Heron. Breast pattern: left adult (12-III); right 2nd year autumn (09-IX).



Grey Heron. Nape pattern: left 2nd year spring (24-III); right juvenile (27-VII).



Grey Heron. Breast pattern: left 2nd year spring (24-III); right juvenile (27-VII).



Grey Heron. Pattern of neck and ornamental feathers on breast: left adult (12-III); right 2nd year autumn (09-IX).



Grey Heron. Pattern of flank: top adult (12-III); bottom 2nd year autumn (09-IX).



Grey Heron. Pattern of flank: top 2nd year spring (24-III); bottom juvenile (27-VII).



Grey Heron. Pattern of neck and ornamental feathers on breast: left 2nd year spring (24-III); right juvenile (27-VII).



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Grey Heron. Upperpart pattern: left adult (12-III); right 2nd year autumn (09-IX).



Grey Heron. Adult: pattern of primaries (12-III).



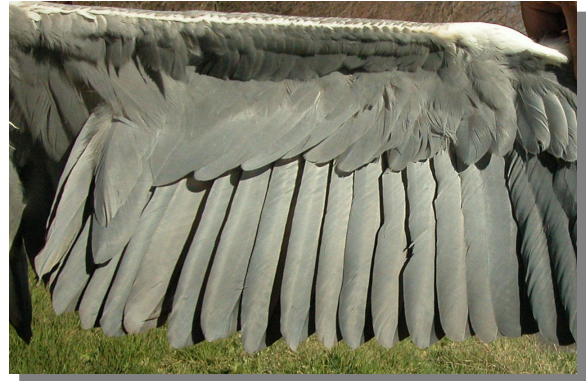
Grey Heron. Upperpart pattern: left 2nd year spring (24-III); right juvenile (27-VII).



Grey Heron. 2nd year autumn: pattern of primaries (09-IX).

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Grey Heron. 2nd year spring: pattern of primaries (24-III).

Grey Heron. Adult: pattern of secondaries (12-III).



Grey Heron. Juvenile: pattern of primaries (27-VII).

Grey Heron. 2nd year autumn: pattern of secondaries (09-IX).

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Grey Heron. Adult: pattern of wing (12-III).

Grey Heron. 2nd year spring: pattern of secondaries (24-III).



Grey Heron. 2nd year autumn: pattern of wing (09-IX).



Grey Heron. Juvenile: pattern of secondaries (27-VII).



Grey Heron. 2nd year spring: pattern of wing (24-III).

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Grey Heron. Juvenile: pattern of wing (27-VII).