

[Page 41 - Great Blue Heron](#)

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Drooping head & neck, shaking bill slowly side to side mate coming in. Copulation on a branch and in nest Post-copulation shaking and preening. Neck-crossing ceremony; repeated a few seconds after they righted themselves. There while the female assumes the responsibility for adding the new sticks to the nest. The presentation of each stick occasions display. He flies straight to the nest and alights on the rim uttering a greeting-call ar-re-ar-re-ar; his crest is erect and neckfeathers are raised, giving a thickened appearance to the upper part, while the pectoral plumes are arranged like a large rosette. The female stands on the nest, stretches to her fullest extent, sinks down again and stretches once more (the Cottrilles describe her as making a deep bow and emitting a long howl) with crest raised she takes the stick and weaves it into the fabric of the nest. These ceremonies always occasion excitement and sometimes lead to coition. "Coition takes place on the nest or on a branch, sometimes following the presentation of a stick, sometimes without any introductory behaviour. When there has been a stick it is first disposed of and then the pair generally bite each others' bills." Cottrilles: "Bird in nest (male) greets its approaching mate with posturing and howl. Both birds clap mandibles loudly, then walk around each other in the nest. The male strokes the female on the head, neck and back with his bill. Female crouches. Male steps on her back, grasps her neck feathers with his bill, and copulates, balancing with his wings. The female elevates her wings slightly, which helps to support him. Average duration of copulation was 12 to 15 seconds." The Great Blue Heron most commonly lays 7 eggs to a nest. The period of incubation is about 28 days and the male and female take turns sitting on the nest. They relieve one another every 4 to 6 hours during the day, but most observers feel only the hen sits through the night. The Cottrilles saw one heron bring food to its incubating mate, but this would be considered rare. Each one searches out its own food when away from the nest. The young are fed at the nest, again by both parents, at first on soft, regurgitated food and later on whole food carried in. Some observers indicate that the food, even for the newly-hatched, was vomited into the nest for the young to peck at; others saw the young receiving the food from the parent's bill. There is no question that at a later stage the young jab at the parent's bill, even grab it crosswise - an action which probably stimulates the parent to vomit the food. Audubon wrote: "The principal food of the great blue heron is fish of all kinds; but it also devours frogs, lizards, snakes, and birds, as well as small quadrupeds. Adult heron arrives to feed brood, displays to departing mate. (Photo Frank Lowe.) Warmth, Comfort and Farm-fashioned Hospitality await you at the Inn, INVERARY INN, Baddeck, Nova Scotia Our Dining Room is famed for its Scottish Fare\* Isobel and Dan MacAulay. Innkeepers The Inn Can old farmhouse > t \*" Bam and pine-paneled Cottages are located on the outskirts of Baddeck, just off the Trans-Canada Highway. A Berkshire Traveller Country Inn For Reservations Phone 902-295-2674