

GENERAL NOTES

A Green Heron gleaning honeybees.¹—Although the Green Heron (*Butorides striatus*) feeds primarily on fish, its diet is quite variable. An analysis of 255 stomachs by the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service found 44.5% of the prey were fish, 20.6% were crustaceans, 23.7% were aquatic insects and the remainder were other invertebrates such as spiders and snails Palmer 1962, Handbook of North American birds, Vol. 1, New Haven, Yale Univ. Press. Bent (1926, Life histories of North American marsh birds, U. S. Nat. Mus. Bull. 135) mentions the Green Heron taking terrestrial prey such as earthworms, crickets and grasshoppers.

On 15 July 1977 I was making observations from a blind at the Moore Creek Heronry on the Kennedy Space Center in Brevard County, Florida, when I noted a Green Heron standing on a branch about 3 m above the ground and striking at a cluster of white mangrove (*Laguncularia racemosa*) flowers (Fig. 1). Closer observation revealed that the bird, which was standing in a crouched position, was gleaning honeybees (*Apis mellifera*) that were walking from flower to flower. With a short thrust of its bill the heron captured a bee and held it at the tip of its mandibles for several seconds, during which time it appeared the bee was crushed and killed. The prey was then manipulated to the base of the bill and swallowed. No unusual behavior was noted after the bee was ingested. Although other duties kept me from obtaining any quantified data, the heron was successful in most attempts observed. This is the first record of gleaning by the Green Heron (Kushlan 1978, Pp 249-297 in Wading birds, (A. S. Sprunt, IV, et al., Eds.) New York, Natl. Audubon Soc.).



Fig. 1. Green Heron preparing to strike at a honey bee on a cluster of white mangrove flowers. Location of the bee is shown by the arrow.

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¹ Contribution # 15 of the Merritt Island Ecosystems Studies.