



*First published March 1, 2017*



***Courtship among these Great Blue Herons leads us to compare it to human behavior. (Photo 6)***



# LOOKING FOR LOVE

We humans love to attribute our human emotions and characteristics to birds and animals. It's called anthropomorphism. That's a big word, that in today's example, means that just as we humans spend a considerable amount of time and effort looking for love during our lifetimes, we sometimes get the opportunity to watch birds and animals go through the same give and take, push and pull, move forward, step back, feel excitement and emotions grow and subsequently ebb, as they also look for love.

On one such occasion, at Viera, a pair of Great Blue Herons went through one such exquisite performance for us, to which we were able to anthropomorphically provide our human thoughts and emotions to the very actions the herons were exhibiting.

We watched a Great Blue Heron male, with the bright blue "lores of love" climb upon a makeshift stage and begin to "dance" in obvious anticipation of attracting the attention of a comely female. (*photo 1*)



1

After a short while, during which time "Handsome" stood on the stage, alternately throwing his head back and then bending low in a slow dance, "Gorgeous" finally arrived on the scene, apparently attracted by "Handsome's" gyrations. (*photo 2*)

While a considerable time passed as the two slowly maneuvered toward each other, just as a couple of teenagers might size each other up at a school dance, "Gorgeous" finally jumped up on the stage with "Handsome," and you can just see her saying to him, "Okay, big boy, show me what you've got." (*photo 3*)

At this point, "Handsome," much like many a human male who misreads the signs and signals, immediately becomes excited, and thus emboldened, moves much too quickly, and impetuously goes way beyond what "Gorgeous" intended or expected, as he says to her, "Come on Baby, give me a kiss." (*photo 4*)

"Gorgeous" very quickly puts "Handsome" in his place, telling him. "Back off, big boy, I'm not that kind of girl." (*photo 5*)



2



3



4



Now, as any human Don Juan can tell you, and any sweet young thing knows, she doesn't really mean or expect him to back off too much, and he, only slightly deterred, will be determined to keep trying harder.

The dance continues back and forth on the stage for some time, until "Handsome" is finally emboldened to jump up on the same level of the stage occupied by "Gorgeous" and display all of his glorious charms. (*photo 6*)

Obviously quite impressed, she does not back away, but has now reached the point where she is ready to accept his advances and seals the performance with a "kiss." (*photo 7*)

The thrill, now over and gone, the couple parts ways, each heading in a different direction, "I'm out'a here." (*photo 8*)

Watching this courtship display stirred long lost memories of high school dances where young males strutted while pretty young girls watched from across the dance floor. Gradually gravitating toward each other, the couple would begin moving closer until the young man would finally gather the courage to ask the young lady to dance.

Admittedly, those early encounters in high school seldom progressed as rapidly as the herons, moving quickly to kissing, pair bonding, nest building, egg laying, and chick raising. Of course, the heron's time frame is much shorter, as they don't have years to accomplish their perpetuation of the species as we humans do. While it was fun to anthropomorphically attribute all these human emotions and characteristics to the heron's courtship and "kiss," the reminiscing also stirred up long buried memories of less successful encounters and outright rejection.

But fortunately, rejection did not occur every time. Not for the herons, and not for me.

**For more on blue "lores of love," see my Jan. 31, 2014 column.**

**Anthropomorphism defined:**  
[en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anthropomorphism](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anthropomorphism)

---

*Click for photos larger versions*

---

**Get all of Hart Rufe's columns from the beginning to mid-2015 in *Birding in a Hart Beat*, a 292-page full-color large-format book**



5

6 (top)



7



8

**Click photos for larger versions**

**Get all of Hart Rufe's columns from the beginning to mid-2015 in *Birding in a Hart Beat*, a 292-page full-color large-format book**