

## Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea* with unusual prey at Upton Warren

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On 5<sup>th</sup> October 2022, I was sitting in the hide at Moors Pool, Upton Warren, when I observed a Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea* apparently struggling with its prey. Expecting the prey to be a large fish or eel, I was surprised to see that it was in fact a Little Grebe *Tachybaptus ruficollis*. The ensuing struggle was long-winded and brutal (01,02,03). The Heron was standing in very shallow water, and constantly battered the grebe on the ground to stop its wings flapping so that it could swallow it. Having subdued the Grebe, the Heron made several attempts to swallow it, but after three attempts over a period of about 20 minutes, it finally abandoned the corpse.



01,02,03. Sequence showing a Grey Heron attempting to eat a Little Grebe. Upton Warren 05.10.22. Patrick Taylor.

*Birds of the Western Palearctic* (Snow and Perrins 1998) describes the food for the Grey Heron as “chiefly fish, small mammals, insects and reptiles, occasionally crustaceans, molluscs, worms, birds and (possibly as an aid in pellet formation) plant material”.

It would be interesting to hear of any other observations of Grey Herons attempting to take bird species or any other unusual items.

### Reference

Snow, D.W. & Perrins, C.M. 1998. *Birds of the Western Palearctic*. Concise Edition. Oxford University Press, Oxford.

### Images

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