



Nuisance Rookery Management

TEXAS
PARKS &
WILDLIFE

Rachel Richter
Urban Wildlife Biologist
Texas Parks and Wildlife

What is a Rookery?

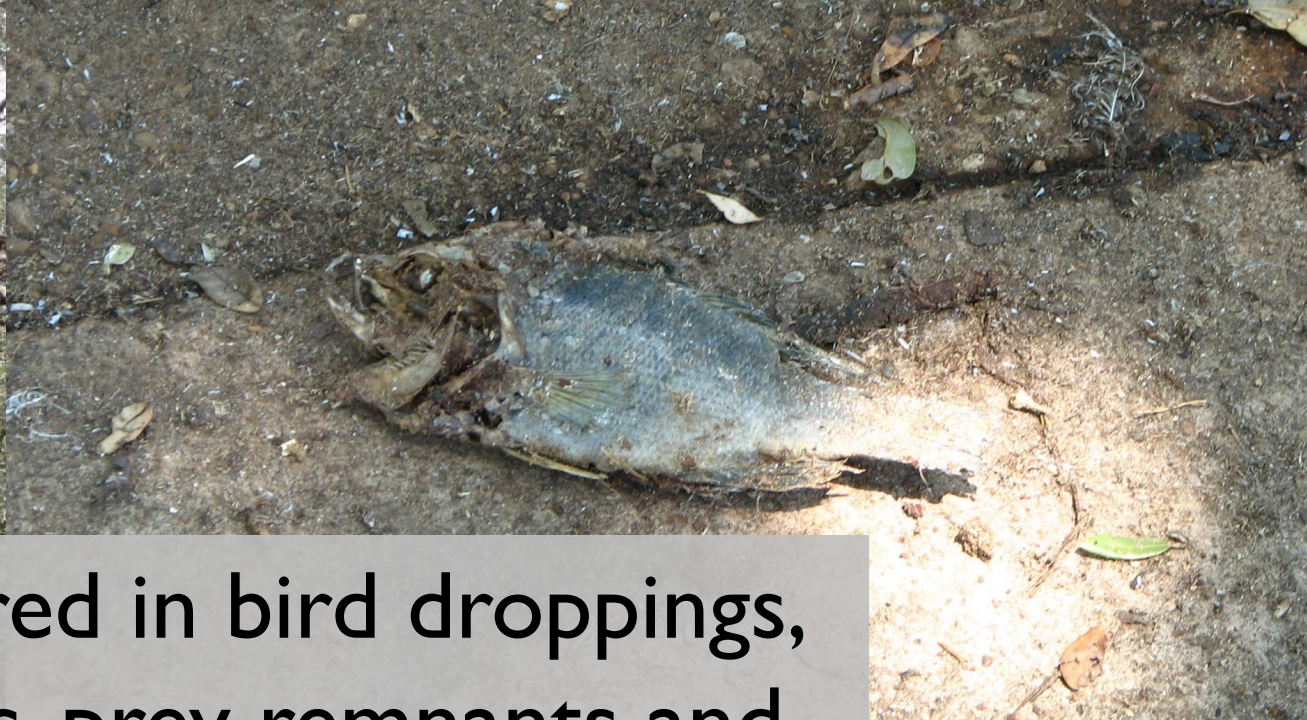
- Nesting or roosting birds in trees
- Vary in size
- Prefer large, mature trees with dense canopy cover
- Birds may return to same location every year



What is a Rookery?

- Nesting season is February through October
- Nesting cycles
- Multiple species
- Survival strategy





Loud, ground covered in bird droppings, feathers, dead birds, prey remnants and many live birds on the ground





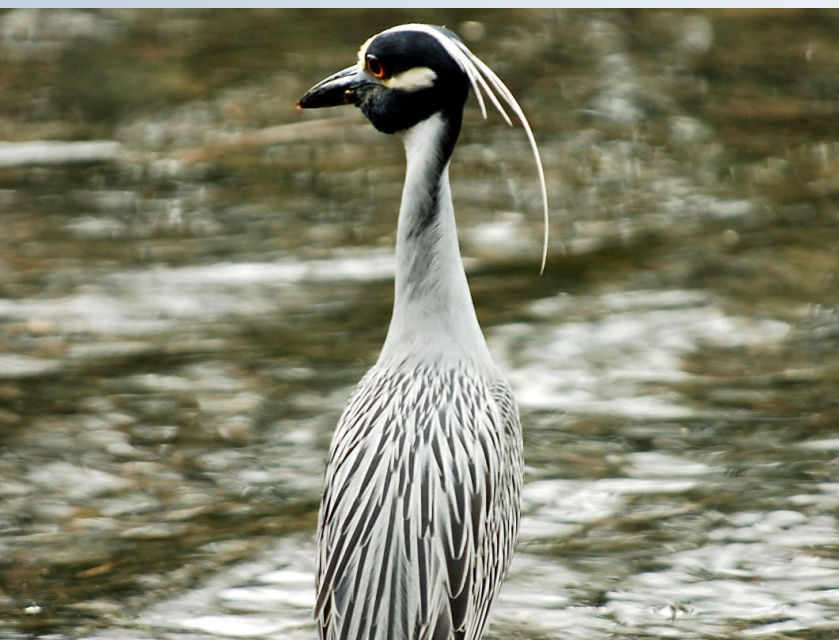
Black-crowned Night Heron



Great Egret



Little Blue Heron



Yellow-crowned Night Heron



Snowy Egret



Cattle Egret

Migratory Bird Treaty Act



- International convention between USA, Canada, Mexico, Japan and Russia
- Established federal protection of nearly all species of birds
 - Illegal to “take” or possess migratory birds and their eggs, feathers, or nests
- Violations can result in fines and jail time
- Texas Parks and Wildlife Code provides similar state level protections

What can and cannot legally be done?

- It is prohibited to kill or injure birds or harass them in a way that causes the abandonment or death of eggs or hatchlings
- It is legal to use scare tactics as long as there are no active nests



Once the **FIRST** bird lays an egg,
ALL harassment and scare tactics
MUST STOP.



Routine neighborhood activities can continue



End of Nesting Season Nest Removal

- All nesting activities by all birds in the rookery have ceased
 - Nests can be removed
 - Infertile/abandoned/dead eggs or long-dead nestlings may also be destroyed

Federal Depredation Permit

- Authorizes the lethal removal of a limited number of birds and eggs
- Can allow greater flexibility to prevent rookery establishment



Prevention

- Early Detection
 - Deterrents should focus on **sentry** birds
 - Birds are nervous when they first arrive
 - Need to act **before eggs are laid**
- Public Awareness
 - Public education improves early detection
- Develop a Plan



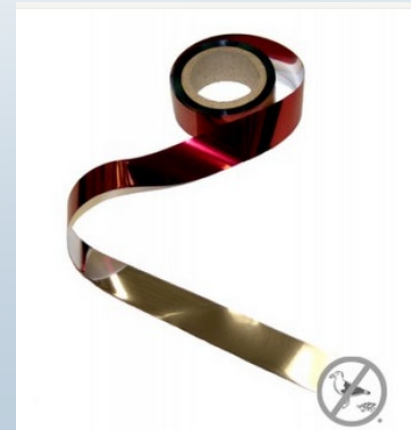
Scare Tactics

- **Noise Deterrents**

- Predator calls
- Pyrotechnics (screamers, bangers)
- Cracker shells (shot from a 12-gauge shotgun)
- Rope-firecrackers
- Propane cannons

- **Visual Deterrents**

- Mylar tape
- Scare Eye balloons





Early nesting material can be knocked from trees as long as there are no eggs in the colony.

Habitat Modification

Thin tree canopies
Birds prefer $>75\%$ canopy closure



Modification of potential nesting areas produces more effective and longer lasting prevention.



Combination of techniques February through June is most effective

Summary

- Prevention and early detection are critical
- Harassment must stop once the 1st egg is laid
- Not a one-time fix
- Hard work now may result in years of reduced conflict



Questions?



Rachel Richter
Urban Wildlife Biologist
Texas Parks and Wildlife

TEXAS
PARKS &
WILDLIFE