



# Egret Deterrent Measures

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Presented to City Council on October 21, 2024

# Objective

To explore the various options for utilizing the \$30,000 allocated in the FY 24-25 budget for egret deterrent measures and addressing other needs related to egret nesting areas in our community.

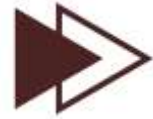


**CONSIDER  
YOUR  
OPTIONS**

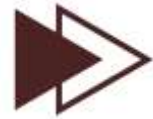
# Outline



**Background:** Egret Rookeries in Burleson and Issues associated with them



**Protected Status & Challenges** associated with mitigating egrets



**Mitigating Best Practices**



**Options for funding use** and benchmark city comparison



**Summary of Options**

# Background

An egret rookery (colony of nests where dozens, sometimes hundreds, of egrets congregate) was established in May 2024 in the Shady Oaks area.

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2024: Shady Oaks

2017: Redhaw Court/Clinton Street

2018: SW Brushy Mound (Brown's Mountain)

The egrets posed a variety of **negative impacts and concerns** on the residential neighborhood during their nesting period.



Noise



Mess



Property Damage



Health Concerns







# Background: 2024 Rookery

- In July, the city began spraying down and sweeping streets in the area five days a week.
- Animal Services started picking up dead birds twice a day, seven days a week.
- After the nesting season ended, Animal Services used bird banger guns and sound machines to encourage the remaining birds to leave.
- Staff has developed a egret option to be included in BTX 311 for the upcoming season.



# Protected Status

Egrets are **protected by the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA)**, making it illegal to harm or harass them once they are nesting. Therefore, early action and deterrence are crucial.





# Challenges

**No Interference Allowed:** Once egrets lay eggs, they cannot be moved or disturbed due to the MBTA's strict regulations.

**Colonial Behavior:** Egrets are highly social during nesting and will often return to the same site year after year, bringing more birds with them each time. If a colony forms, the problem tends to get worse over time, making future deterrence more difficult.





# Migrating Best Practices

# Mitigating Best Practices

## Recommended deterrent measures from U.S. Fish & Wildlife Services

**Note:** Using a multiple harassment techniques is more effective at deterring birds than using a single method.



### Landscaping

Herons and egrets need trees of substantial size to support their nests. Pruning and/or removing trees during the non-breeding season to eliminate perches and nest sites can reduce the amount of habitat available to waterbird colonies. If the birds return the following year, continue to prune perches and nest sites **before** the first egg is laid. All deterrent measures must stop once the first egg is laid.



### Exclusion

Aside from completely removing all nesting substrate, installing exclusion netting over roost and nest trees is the most effective deterrent method for herons and egrets. Installing 1 – 2 inch mesh netting over some trees while also implementing other deterrent measures can minimize costs and still reduce the number of nests that are established. Be sure to use strong mesh to survive weather conditions. Do not use loosely hung, small mesh netting such as mist netting, as it can cause bird loss and draw public and regulatory attention.

# Mitigating Best Practices

## Recommended deterrent measures from U.S. Fish & Wildlife Services

**Note:** Using a multiple harassment techniques is more effective at deterring birds than using a single method.



### Lasers

Wildlife Services' research has found that low power, long-wavelength lasers (red beam) can be an effective bird deterrent method and aid in dispersing flocks of birds under low-light conditions (i.e., between sunset and sunrise). Green lasers have also been found to effectively deter herons and egrets away from sensitive locations. Lasers can be aimed at objects near the birds, such as shrubs or sidewalks, in order to reflect the light and affect bird behavior. Lasers must be used with extreme caution and should not be aimed directly at birds or up at the sky. We recommend using an experienced professional for safe and successful bird dispersal with lasers. During the non-breeding season, harassment with lasers should continue until the birds fly.



# Mitigating Best Practices

## Recommended deterrent measures from U.S. Fish & Wildlife Services

**Note:** Using a multiple harassment techniques is more effective at deterring birds than using a single method.



### Noise making devices

- **Clappers**  
Multiple, rapid claps can be more effective at flushing perched birds than a single clap. Must be used aggressively and continuously.
- **Loud air horns**  
Horns powered by an air compressor are very loud and are extremely effective.
- **Airsoft pellets**  
Airsoft pellets shot through foliage in the trees where herons and egrets are roosting can be very effective. The sound of pellets zipping through foliage often flushes birds that are unresponsive to other hazing methods. Be very careful to avoid hitting any birds with airsoft pellets since they can cause minor injuries. Biodegradable pellets are recommended to avoid polluting the environment. Again, continuous use is the key to success.

# Mitigating Best Practices

## Recommended deterrent measures from U.S. Fish & Wildlife Services

**Note:** Using a multiple harassment techniques is more effective at deterring birds than using a single method.



### Noise making devices

- **Electronic devices that play bird alarm calls**  
Such as Bird Gard<sup>®</sup>, can repel herons and egrets away, but they may be disruptive to nearby businesses and residents.
- **Propane cannons**  
Propane cannons under roost trees can also be effective. However, herons and egrets can become accustomed to them and may not respond if they are used too often.



### Physical methods

Another method that may be considered is hitting the birds with a stream of water from a garden hose. This may pose a nuisance to the birds without injuring them. **Whatever combination of deterrent methods are used, they must be used continuously and aggressively. Implementing deterrents for only an hour each day has a limited chance of success.**

# Roosting Vs Nesting



## Roosting

- Standing on or around nest



## Nesting

- Sitting on nest
- Pink breeding spots



# Options for deterrent measure allocated funding *And benchmark cities*

# Benchmark cities

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Arlington

~~Cedar Hill~~

~~Cleburne~~

Coppell

Euless

Fort Worth

Grand Prairie

Hurst

Keller

~~Mansfield~~

~~Midlothian~~

~~North Richland Hills~~

The Colony

~~Waxahatchie~~

\*Crowley

## Reimbursement of habitat modification

- Could include:
  - Reimbursement (all or a portion) for tree pruning
  - Reimbursement (all or a portion) for removal of trees
  - Reimbursement (all or a portion) for cost of hiring someone to hang deterrents in trees



Costs depends on what type of habitat modification occurs. Tree trimming and tree removal can be \$1,000 or more. The cost of hiring someone to hang deterrents would also vary.



**No other benchmarked city did this**





## Considerations for habitat modification

- The reimbursement would need to be done after the work was complete.
- What type of requirements (receipts submitted and in what time frame) would need to be made to receive the reimbursement?
- Who would be eligible for the reimbursement?
  - Those who live in/near a known egret rookery?
  - Anyone in the city?



## Reimbursement of Exclusion Netting

- Could include:
  - Reimbursement (all or a portion) for purchase of netting
  - Reimbursement (all or a portion) for cost of hiring someone to hang netting in trees



Costs depends on how much netting needs to be purchased. Roll size of 14' x 100' is approximately \$60



**No other benchmarked city did this**



## Considerations for exclusion netting

- Difficulty of putting the nets up
- Nets need to be checked multiple times a day
- The reimbursement would need to be done after the work was complete.
- What type of requirements (receipts submitted and in what time frame) would need to be made to receive the reimbursement?
- Who would be eligible for the reimbursement?
  - Those who live in/near a known egret rookery?
  - Anyone in the city?





## Go-Kits

- **Buying and preparing deterrent go-kits for owners**
  - Kits could include items such as air horns, bright streamers to hang in trees, water nozzles and "scare eye balloons," to scare away birds.



Costs depends on what is purchased for the go-kits and how many are prepared. (air horn cost approximately \$15, scare eye balloons cost approximately \$10)



*The Colony – Provides kits for residents  
Arlington did – now provides Amazon list of supplies  
Grand Prairie - Very few citizens attended the meetings or took advantage of the deterrents that were offered.*





## Noise Makers/Lasers

Purchase additional noise makers for city use in various neighborhoods that spot egrets

- **Noise Makers could include**
  - Electronic Bird Repeller Sound Machine (\$1000 a machine)
  - Bird Banger Guns (\$50 a piece)
  - Bang Cannons (\$300 - \$700)
  - Handheld and autonomic Bird Lasers (\$250 - \$700 per laser)



**All other benchmark cities who have experienced egrets do have some deterrents that they utilize**



## Outreach Campaigns

- Marketing outreach
  - Currently the city hangs door hangers on over 700 homes in the area.
- **Additional marketing options include:**
  - Direct Mail to all homes in the area (\$2,500-\$5,000)
  - Yard signs in the right-of-way in the area to alert them of upcoming egret seasons (approximately \$250-\$500)
  - Public Meetings (low cost)
  - Billboard (depends on where, for how many months)



**All other benchmark cities who have experienced egrets do some outreach campaigns to affected areas**



# Alternative Funding Options

*As requested by residents*

## Reduction of Water Bills

Request was for:

- Reduction in water bills from February through October, or until the Cattle Egrets migrate, to offset the costs associated with cleaning and maintaining affected properties.



**The Colony did offer this during a rookery infestation**





## Considerations for water bill reduction

- Who would be eligible for the reduction?
  - Those who live in/near a known egret rookery?
  - Does the egret have to be established for the reduction to be active?
- How do we determine the reduction?
  - Is it based on a percentage of the additional amount of water spent based on an average of previous years?



## Weekly Cleaning Assistance

Request was for:

- Assistance in cleaning at least weekly the roofs and yards of the main homes affected to manage odor and prevent disease spread from bird waste contamination.

Could include:

- Reimbursement for hiring a cleaning service



**No other benchmarked city did this**



## Considerations weekly cleaning assistance

- Who would be eligible for the assistance?
  - Those who live in/near a known egret rookery?
  - Does the egret have to be established for the reduction to be active?
- How much would the reimbursement be for?





## Oncor Disconnect/Reconnect Fee Waiver

Request was for:

- Waive the Oncor disconnect/reconnect fee for residents needing temporary disconnection for property cleaning and maintenance to prevent nesting in nearby trees

Could include:

- Reimbursement for Oncor disconnect/reconnect fee



**No other benchmarked city did this**





# Funding Options Review

# Consideration

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- Would council like to implement any of the funding options to assist in egret deterrence?
- If so, which ones and how much funding would you like to allocate to what deterrent measure?

# Review of Funding Options

- 1** Reimbursement of habitat modification
- 2** Reimbursement of netting exclusion
- 3** Buying and preparing deterrent go-kits for owners
- 4** Purchase of additional sound/laser machines
- 5** Additional marketing outreach
- 6** Reduction in water bills
- 7** Reimbursement for hiring a cleaning service
- 8** Reimbursement for Oncor disconnect/reconnect fee

**Other options to consider?**

# Next Steps

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- Back to city council in December
- Open to the public in January 2025



# Staff Contact

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# Benchmark City Methods

## Coppell

They offer outreach and education on the Migratory Bird Treaty Act, provide detailed information on the city's website, and supply contact numbers for the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Division of Migratory Bird Management.

## Eules

They conduct outreach and education on the Migratory Bird Treaty Act, provide information on the city's website, and had the water department spray sidewalks and drive approaches in affected areas.

## Fort Worth

The city does not offer reimbursement for tree trimming, as maintaining trees on private property is the owner's responsibility. Animal Services advises residents that failing to trim their trees increases the likelihood of birds nesting. They encourage neighborhoods to organize watch programs to prevent bird activity. Information about migratory birds is shared via the city's website, social media, neighborhood meetings, and through the community relations department. Every year, officers visit affected areas to assist in deterring migratory birds and emphasize the importance of collective efforts to prevent nesting. Staff distributes flyers before the end of February and attends neighborhood meetings to provide guidance on effective bird deterrence strategies.

## Keller

Information is shared on city's website and through door hangers in affected neighborhoods, while animal control officers monitored rookery areas and notified residents of any egret activity. Educational classes were also hosted.

## Grand Prairie

Grand Prairie provides information on their website, has hosted community meetings, and distributed deterrents to residents.

## The Colony

They have a migratory bird concern report form and educational information available on their website. They offer go-kits and have conducted street, sidewalk, and occasional mailbox cleanings. The city utilizes social media, posts signage in neighborhoods, and includes educational pamphlets in the go-kits. They've also hosted informational meetings. A team of 15 parks staff monitors egret activity in March and April, using deterrents to haze birds as they begin settling in trees. Once settled, they utilize a depredation permit to remove nests and continue hazing as allowed. Cleanup of rookery mess occurs weekly or bi-weekly. Their website also notes that, "The City of The Colony is unable to address any complaints while the birds are nesting."



## Hurst

Although no formal response was received from a representative, the city offers an online bird sighting form for residents to fill out. Their website features a video on how to deter birds and includes a statement clarifying: “As a result, the City of Hurst cannot address any complaints while the birds are nesting.”

## Arlington

They previously created go-kits with deterrents but now offer a list of items homeowners can purchase on Amazon. They engage with residents through their website, social media, and neighborhood signs featuring QR codes. Animal services officers distribute pamphlets, and they provide a migratory bird reporting tool. Additionally, an animal services officer collaborates with neighborhoods, offering guidance on effective deterrent methods.

## Crowley

The city strongly recommends tree trimming but does not provide reimbursement. In 2021, they held a public educational meeting on the topic. Each January, Animal Control initiates abatement efforts, which include harassment techniques such as loud noises and pyrotechnics. Officers utilize a cannon mounted on a city truck and fire it as needed, along with deploying "bird bangers" to deter the birds. They follow a set schedule to conduct harassment activities 2-3 times per week in neighborhoods with a history of egret populations or recent sightings of migratory birds.