
Park Board

DEPARTMENT: Community Services

FROM: DeAnna Phillips, Director of Community Services

MEETING: March 20, 2025

SUBJECT:

Provide a report and hold a discussion on past egret rookeries and the city outreach and education campaign. (*Staff Contact: DeAnna Phillips, Director of Community Services*)

SUMMARY:

The purpose of this presentation is to provide an update on the city's egret history, deterrent measures and education and outreach campaign.

Background:

Egrets have formed significant rookeries within Burleson in recent years, with a major nesting site established in Shady Oaks in May 2024. These rookeries create multiple issues, including excessive noise, droppings that damage property, health concerns due to bacterial contamination, and long-term damage to trees and landscaping. The protected status of egrets under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA) restricts interference once eggs are laid, making proactive deterrent measures crucial.

Challenges:

- No Interference Allowed: Once egrets begin nesting, federal law prohibits interference until the end of the breeding season, limiting options.
- Colonial Behavior: Egrets tend to return to the same nesting sites each year, often expanding their colonies, which exacerbates the problem over time.

Mitigating Best Practices:

Based on recommendations from U.S. Fish & Wildlife Services, the following best practices are advised:

- Landscaping and Pruning: Reducing available nesting trees by pruning or removing them in the non-breeding season.
- Exclusion Netting: Installing durable mesh netting over trees to prevent nesting.
- Laser Deterrence: Using low-power lasers to disrupt birds in low-light conditions.
- Noise Devices: Employing clappers, air horns, and other noise-making devices.
- Physical Deterrence: Using methods like spraying birds with water to encourage them to leave.

Egret Education and Outreach Campaign Overview:

The city has launched a multifaceted public education and outreach campaign to help residents understand the importance of proactive egret deterrence and provide the tools they need to take action before nesting season begins.

This comprehensive campaign includes targeted messaging across multiple platforms, including social media channels (Facebook, Instagram, X, and Nextdoor), city e-newsletters and a formal news release.

A dedicated webpage at www.burlesontx.com/egrets serves as a centralized hub for information, resources and reporting options.

To further engage the community, the city is utilizing yard signs in key neighborhoods, Everbridge text messages and phone calls and hosted a town hall meeting to provide expert guidance from urban biologists.

Additional efforts include internal training for city staff, informational flyers distributed to homes impacted by past rookeries and encouraging use of the BTX 311 reporting tool to track egret sightings.

This proactive and layered approach ensures residents are well-informed and empowered to take steps to protect their properties and neighborhoods from future egret infestations.

RECOMMENDATION:

N/A

PRIOR ACTION/INPUT (Council, Boards, Citizens):

City council received presentations on egret deterrent methods during their regularly scheduled meetings on October 21, 2024, and November 18, 2024.

REFERENCE:

N/A

FISCAL IMPACT:

N/A

STAFF CONTACT:

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