



June 2011

Heron Habitat Helpers' HERALD

P.O. Box 99815, Seattle, WA 98139-0815

Have a Story? We'd Like to Hear It

By Camille Blanchette

Much of the history of Kiwanis Ravine can be found in Seattle's municipal records, which detail civic planning, city council and agency decisions, and the nuts and bolts of parks management.

But a rich part of the history lives in the memory of area residents. For example:

- Neighborhood children used to play in Kiwanis Ravine, making "camps" and fishing in Wolfe Creek, when its flow was much stronger. They rode a tire swing out over the ravine-resulting in a broken collarbone for at least one local child.
- During Prohibition, evening revelers may have come up Wolfe Creek by boat, heading for a speakeasy in the basement of one of the houses near the ravine.
- At one time, the developers planned to extend 36th Ave. W. from the point where it currently ends (at W. Lawton) through to W. Commodore Way. HHH helped to scuttle that plan and the resulting increased traffic and noise that would have disturbed the herons.

- Wolfe Creek, which flows in two branches north through the ravine to the ship canal, originates in central Magnolia and also flows south into Elliott Bay.

During interviews with long-time neighbors of the ravine, I've learned many interesting facts like these. They will all be included in the HHH Kiwanis Ravine history project.

The goal of the history project is to collect the stories of long-time area residents and HHH members and combine them with materials from other sources into a narrative about Kiwanis Ravine. The final version of the history will be posted to the HHH website.

Please help us save these interesting stories about the home of the herons. If you would be willing to share your recollections or experience of the ravine with me, or if you can suggest other sources of information, please call me at 206 781 0719 or email cbredits@drizzle.com

Seattle Tree Protection Ordinance Update

By Kay Shoudy

For the past two years, members of the HHH Outreach Committee have been participating in the development of new tree protection regulations to replace the Interim Tree Protection ordinance by attending and testifying at Seattle Urban Forestry Committee Commission meetings and City Council work meetings. In February, 2011, Councilman Richard Conlin announced that the Tree Preservation Ordinance will be delayed a year before the City Council resumes work on the update. Although there is an Interim Ordinance in place, it had been expected that a new ordinance would be adopted in 2011 with stronger tree-cutting limitations, a possible tree permit system and more detailed regulations.

Councilman Conlin believes that the Council needs additional time to find a good legal basis for the update and that it is fully understood by city residents. Although many tree protection advocates believe that some “exceptional” trees are being cut illegally despite the Interim Tree Ordinance, other citizens are concerned about restriction of tree cutting to preserve views,

getting enough sun to install solar panels and provide sunlight to gardens as well as the limitation of potential development sites.

The City has adopted an Urban Forest Management Plan with stated goals to increase tree canopy from the existing 23 percent to 30 percent by 2037, and the UFC is currently considering some amendments to this plan. Outreach Committee members will monitor the work of the Commission and participate with other tree protection groups to provide comments during the process. HHH will also continue to advocate for further protection of the heron colony by strengthening the administrative regulations and enforcement process related to tree-cutting in the vicinity.

People who are interested in the current requirements for tree protection are encouraged to review Seattle Municipal Code 25.11, Tree Protection Ordinance, or the Director’s Rule 16-2008 related to trees which have historical ecological or aesthetic value.

Lawton School Visits Kiwanis

By Scott Luchessa

On May 20th, Scott Luchessa led two Lawton Elementary 5th Grade classes, a total of 53 kids in a supplemental planting project on the upper terrace at the Stevens site.

The kids were accompanied by Mr. Peter Hubbard and Ms. Lily Ulmer, the two 5th Grade teachers and a number of parents. Following a brief demonstration on proper planting and mulching technique, the kids were separated into three groups, planters, mulchers, and waterers. The enthusiastic bunch planted, mulched, and watered more than 60 plants in a little over an hour. Fantastic! The event concluded with a shout of “Habitat Forever”!



Your Chance To Help On HHH Board

*By Barbara Selemon
HHH Volunteer Coordinator*

The HHH Board is seeking nominations (even self nominations) to join the HHH Board. Here's your chance to help the herons by keeping their protective group going.

What would it mean for you? It would mean taking leadership of a segment of HHH work – restoration, outreach, or membership. Board meetings typically are quarterly, unless there is a special meeting called. Hopefully you're someone on e-mail regularly as your opinion or vote may be needed.

Starting this summer you will have the opportunity to work with "old" board members whose terms will soon be up, so you can learn the ropes from them.

**HHH and the herons need you.
How 'bout it?**

Contact Barbara Selemon:
selemon@u.washington.edu
or 206-525-7448.

heronreport

By Pam Cahn



The herons returned to the colony later than usual this year, but quickly got settled, laid eggs, and starting incubating.

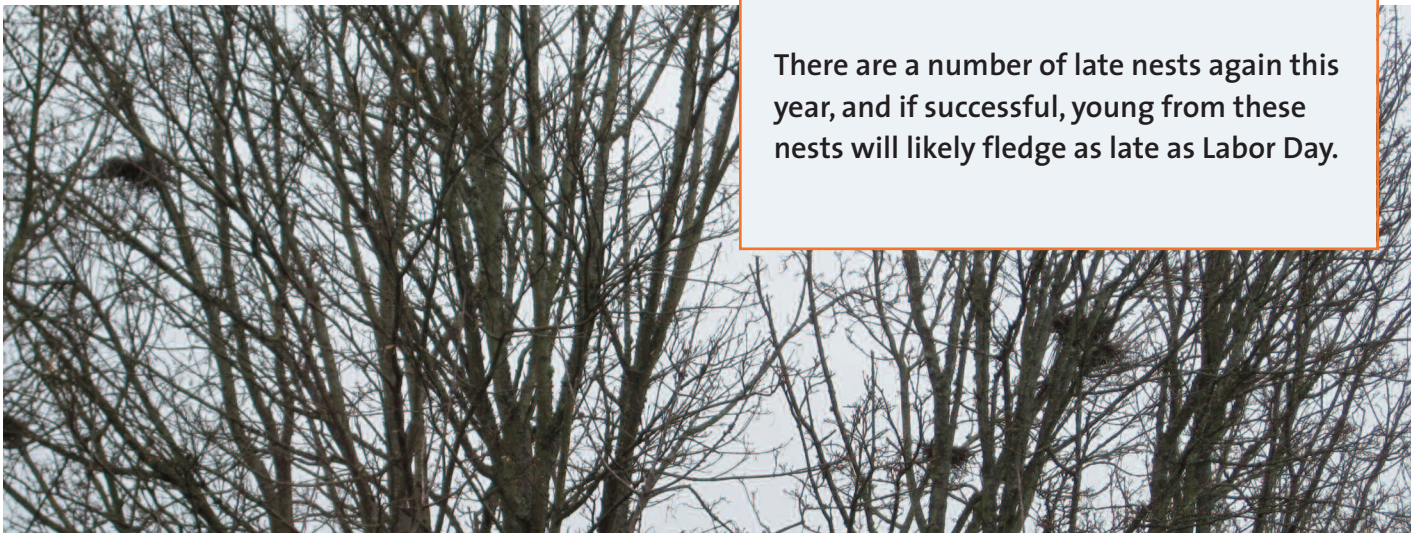
The first chicks hatched the beginning of May, so these first young will fledge in late June or early July.

As of mid-June, there are around 80 nests in the main colony and 8 nests at Commodore Park.

The herons seem to be less disturbed by eagles this year than in the past few years, although eagles have been observed carrying off some nestlings.

Visibility is very obscured by foliage from all vantage points and the best views are seen from the heroncam.

There are a number of late nests again this year, and if successful, young from these nests will likely fledge as late as Labor Day.



The Joy Of Work Parties

By Mike Marsh

Does attending a work party at a plant restoration site thrill you, appall you, or somewhere in between? I'm a somewhat frequent work party leader, although I'm a sluggard about weeding at home, so why do I do this?

A primary reason is that I know the natives (native plants, that is) need help in their early years to keep from being smothered with competing weeds. We plant them with spacing that will give them enough space later as more mature plants. Since many weed species are more aggressive in sunny areas, they fill in the open areas between these young plants and exclude most of the direct sunlight from the soil.

However, a reason that is at least as important to me is to meet and work with others. There is a very soothing feeling about working with your hands while engaging in unstructured conversation. I remember a story about a person who was seeing a counselor for his anxiety problem. When asked how he relaxed, he said, "I watch the evening news"! I think that weeding a restoration site, or the garden, even without companionship, would be better relaxation than watching the evening news.



At Kiwanis Ravine, HHH has had work parties with groups ranging from pre-schoolers (well, not much work, but they had a great time) to Boy Scout troops, to community organizations like "Seattle Works". We have had all-woman groups, and in June we hosted a women veteran's group. All of this is aimed at connecting people with their natural environment and the plants and animals that live there.

Work parties are planned and hosted, usually, by the HHH Restoration Committee. Recently, using funds from the 2008 Parks and Green Spaces Levy, we have had help from EarthCorps in organizing, recruiting volunteers, and leading work parties. Seattle Works and United Way, working with Washington youth, have also been valuable partners.



However, our monthly (second Saturday) work party is my favorite, because it is unstructured, small, and all are welcome so that we do not know how to expect. Why don't you come?

Don't forget to check the heron cam at <http://heronhelpers.org/HeronWatching.html> As I write, a heron parent is standing in the center of a pyramid of downy chicks.

RESTORATION WORK PARTIES

9:00 am – 12:00 pm

**JULY 9
AUGUST 13**

**Contact Mike at 206-281-8976
for more information**

Protect Your Trees And The Herons!

By Donna Kostka

HHH learned again this Spring just how vulnerable our herons are. The City has not given the herons full protection YET! This is what happened. A family decided to cut one or more large trees on their property within a block of the main heron colony – while the herons were nesting. HHH called the City. We held our breath. We were so lucky, the noise did not frighten away the birds or cause them to abandon the colony. But, it could have.

The City reminded us again that its Director's Rule 5-2007 applies only to properties that have building permits. This tree cutting happened on property without a permit – the family just wanted to get rid of the tree(s). The family owns the property. And the family has the right to make decisions about its property. But, the family didn't think about the herons!

The timing was poor. Better to do tree trimming or cutting or outside construction work when the herons are not nesting. The herons are vulnerable to being scared off by loud noises. And, once the trees are cut, there is less screening for blocking human

activities from the eyes of the nesting herons. The birds seem to find comfort in being secluded and quiet. And once the trees are cut, the trees aren't there to gather twigs from to help the herons build nests. And once the trees are cut, they aren't there to provide future nest trees if the herons ever want to expand their colony.

HHH has been "hounding" the City about tightening its rule to provide more protection for trees in the 500' buffer area around the heron habitat. But, so far, the City gives us only excuses: the City can't afford to do that right now; there aren't any studies showing what happens to urban herons when trees are removed; etc. So, what is the best we can do for now?

The best we can do for now is to voluntarily hold on to those trees in the buffer around our Kiwanis Ravine Wildlife Sanctuary. And be vigilant to what your neighbors are doing. You might be able to put in a good word for the herons. Or call Donna at 206-283-7805 if you see a situation you're concerned about. Herons need trees. There's no denying that.

Heron Tours

By Heidi Carpine



We had a most successful year with heron tours. This year, tours were only given to members – which meant there was a definite increase in membership.

The tours began at my house with a talk about Great Blue herons and a short stroll to a private back yard to view the nests. Tours were conducted in April before the leaves blossomed allowing a clear view to the nests and herons.

A big thank you to Christine and Perry Atkins for again sharing their lovely yard to see the herons. People were very appreciative to have the opportunity to experience these magnificent birds in our city.

Thank you to Pam Cahn, our heron monitor and Mike Marsh for use of their scopes. Thank you to Carol Burton for being a tour leader.

Public viewing is at Commodore Park where there are currently eight nests. We invite you to come and see the herons next year.

President's Corner

We are well into June already, and there are still little signs of an approaching Summer!

Things have been happening in Kiwanis Ravine as well as in City Hall during the Spring:

A Kiwanis Ravine neighbor, not connected to HHH, decided to cut down some beautiful old trees growing on their property. Other neighbors raised the alarm but to no avail. The DPD said that the Director's Rule didn't cover this situation. We lost some wonderful alternate nesting trees for the herons. Obviously we need to take more political action to strengthen the Director's Rule.

We have also had some wonderful and productive work parties at our three locations where volunteers work. Scott Luchessa hosted a group of school children from the Lawton School who did some planting at the Stevens site. And Seattle Works came and worked on both the Overlook and Stevens with great success. Check out all of the new plantings at Stevens. They are quite impressive. Scott and Hooper have been watering the new plants, but Parks will be taking over those responsibilities very soon.

We can use volunteers at work parties and for many other functions (advocacy, membership, events, publicity, etc.) If any of this work interests you, please feel free to contact us at: Volunteer@heronhelpers.org.

Our heron cameras have been having a rough time of it this year. Last fall or sometime over the winter the cables to the cameras were cut by a Parks contractor, mistakenly thinking they were runners for some weed plant. When the cables were cut, a short circuit blew out one of the cameras, so that only one camera is working this season. The Heron Camera Team, with Phil Turner of Olympia Systems, replaced the damaged cables, but could not replace the damaged camera this year because nesting had already started. Performance has been off and on. There were some sweet images of parents and chicks, but now a key component, the Axis server, which controls the camera movement, has failed. Replacements are on the way, but patience will be required. Repairs will be undertaken in the Fall or Winter, after nesting is complete.

John "Hooper" Havekotte, president



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