

May 2013

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



Heron Habitat Helpers' HERALD

Living with the Herons

By The Atkins Family

Our family has been fortunate to be neighbors with the Kiwanis Ravine great blue heron rookery for over 20 years. While many people might complain about having noisy and unsightly people next door in their own neighborhood, having our noisy and occasionally messy herons as neighbors is very welcome. The opportunity to watch these giant bird neighbors as they build their homes, find and woo their mates, and roar at bald eagles when under attack has been the defining character of living in our home.

Witnessing nature up close and personal in an urban environment like Seattle is a secret and unexpected experience. But Kiwanis Ravine is not just about the herons. Waking in the middle of the night to hear barred owls calling back and forth, or seeing a pileated woodpecker with its brilliant red-crested head winging through the canopy are quick magic moments in between the day-to-day wonder the herons offer.

The misbehaving packs of raccoon families that assume our yard is their yard and that we are the intruders are a reminder that we live in the midst of an active and real ecosystem. This is real life, and not something we are watching on television. We measure spring by when the herons first return to their nests, and we know that summer is almost over when the birds leave. Even seeing the nests in winter when they are empty but obvious in the leafless trees is a hopeful sign, as we know what is coming next. Huge ungainly birds perched on impossibly thin branches, craning their necks and eyeing their season's homes. We are always glad to have them back.

It has been a genuine privilege to live next to such an abundant and active place, to provide our daughter a unique experience as she grows up, and to act as community ambassadors for this unusual place, Kiwanis Ravine. We are lucky to be able share it with so many others.



Kathleen Atkins



Project HeronWatch: An Exciting New Heron Viewing Opportunity

By Barbara Selemon

Viewing herons up close in Kiwanis Ravine is nearly impossible for the majority of heron admirers, and HHH is searching for ways to improve upon viewing heron activities to increase awareness and broaden support of protecting the herons and their habitat. The 2012 grant from Seattle's Department of Neighborhoods awarded HHH funding to research the feasibility of placing viewing stations with interpretive panels for public access at the visitor centers at Discovery Park and the Hiram M. Chittenden Locks. Named Project HeronWatch, activity has begun with hiring of contractors, establishing stakeholders and setting a time table of activities.

Contractors hired for Project HeronWatch are CRITTERZOOM of Olympia, Washington, focusing on the technical aspects of the project, and Partners In Design (PID) of Seattle, Washington, centering on the interpretive panels. The contractors were selected for their previous work and experience in the field. CRITTERZOOM has worked with the Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife to establish webcams for many types of wildlife, including the great blue heron in Kiwanis Ravine. PID of Seattle has worked with King County's Cedar River Watershed and West Hylebos Wetlands and Bellevue Botanic Garden.

HHH was also awarded a technical assistance grant in support of Project HeronWatch. National Park Service will assist in planning and facilitating of a public meeting.

The kickoff meeting of all stakeholders was held on April 3rd. Representatives from Seattle Parks, National Park Service, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Seattle Department of Neighborhoods and Heron Habitat Helpers gathered with the contractors to meet and discuss the upcoming project. An outcome of the meeting was a basic timeline and activity schedule from April through end of September.

June/July/August	Design planning
August/September	Schematic design
Mid-September	Presentation at public meeting
End of September	Final reports and wrap up

In early May, look for a Project HeronWatch survey coming your way. Please help HHH in gathering input for planning and design of the viewing stations and accompanying interpretive panels. Your thoughts and ideas will greatly help to make this project something that appeals to you, your family and friends.

Second Saturday Work Parties 10:00 am - noon

Do you love to grub out invasives and listen to birds at the same time? Participate in a work party to help restore heron habitat. No experience necessary. Just a love of herons, nature and meeting new people. Bring your work gloves and dress for the weather. See you there!

Check www.heronhelpers.org for the work location.
Join us and you'll be doing your part to help the herons!



Heidi Carpine: Advocate for Magnolia Parks and Herons

By Deborah Andrews Jacobsen

Deborah Andrews Jacobsen

Magnolia has benefited from Heidi Carpine's advocacy skills and energy for over fifty years. For example, we can thank Heidi for her part in creating Commodore Park. When she first moved back to Seattle from Washington, DC 50 years ago, a man knocked on Heidi's door and asked if she'd sign a petition to save an empty Commodore Way lot from development. She signed, raised money, and gathered interested neighbors to save the lot and create permanent access across the locks to Ballard. Commodore Park is now a haven for both people and herons.

We can also thank Heidi for her part in preserving Discovery Park. During her many years of chairing and serving the Seattle Park Department's Discovery Park Advisory Council (DPAC), Magnolia Community Club's Discovery Park Advisory Committee, and the Magnolia Community Club itself, she advocated for saving Discovery Park as an open space instead of a national cemetery, golf course, or other commercial entity. Heidi continues to actively serve on the Discovery Park Advisory Council.

Magnolia and herons can thank both Heidi and Donna Kostka – the “Heron Sisters” as they call themselves – for protecting Kiwanis Ravine and the great blue heron colony that nests there. Thirteen years ago Heidi wanted Donna to join the DPAC, so she invited her for a walk in a Discovery Park neighborhood. They walked to Kiwanis Ravine and discovered that nearby construction projects jeopardized the heron colony and the Salmon Bay wildlife corridor.



Heidi in action! Teaching about herons before leading a tour.

Heidi and Donna approached the project owners and persuaded them to work on inside projects only during the heron breeding season, February - June, so the construction noise would not disturb the herons. Heidi said of the owners' immediate support: “It was a miracle.” Heidi and Donna co-founded Heron Habitat Helpers (HHH) in 2001 and have worked tirelessly to keep Kiwanis Ravine a healthy place for herons to nest. They also helped the great blue heron win the Seattle city bird contest by bringing a man in a gigantic heron costume to a city council meeting.

Heidi is humble about her many contributions to Magnolia. She attributes her leadership and goal-setting skills to working with the League of Women Voters in Virginia.

Most of all, she credits active neighbors and citizens who volunteer their skills, hard work, and passion for preserving wildlife sanctuaries.

Thank you, Heidi, for all of your efforts and for spurring us to positive action.

The herons returned to Commodore Park around the second week in February. There are 6 active nests this year. The first chicks were heard on April 23rd. The herons returned to nests in the main colony in Kiwanis Ravine in early March. These herons started laying eggs in late March. Bald eagles have been heard and observed near and in the colony off and on since late March. Some first eggs were lost to eagles and a few nests are now abandoned. As of the end of April, there are 94 nests in Kiwanis Ravine. First chicks were heard in Kiwanis Ravine at the end of April. If all goes well, look for the current heroncam nest to begin hatching around May 18th or soon thereafter.

The best viewing again this year is via the online heroncam at:

www.heronhelpers.org/HeronWatching

Also check our Facebook page for heroncam updates at:

www.facebook.com/HeronHabitatHelpers

UW Heronry, Spring 2013

By Pam Cahn

The UW campus is home to 25 Great Blue Heron nests so far this spring. This is the sixth year they have nested in trees just below Drumheller Fountain, now on both sides of Rainier Vista.

In 2008, at least 4 pairs nested in the trees between the Chemistry Building and the medicinal herb garden. In 2009, some herons also attempted nesting in the cedars above the Triangle Parking Garage across from University Medical Center, but those nests failed due to eagles.

The herons have expanded across Rainier Vista to also nest in elms in Sylvan Grove. The colony expanded to 41 nests last year and has survived repeated eagle disturbances, band concerts,

outdoor rocket tests, wedding photo shoots, large cookouts, and many parties. There is a paved pathway under many of the nests, but it's still hard to see the nests once the trees leaf out.

However, as the season progresses, you can't miss the smell and the extensive whitewash underneath the nests. First chicks hatched the second half of April this year, so watch for fledging beginning in late June.

If you make a trip to visit this colony up close, be advised to wear a hat. Parking on campus is free after noon on Saturdays and all day Sunday.

Hérons 1, Coal Trains 0

By Sue Gillespie

The City of Seattle is supporting – albeit indirectly – the protection of great blue herons from negative effects of proposed coal trains that would travel on Burlington Northern tracks adjacent to the heron colony in Kiwanis Memorial Preserve Park.

A newly formed coalition opposing the coal trains, Leadership Alliance Against Coal, includes the City of Seattle and six other cities, along with four Indian tribes. Although the issue is still a long way from being decided, this is certainly a win for the herons – and for the important work performed by HHH.

Heron Tours 2013

By Marla Master

Tours were held in the first three weeks of April by Heidi Carpine, Carol Burton, Pam Cahn and Mike Marsh, who also brought scopes to enhance viewing. Thanks to Christine and Perry Atkins for again sharing their lovely yard to see the herons.

Tours were available to HHH members and many came to enjoy the birds up close.

“The view is incredible!” said one visitor. “And hearing their loud squawks is a wonderful addition to the experience.”

Don't miss your chance next year!



Sue Gillespie



Prabhu Kannan

GiveBIG on May 15 and Increase Your Support of the Herons

GiveBIG is May 15, 2013 – when every dollar you give to support the herons will be s-t-r-e-t-c-h-e-d by a matching contribution from the Seattle Foundation. Heron Habitat Helpers uses your donations to protect heron nesting habitat in Kiwanis Ravine, educate people about the great blue heron, and advocate for this magnificent bird with local planning agencies.



Here's how to help the herons on May 15, GiveBIG day:

1. Go to the Heron Habitat Helpers website: www.heronhelpers.org.
2. Click on "Membership" in the left column.
3. Click the link in the third paragraph that says, "To pay for membership or donate online, click HERE."
4. Follow directions on the next page.
5. On the first page of the Associated Recreation Council's donation page, click the drop-down menu under "Program" and select "Heron Habitat Helpers."
6. Complete the rest of the Association Recreation Council's donation page.

Thank you for GivingBIG
and supporting Heron Habitat Helpers.

We can't do it without you!

HERON HAPPENINGS AROUND THE SALISH SEA

Protection Island is a small island located 1.5 km northeast of downtown Nanaimo, BC, Canada. There are no paved roads on the little island. Some residents move about the island in golf carts, others with cars, but most walk.

Heron Happenings on Protection Island, BC

By Trudy Chatwin

Spring is my favourite time of year. Everything is bursting with life and beauty. As the waters in the eelgrass beds warm, shiner perch give live birth to their young. The herons gather near the nest site, pair up and the female birds feed on the young perch that provide nourishment for their eggs to develop. Male herons develop magnificent head and chest plumes, and then pluck enticing branches to present to the females for the nest. Courtship ensues with much display and vocalization! Tonight as I paddled home, one of the adult herons...

For more by Trudy Chatwin

please read her article on our website:

www.heronhelpers.org/HeronHappenings_TrudyChatwin.html



By KenWalker kgw@lunar.ca, via Wikimedia Commons

HHH is Ramping Up



2013 is shaping up to be an ambitious year filled with new activity for Heron Habitat Helpers. I'd like to share a few observations about what lies ahead.

Departing president Hooper Havekotte has done a remarkable job with HHH over the past few years. We're very lucky to have several long-time heron advocates remaining on the board (including Hooper, Mike Marsh and Craig Purkey), along with a few folks who joined more recently (Barbara Selemon and Marla Master), and some brand-new board members bringing fresh ideas and spirit (Prabhu Kannan and Curtis Kukal). Founders Heidi Carpine and Donna Kostka continue to inspire us. The HHH board is enjoying renewed energy, excitement and enthusiasm. We have some dynamic plans to enhance HHH's efforts to protect our favorite bird, the great blue heron!

In coming months, watch for updates about heron viewing stations in the visitor centers at Discovery Park and Hiram M. Chittenden Locks. If we're able to move forward with the viewing stations, many more people will be able to see the herons nesting and raising their young.

Keep your eyes open for fun new events that will help HHH members learn more about these stately birds. Look for regular invitations to participate in restoration parties, held the second Saturday of each month (through September). And stay tuned for more frequent news on heron colonies across the Puget Sound, in addition to regular updates on the herons in Kiwanis Ravine. Most important, in 2013 we'll be working harder than ever to spread the word about the great blue heron. Sharing our daily lives with these stately birds is an amazing privilege. We want others to recognize and appreciate this experience.

To this end, HHH will be actively seeking out opportunities to engage with people in every walk of life: kids, parents, high schoolers, working professionals, retired folks, homebodies, college students, birders, etc. If you have ideas about reaching out that you think we should consider, please share them with me directly by emailing president@heronhelpers.org.

Here's to a year filled with great blue heron related challenges and successes.

SUE GILLESPIE
President

Share your heron photos!

Prabhu Kannan



We'd love to see your photos of herons – flying, on a nest, wading, looking for prey...

www.facebook.com/HeronHabitatHelpers
or email to info@heronhelpers.org

Our good friend, **Herb Foster**, passed away in April. Herb gave generously of his time and skills on behalf of HHH for many years. Our deep condolences go out to Herb's family. He will be missed.

Join a community that shares your passion for herons!

As a member of HHH you're helping to support habitat restoration, education and acting as an advocate for the herons at Kiwanis Ravine.



Prabhu Kannan

Join, renew or donate today!

HHH is an all-volunteer group. By joining and supporting Heron Habitat Helpers, you enable us to directly support conservation initiatives, educational programs and outreach efforts. Every membership and donation – regardless of size – truly makes a difference!

Donate online (under membership) at www.heronhelpers.org or by mail:
Heron Habitat Helpers, PO Box 99815, Seattle, WA 98139-0815

ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP \$15

Mail your check to: Heron Habitat Helpers • PO Box 99815, Seattle, WA 98139-0815

NAME _____

MAILING ADDRESS _____

PHONE NUMBER _____

\$15 ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP PER FAMILY _____

Donation \$10 \$25 \$50 \$75 _____

TOTAL _____

E-MAIL _____

WOULD YOU LIKE TO VOLUNTEER? YES check field of interest(s) NO

conservation programs fundraising strategic planning public relations habitat restoration

HHH is an IRS 501(c)(3) organization under the umbrella of the Associated Recreational Council (ARC). Membership and donations are 100% tax deductible.