

Stanley Park Heronry Update

April 2014

It's spring time. The birds and the bees are out and about, the sun is shining (as much as you might expect in Vancouver) and the Pacific great blue heron colony at the west entrance to Stanley Park is back and at it again. Herons arrived at the beginning of March, males claimed old nests, and females later arrived to select a suitable mate. Over the past month they've been building a few new nests and repairing the old fixer uppers in preparation to lay their eggs and start their new families.



Hérons mating in nest B3. Photo by Maria Morlin

To learn more about the Stanley Park Ecology Society's heron monitoring program or to adopt a nest please visit:

stanleyparkecology.ca/conservation/urban-wildlife/herons/

The last count from the ground showed that of 119 total nests in the colony, 90 were occupied by 117 adult herons. These numbers are roughly consistent with counts done at this time last year.

During a breeding survey from a nearby apartment building, which looks at a subsample of 34 nests from an aerial view, we found that all 34 of our subsample nests were occupied. During the survey, we look to see how many nests in our subsample are being used, and whether a heron is actively sitting on the nest, potentially incubating eggs. Occasionally, a heron will stand up and we can catch a glimpse of the stunning pale blue eggs that lay underneath it. During the hour long survey this week, we had the opportunity to see a total of 14 eggs in 6 of the 34 nests.

This doesn't mean that there are only 14 eggs in the whole colony; this is just what we were lucky enough to spot. There are many, many more. A typical clutch for the herons will be about 2-4 eggs when they are done laying. However as we have found in past years, if herons lose their eggs to predation they may lay a second or even third clutch in one season from March – August.



There is still mating left to do. The photo on page 1 shows the herons in nest B3 taking a few moments to mate right next door to our adopted nest B5. For those of you who adopted a heron nest this year, you'll be happy to know that there is currently 1 egg in our adopted nest B5. If you look closely enough at the photo below you can see the egg underneath the standing heron.

Thank you for your adoption support. The donation you contribute helps us to continue monitoring these magnificent birds, and conserve this species on the brink of endangered status.



Photo map of nests in Tree B. Nest B5 is the adopted nest. Photo by Maria Morlin

Lastly, in honour of National Volunteer Week, a huge thanks goes out to the countless hours of effort put in by volunteers, Maria Morlin and Dalcyce Epp, who really started this program and have kept it alive. Together they have surveyed, photographed, and written updates about the amazing birds of this colony since

the herons first arrived in 2001, before SPES even undertook the monitoring program. Maria has continuously offered us access to her apartment roof top that gives us a bird eye view of the colony, while Dalcyce can often be found on the ground, checking in on the entire colony of nests. These volunteers have made this monitoring program possible.



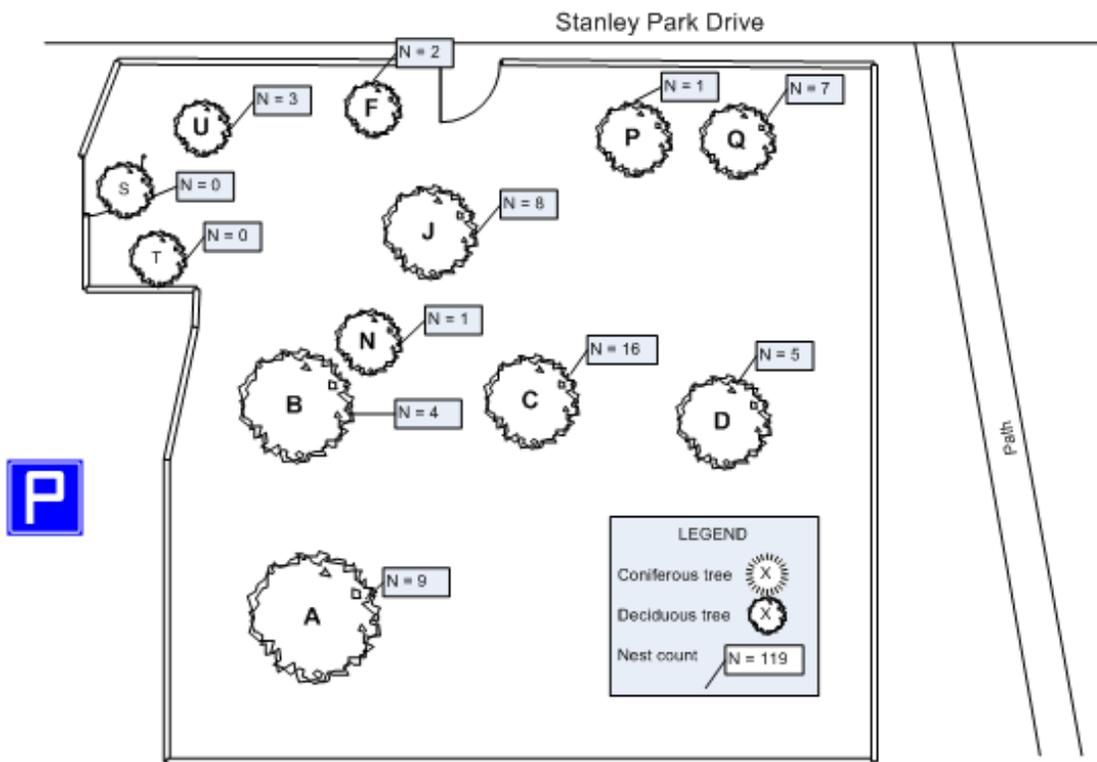
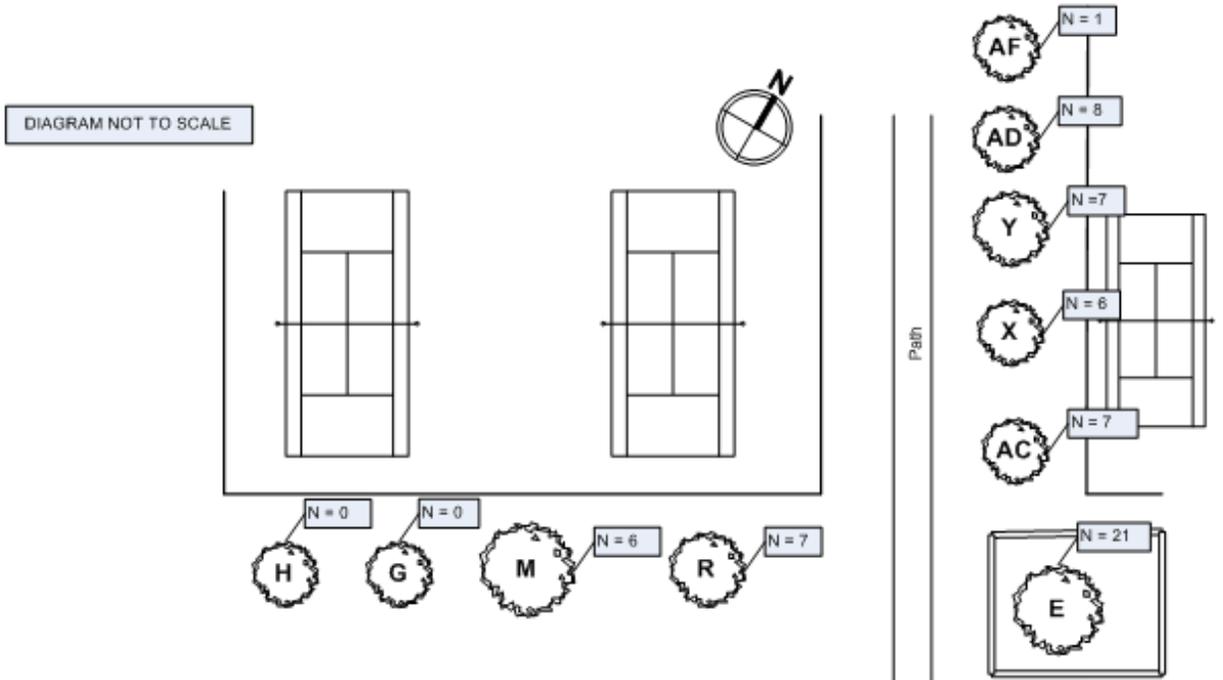
We are celebrating heron monitors Dalcyce Epp (left) and Maria Morlin (right) who have been volunteering with SPES for over 10 years!

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Heron Colony map supplied by Dalyce Epp