

Stanley Park Heronry Update

July 2014



An adult heron feeding its chicks a sizable fish meal.

Photo by Martin Passchier

They sure do grow up fast. Since our last update in April, many of the blue heron eggs carefully incubated by their parents have transformed into large, awkward fledgling herons. They can be seen testing their wings high above branches and perching on building tops. A lot has happened since our last update: some branches carrying nests have fallen and continued eagle attacks have made for raucous twilight hours.

The adopt-a-nest B5 has had a difficult go of it this year. Monitors observed a lone young chick in the nest during a survey on June 2nd, only to find the nest empty during the next survey on June 24th. Tree B also saw the loss of an entire

branch that carried nest B6. While things seemed like they couldn't be worse in tree B, nest B3 had a surprising five healthy and developing chicks, a number unusually high for one nest. This also happens to be the same nest where we observed the mating behaviour featured in the [April heron colony update](#). Suffice it to say, tree B has had its ups and downs this season.



Photo map of nests in Tree B. Nest B5 is an adopted nest, B6 unfortunately fell during a spring storm. Photo by Maria Morlin

Continued eagle attacks have hit the colony hard as per usual. During the survey on June 24th, monitors were able to observe continued attacks on tree M. We had thought the eagle's attempts at the nests were unsuccessful, mobbed by a murder of crows on its approach, greeted by a thunder of heron squawks, and by all appearances leaving dismayed. However, local wildlife videographer,

Bruce Causier, was able to capture some [rare footage of the eagle attack](#) from below the nest the very same day. A very small, young heron chick can be seen captured in the eagle's beak as it leaves the heron nest. Monitors observed the eagle approach from and return to its Cathedral Trail nest in Stanley Park three times during the one hour survey. Eagle monitors also confirmed the presence of at least two eagle chicks at that nest this season.



A bald eagle from Cathedral Trail nest in Stanley Park leaves a heron nest with a heron chick in its beak. Snapshot taken from [a video by Bruce Causier](#).

The latest count of the colony is showing that this year is not going to be quite as successful in terms of the number of fledgling herons as the past two years, but not by a large amount. In a subsample of 34 surveyed nests, a total of 17 nests successfully produced at least one chick. Of these 17 nests, there was a total of 40 young fledging heron chicks. Four mating pairs made a late go of it,

incubating a late clutch of eggs likely due to losing their chicks from eagle attacks or other causes. Counts at this time last year showed 27 successful nests with 53 fledging heron chicks.

Many of the adults have already left their young chicks, and now the chicks will have the difficult task of learning to hunt and feed themselves and find the best foraging grounds. Our final report will look more closely at all the data collected this year and see just how successful the colony was as a whole this year and compared to previous years. Keep an eye out for that report in August.



Five heron chicks sharing nest B3.

Photo by Tina Hurd

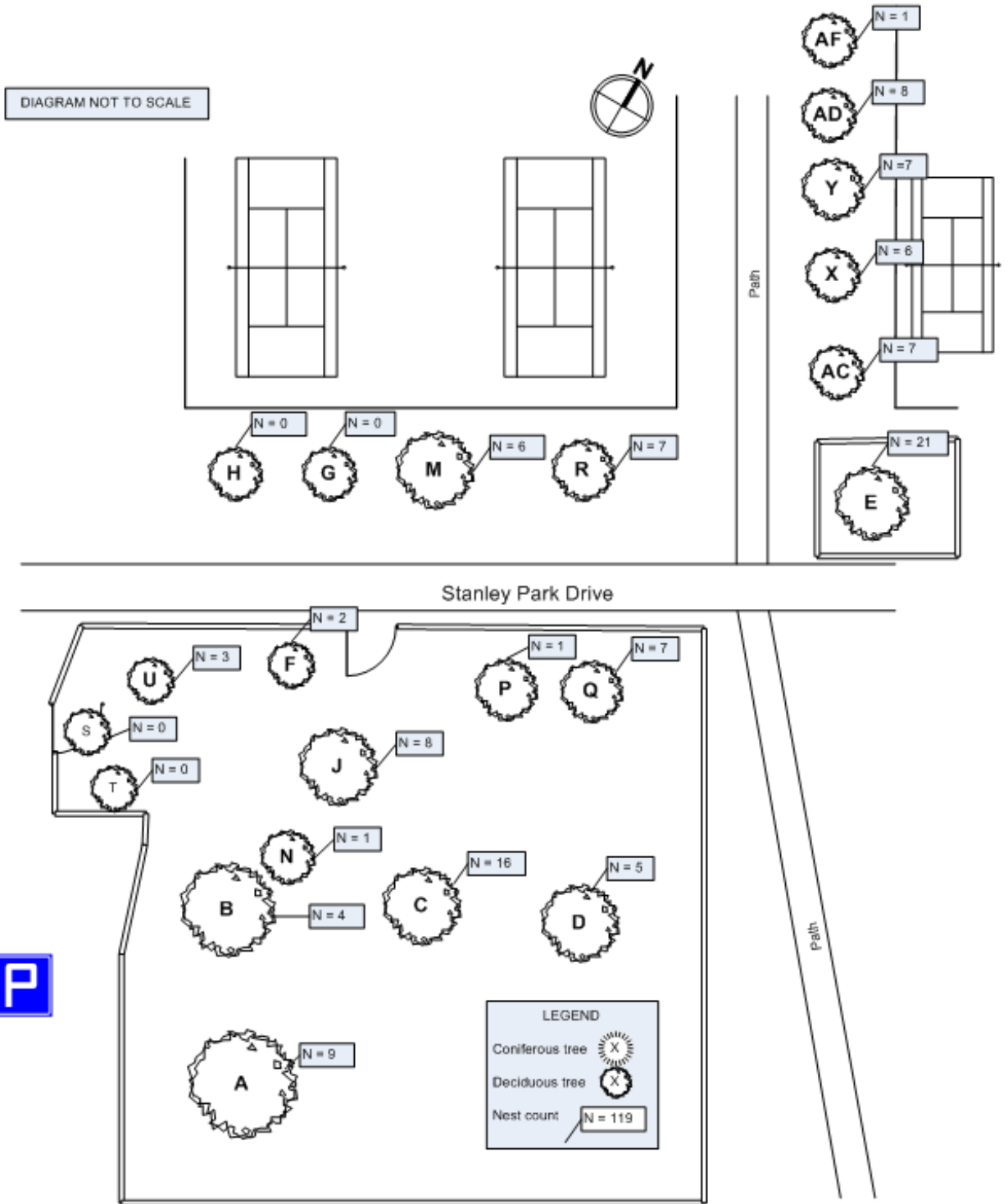
If you've adopted a heron nest this season, thank you for your support. Your contribution helps to maintain our heron monitoring program and conserve this [blue listed](#) species. For more information on adopting please [click here](#).

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STANLEY PARK HERONRY 23 March 2014



Heron Colony map supplied by Dalyce Epp.