

2018 INSTRUCTIONS FOR FIELD OBSERVERS

Audubon Canyon Ranch North Bay Heron and Egret Project

2018 REGIONAL OBSERVATION PERIODS	
DATES	RESEARCH OBJECTIVE
March 2–4 (Fri - Sun)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Draw a panoramic sketch of the nesting trees. Locate and number all active nests on the sketch. • Determine the <u>total</u> number of active nests in the colony for each species. • Identify and monitor focal nests for each species.
March 17-19 (Sat - Mon)	<p><i>Please note this visit is now one of our required observation periods.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Determine the <u>total</u> number of active nests in the colony for each species. • Add additional focal nests as soon as they are confirmed to be active. It is important to begin tracking nest survivorship as early as possible.
April 6–8 (Fri - Sun)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Determine the <u>total</u> number of active nests in the colony for each species. • Continue to add focal nests. Focal nests known to be active for less than two weeks can be added until the colony reaches its peak size. • Monitor focal nests.
May 5–7 (Sat - Mon)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Determine the <u>total</u> number of active nests in the colony for each species. • Monitor focal nests.
June 1–3 (Fri - Sun)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Determine the <u>total</u> number of active nests in the colony for each species. • Monitor focal nests.
June 23–25 (Sat - Mon)	<p><i>This visit may not be necessary if your site only has Great Blue Herons.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Determine the <u>total</u> number of active nests in the colony for each species. • Monitor focal nests.
ADDITIONAL OBSERVATION PERIODS	
<i>For sites with Snowy Egrets, Cattle Egrets, and Black-crowned Night-Herons</i>	
<p>Snowy Egrets, Cattle Egrets, and Black-crowned Night-Herons are able to leave the nest platform 10-14 days after hatching. Because of this, weekly visits greatly enhance the accuracy of our estimates of reproductive success. If you are observing a colony with Snowy Egrets, Cattle Egrets, and/or Black-crowned Night-Herons, we encourage you to check in on your focal nests on a weekly basis. Please let us know if this is not possible for you. Site coordinators should contact us immediately if any of these species are new to your site this year.</p>	

PLEASE PLAN YOUR FIELD TIME:

- Check the Preliminary List of Site Coordinators and Observers for your colony assignment(s). Let us know as soon as possible if we need to make any changes to your assignment or if you need contact information for your partners.
- If you are a Site Coordinator, it is your responsibility to inform other field observers about access requirements and to coordinate team or individual observations. The Site Coordinator compiles the data at the end of the season and submits them to the Cypress Grove Research Center.
- Plan to visit your site once during each of the Regional Observation Periods above. If you cannot observe your site during a scheduled Observation Period, please call Cypress Grove Research Center as soon as possible. Standardized Regional Observation Periods allow us to compare reproductive timing among colonies. These dates provide the minimum four site visits required for this study. *However, additional visits will greatly improve the quality of your data.*
- Arrange for the use of a telescope. Telescopes are necessary to obtain adequate data and will greatly add to your pleasure in viewing heron and egret behavior. We encourage you to acquire your own scope; however a few telescopes are available for loan from the Cypress Grove Research Center. Contact us as early as possible to arrange to borrow one.

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HOW TO SET UP YOUR MONITORING PROGRAM:

1. DETERMINE THE NUMBER OF ACTIVE NESTS EARLY IN THE SEASON.

What is an active nest? We define a nest to be “active” when evidence of a pair bond has been observed. Determine this by looking for the following: before April 1st, either two adults present on the same nest platform or one adult carrying nest material or incubating. After April 1st, any occupied nest is “active.” **Please note:** Black-crowned Night-Herons may engage in nest building before pair bond formation. Therefore, one adult carrying nest material alone does not indicate an active nest. For Black-crowned Night-Herons, please look for **at least one** of the following: two adults present on the same nest platform, a stick presentation, a nest with eggs or chicks, or a single adult on a well-constructed nest platform (sturdy enough to hold at least two eggs).

2. COMPLETE A NESTING PANORAMA. The nesting panorama is a landscape sketch or photograph that indicates the location of numbered nests you will follow through the season. Additional sketches or photos may be needed if you view numbered nests from different vantage points. Remember to check all sides of nesting trees. Excellent panoramas can be created by making enlarged photocopies of photographs. If you use panoramas from previous years, re-number nests to reflect the current colony.

3. SELECT FOCAL NESTS. Focal nests are used to measure the rate of nest survival by monitoring them repeatedly through the entire season. As early as possible, try to **identify a minimum of 15 focal nests per species**. A “focal nest” must be observed “active” either before Stage 1, or at Stage 1. New focal nests known to be active for less than two weeks can be added until the colony reaches its peak size.

If your colony has 15 or fewer active nests, or if you commit to monitor every nest in the colony, then all nests that meet the above criteria are focal nests. **Try to record a complete row of data for each focal nest on every visit, even if you no longer see activity in a nest.** If your colony has more than 15 active nests and you cannot monitor every nest on every visit, select a random subset of nests for each species to monitor as focal nests. To select a random subset of nests, write each nest number on a separate slip of paper and place in a paper bag. Select at least 15 nest numbers from the bag for each species.

Obtaining complete data for every focal nest is crucial, and will determine the length of time necessary for a complete visit. Observations during feeding and nest relief provide the best opportunity for complete data. If you have any questions, **please call us!**

Nest #	Species	Focal nest?	(A) Active (P) Possible (I) Inactive	# Adults	Stage	# Chicks	Comments: behavior, feeding, nest relief, food, etc.
1	GBHE	■	A / P / I	1	4	2 ■	Feeding obs.; parent left colony after 12 min.
2	GBHE	■	(A) P / I	1	3	3 ■	Nest partly obscured by foliage
3	GBHE	■	(A) P / I	0	4	3 ■	Lost chick; 4 chicks on April 10
4	GBHE	■	(A)(P) I	1		□	Possible new attempt after failure? Will recheck
5	GBHE	■	A / P (I)	0		0 □	Failed last visit (April 10)
6	GBHE	□	(A) P / I	0	4	3 □	

“FOCAL NEST” is defined in Step 3, above.

“STAGES” are defined on the Colony Visit Form

Re-number nests on your panorama each year.

“ACTIVE NEST” is defined in Step 1, above.

Check this Box if you are confident you’ve counted all chicks in the nest. This may be impossible when chicks are young, but please make a special effort to count all chicks in Stage 4 nests.

IMPORTANT: The data on nest #6 was not focal, but please report # chicks in all Stage 4 nests, even if they were not monitored on previous visits or assigned a nest number.