

Nest Stages

Nest stages are defined by the criteria below. Note that although the nest stage illustrations depict Great Egrets, these stages apply to Great Blue Herons as well. The Heron and Egret Project tracks nest stages for these two species only.



Great Blue Heron



Great Egret



- 1**
- Egg laying and incubation
 - Adult lying down for long periods
 - Egg turning
 - Nest relief (with no sign of chicks)



- 2**
- Hatching
 - Eggshells on the ground
 - Soft chick sounds
 - Small downy chicks, not yet able to thermoregulate (brooded by adults)
 - Feeding low in nest
 - Adults eating leftovers from bottom of nest cup



- 3**
- Chicks often standing
 - Most or all of down may be replaced by juvenal plumage
 - Chicks start to grab and hold parent's bill during feedings



- 4**
- Adults not continuously at the nest
 - Chicks remain on or close to nest
 - Chicks begin to perform "Jumping Jacks"



- 5**
- Adults not continuously at the nest
 - Young often off nest, "branchers"
 - Chicks return to the nest to be fed

At least one parent continuously at the nest

Adults not continuously at the nest