Action Plan Update: March 8, 2013

Preventing Egret and Heron Nesting Problems in Residential Neighborhoods

The City of Carrollton is now in the process of actively working to deter migratory birds from nesting in residential areas of our community. Citizens and staff have been watching for returning egrets and herons to begin nesting activity. Although we have not confirmed our first official sighting of returning herons or egrets, we feel certain this activity will pick up significantly in the next couple of weeks. We have distributed starter kits to residents who have experienced nesting in the last two seasons and have additional kits available for those residents who experience challenges this year. This is the time for you to keep a watchful eye on the trees in your neighborhood and immediately report all egret and heron activity to Carrollton Animal Services. These reports may be filed by calling (972) 466-3420. If you call after hours, please leave a message so that our team can log your sighting and schedule a survey of your area.

The time to act is now! If you have previously faced the challenges of nesting egrets, you must work now to hang visual deterrents in your affected trees to help in limiting future nesting activity. Although you may not have experienced the extreme problems that were shared by some of our residents in the past, these folks noticed limited activity as well just prior to the arrival of several thousand birds. With this in mind you must act quickly, as when the nesting process begins (eggs in the nest) it will be too late for the city to assist you. As mentioned in previous updates, staff in Code Enforcement, Environmental Quality, Parks, Police, Public Works, Water Quality and Utility Customer Service have received training to identify and report activity throughout the city. We are committed long term to assist with reducing the impact of nesting herons and egrets in your neighborhood. Wildlife biologists tell us that fully relocating cattle egrets may take three to four years. Although we have dedicated tremendous resources to assist with addressing these issues, our plan is based on serving as your partner. This partnership will require your participation to ensure our greatest opportunity for success.

<u>Animal Services' Deterrent Measures</u>

Reported sightings will trigger the following responses:

1. A report of migratory bird activity is shared with our Animal Services team.
2. Animal Services staff will conduct an inspection of the reported areas to deploy deterrent measures and/or educate affected residents regarding the need for their immediate participation in deterring activity on their property.
    a. Measures will include any combination of pyrotechnics ("screamers" and "bangers"), propane cannons, laser lights and air horns, in combination with visual deterrents, noisemakers and water jets that residents deploy.
    b. Ground signs will be placed to inform affected residents of our bird deterrent activity in their neighborhood.
    c. Education for those residents experiencing regular activity will include the issuance of a "starter kit" of deterrent materials and instruction from Animal Services on best use of these materials.

3. Animal Services will work with our residents and trained city staff to track migratory bird activity and adjust responses as necessary to increase our opportunity for success.
    a. Deterrent equipment will be shifted as necessary to keep migratory birds on the move.
    b. City staff will be in frequent communication with state and federal agencies to track progress.
4. As a final resort the approved method of lethal removal will be deployed to further discourage nesting activity of hard-to-move birds.
    a. Lethal measures are our absolute last resort and require documentation that all other non-lethal alternatives have been exhausted.
    b. Our U.S. Fish and Wildlife Services Depredation Permit sets a maximum of 25 cattle egrets that may be taken throughout our community over the course of 2013. This is roughly one percent of the birds that were present in 2011.
5. **Although success in moving these birds to a more desirable nesting habitat is our end goal, it is important to note that each of these efforts are intended to support your activity to protect your personal property from nesting migratory birds. This means our success depends on your participation!**

Thank you again for your interest in helping to preventing these challenges in Carrollton. We are hopeful that your interest will continue in the coming months and that you now have the information needed for a positive outcome this spring.

Here is how you can help:

- Start looking now for migratory birds
- To review birds of interest, please visit our website by clicking here
- Ensure that your trees are trimmed to allow sunlight to shine through; it may also be helpful to create a separation between tree canopies – It's not too late!
- Remove ALL old nesting material – It's not too late for this either!
- Team up with your neighbors when hiring a tree trimming service and ask for discount rates for group service
- Be a good neighbor and help those who may have special needs
- Report migratory bird activity to our team in Animal Services by calling 972-466-3420 (press 3 to speak to an attendant) or email your report to animalservices@cityofcarrollton.com

We were successful last year in preventing the challenges we faced in 2011 only because we received such strong support from our residents in affected areas of our community. We hope to continue serving as your partner.

Please feel free to forward this email to your neighbors or have them contact us to be added to this group.