

# Heron Happenings

May 2026

**As May unfolds**, keen birdwatchers—binoculars in hand—will delight in the spectacle of adult herons swooping back to their nests to feed their hungry chicks. With a little luck and a sharp eye, you might spot young herons clambering around, stretching their wings for the first time or jostling for the best position when food arrives. Through a spotting scope, you can catch a fascinating scene: adult herons regurgitating a feast of fish, amphibians, and sometimes even rodents for their offspring, all while tirelessly adding sticks and greenery to keep their nests sturdy and safe.

**Inside the nest**, the drama continues as heron chicks energetically compete for every mouthful. Watch as they stretch, jostle, and sometimes even peck at their siblings for the best spot during meal times. As the chicks grow, their antics become even livelier, with flapping wings and quick attempts to snatch food from one another, making every feeding a lively event.

**Heron parents** are the picture of dedication. They carefully share food, gently preen their chicks to keep them clean, and stay alert for any signs of danger. Meanwhile, the young herons pick up important social lessons by mimicking adult calls and gestures, practicing wing stretches, and hopping from branch to branch—all essential skills as they prepare to leave the nest.

**Juvenile herons are identifiable** by their soft, grayish feathers and pale bills—a stark contrast to the confident, vibrant adults. You'll often see these youngsters looking a bit awkward as they perfect their skills and gain experience.

**Raptors like the bald eagle and red-tailed hawk** are frequent visitors near Goat Island, drawn by all the hustle and bustle—and the chance for an easy meal. These impressive birds of prey sometimes target young herons, sparking swift and fierce defenses from the adult herons. When raptors appear, the entire colony springs into action, filling the air with alarm calls and bold displays—a thrilling reminder of the delicate balance between predator and heron community.

**Join the Friends of Maddax Woods at the observation area for 'Heron Watch' events from 1-3pm on May 10, May 31, and June 13.**