

# A NEST OF A GREAT BLUE HERON

## Definition

A nest and its supporting structure that either (1) is currently occupied by a great blue heron to hold its eggs or offspring, or (2) is habitually occupied and still capable of holding eggs or offspring of a great blue heron.

## Location

- Typically in riparian areas near water
- Primarily in black cottonwood trees, with coniferous species accounting for the rest

## Features

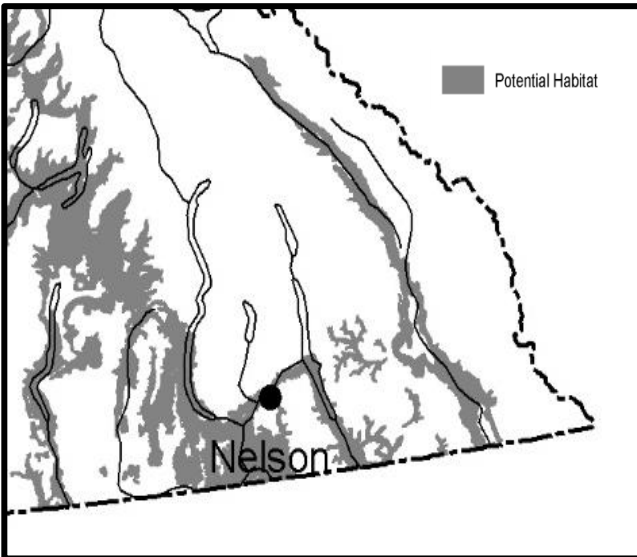
- May nest in loose or tight colonies, building nests in several trees
- Large, stick platforms made with loosely arranged, small diameter branches
- Often regurgitate indigestible food that can be found at the base of the tree along with feces (regurgitated food is usually dark gray with a slight sheen or greasy appearance and may smell of fish)
- Diameter: 1.0 m
- Depth: 0.5 m

## Notes

- Designated a Species at Risk under the *Forest and Range Practices Act* and Blue-listed in British Columbia.
- COSEWIC provides no designation for this bird.

## Sensitive Timing

Courtship	Eggs Present	Young Present
Feb 15 – Apr 30	Apr 1 – Jun 30	Jul 1 – Aug 31



Photos left to right: John Wanderer, Mary Holland

## Similar features to a Great Blue Heron Nest

### Raptor nests - how to distinguish:

- Raptor nests are larger, deeper, and more robust
- Sticks used in construction are generally >0.75 cm in diameter (pencil size)
- Typically built in larger trees, up against the tree trunk or on a large forked branch or stem crotch.
- Generally built at ½ to ¾ canopy height. Some raptor species prefer building near the top of the tree, particularly, Bald Eagles, Ospreys and Swainson's Hawk.
- Some are built on top of mistletoe-like structures or other defects on the tree.

Habitat	BEC	Variant
Interior Douglas-fir	IDF	dk3, dk5, dm1, dm2, mw1, mw2, un, xh1, xh2, xh4, xk
Interior Cedar – Hemlock	ICH	dw1, dw2, dm, mk1, mk2, mk3, mk4, mk5, mw2, mw3, mw4, mw5, xw, vk1, wk1
Montane Spruce	MS	dk1, dk2
Ponderosa Pine	PP	dh1, dh2, xh1, xh2

## Information to Consider

- **Sensitive Timing: February 15 – August 31**
- Great Blue Herons have low to moderate thresholds for new human disturbance, particularly during the breeding season.
- Buffers should be measured as a line drawn around the outer perimeter of all nest trees.
- Increase buffer or delay activities, if the nest is active and the bird constantly flushes away when using minimum buffers.
- During breeding season, add a “quiet” buffer of an extra 200 m to the no disturbance buffer in which no unusual or sudden loud activities will occur (e.g., blasting, tree felling, chain saws, trucking, etc.).

## Recommended disturbance buffers around a Great Blue Heron's nest, depending on existing disturbance and disturbance level of the proposed activity.

		Existing Exposure to Disturbance			
		NIL Isolated site, little or no prior access	LOW Undeveloped area with occasional human use	MODERATE Near secondary logging road or minor recreation site	HIGH Near primary road, major recreation site or human development
Disturbance Level of Proposed Activity	LOW Activities on foot. Small group, visual screening present. Livestock attractants. Examples: layout, cruising reconnaissance.	200 m	60 m	60 m	60 m
	MODERATE Light mechanized activities. Larger group/duration, no visual screening. Examples: spacing, planting, fence construction.	300 m	200 m	200 m	60 m
	HIGH Mechanized activities Examples: road construction, falling and yarding, landing sites.	300 m	300 m	300 m	200 m
	VERY HIGH Blasting, helicopter logging.	1000 m +	1000 m +	1000 m +	1000 m +