

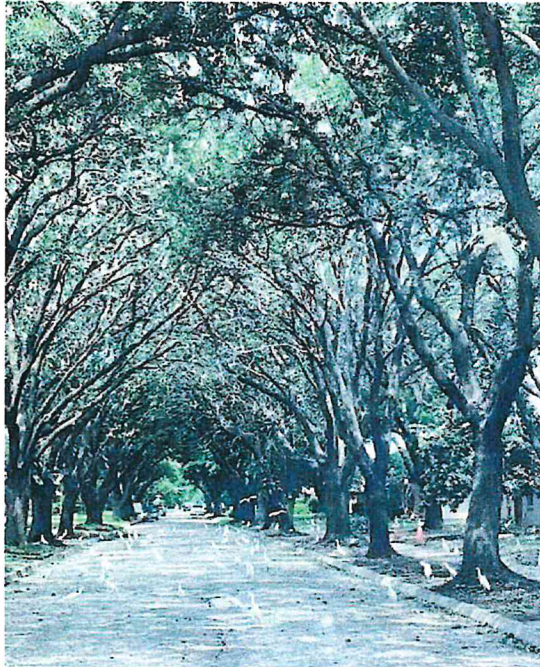
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SPOTLIGHT FEATURED

## Federal permit to assist The Colony in battling egrets

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Pemberton Drive was hit especially hard by egrets in The Colony.

Courtesy of the city of The Colony

The nesting bird problem in The Colony has gotten so bad it's caught the attention of a federal agency.

Pam Nelson, community services director, told the City Council on Tuesday that among the many tools the city is using to battle the issue is a depredation permit issued by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

For the **last two years** certain neighborhoods in The Colony have been a desirable location for migratory birds such as egrets and herons.

Nelson said the area most likely to be impacted by egrets are the streets that intersect with Blair Oaks Drive, between North Colony Boulevard and South Colony Boulevard, as well as the streets that intersect with John Yates Drive, between North Colony and South Colony.

The birds, which between April and October total in the thousands, have brought with them noise and excrement.

But since federal laws prohibit residents from harassing the birds or removing the nests once the birds have laid their first egg, cities are have been limited on what they can do.

The permit allows the city to use deterrent activities further into the season this year.

"This is huge," Nelson said. "This is big for us this year."

Nelson said the permit is city wide.

"So if the rookery pops up anywhere in our city limits we will be able to utilize it," Nelson said.



Egrets, like the one shown here, have been giving The Colony residents fits as they create foul messes and make loud noise. Residents have been forced to not park on the streets in front of their homes.

File Photo

She said when rookeries pop up this season the city will remove the nests with eggs and chicks up to the limit of the depredation permit limit.

"We were given a pretty good number on our limits," Nelson said.

She said the city will also activate hazing activities for as long as the permit allows.

Nelson said the city didn't have enough data from 2018 to obtain the permit.

"We definitely had enough data from 2019 to get their attention," Nelson said.

Among the key statistics: there were more than 1,500 nests removed last year. There were 1,256 dead birds and 481 injured birds discovered. Animal services received 1,470 calls about the birds. In all, there were between 15-20 properties impacted.

Nelson **described the issues** the birds have caused.

"The noise and the smell that comes with this is unbelievable," Nelson said. "But people have to live with this for six full months."

Nelson said the birds cause damage to cars, and she said some residents have said they had to get their roofs replaced and repainted.

"The financial impact is a big part of why we got the depredation permit this year too," Nelson said.

Nelson said the adult birds find food for their babies and bring it back in the form of lizards, grasshoppers and snakes ... leaving behind those remains throughout the neighborhoods.

Nelson said the post office relocated the neighborhood mailbox, and contractors would often not go into the neighborhood because of the issue.

"So these people were dealing with all kinds of impacts to their daily lives," Nelson said.

She said the city cleans the impacted neighborhoods three times a week.

Besides the permit, other efforts by the city include a heavy public information campaign that encourages residents to trim their trees.

Nelson said the birds tend to favor the thick-leafed trees, especially those that connect with neighboring properties.

Other efforts include deploying pyrotechnic devices, providing deterrent kits that come with scare eye balloons, tennis balls to throw at the birds and power nozzles for their garden hose – all to be used before the birds lay their first egg.

Nelson said the white herons have already been spotted flying over the city, but there haven't been any reports of scout birds yet.



Some residents took the advice of trimming their trees seriously to help prevent nesting birds from landing on their property.  
Courtesy of the city of The Colony

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