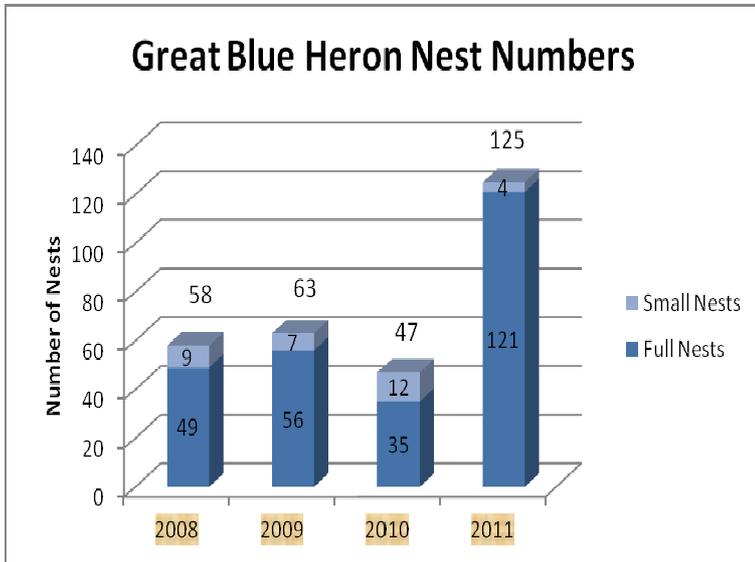


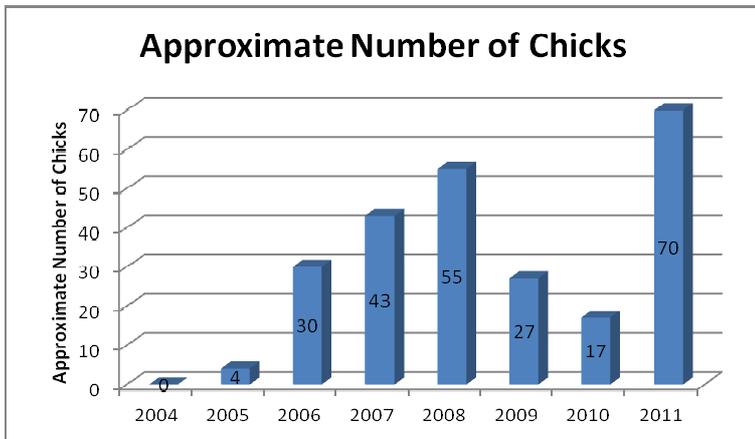
Great Blue Heron Status, Peltier Lake Island, Feb 2012

Wayne LeBlanc

The great blue herons on Peltier Island had a FANTASTIC 2011 summer! Recovery is accelerating. Thanks go to the city of Lino Lakes, their Environmental Board, Anoka County Parks and volunteers for their support of the great blue herons. Protections and support of the herons need to continue to try to reach previous numbers.



Because of no leaves, exact nest counts can be made in winter. In 2011, the herons made 125 total nests and more than doubled the number of nests from 2010. In 2008, 2009, 2010 there were 58, 63, and 47 nests. On Jan 6, 2012, there were 125 total nests (121 full nests and 4 small nests). That's an increase of 80 nests or 170%. That's just terrific! It might be that young herons from 2006 and on are maturing, coming back to the colony and nesting. Herons mature in their third spring. In 1996, the nest count was over 1,000, so there is a long way yet to reach original numbers. The herons moved into 36 new trees not occupied in 2010. The plan is to install new flashing in 15 of those trees with new nests to protect the herons from land predators. The other 20 new nest trees already have flashing.



In June 2011, the estimated chick count was 70. But chick counts are difficult because foliage obscures the nests. Some years had storms and again, foliage and timing of the chick count can make for variable numbers. Years 2009 and 2010 may have been reduced due to weather or predators, it is difficult to say. In 2011, evidence shows great egrets returned for the first time in years which is more good news.

Some people involved in helping the great blue herons are pictured: Marty Asleson (kneeling), Andy Von Duyke and his two daughters Anna and Ellie, Wayne LeBlanc, Joel Kilgore, Gary Averbek and Dave Kilgore. Others, not pictured, include Barbara Bor, Glen Fuchs, Jeff Perry, Tim Sevcik, Ron Marier and Eaglebrook Church. Support includes flashing trees, installing signs, maintaining no-wake zone buoys and assembling stick piles for use as nesting material.





From 2000 to 2010, the most nests seen in a tree were 5. This last summer, 2011, one tree had 10 nests in it! Others had 9. This is an interesting development in higher density nesting. Pictured at left are 2 trees with 9 nests each.

On August 1, 2, and 3 of 2011, Tigress Productions associated with the National Geographic and Wild Case Files program filmed people and places and actions involving the great blue herons. This was an activity intense 3 day venture. The program will air later.

On Sunday, May 22, 2011, a tornado swept through Minneapolis at North Mississippi Park and destroyed all the great blue heron nests on an island. Estimates state about 180 birds were killed. Nine chicks were rescued and bought to the Wildlife Rehabilitation Center. My son, Kyle, happened to be working there and actually fed those great blue heron chicks. Perhaps some of those displaced birds will find a home at Peltier Island. The picture below, from the Star and Tribune, shows a great blue heron chick from that colony just after release.

Let hope the great increasing trend continues!

Further resources are at:

www.PeltierLake.Org

Facebook: Peltier Lake Heron Colony

mail@peltierlake.org

