



Home Sweet Home



Heron Rookery

Scan the wooded island just across the Tennessee River for numerous bundles of sticks scattered through the canopy. These bulky structures are the nests of Great Blue Herons. Dozens of these nests are scattered across the island, and each year Great Blue Herons gather here to raise their young. Such a concentration of nests is called a heron rookery.

Great Blue Heron rookeries often attract other flocking birds such as other heron species and Double-crested Cormorants. The location of the rookery at the base of Wilson Dam is ideal to take advantage of all the fresh fish churned up by the dam's turbines. Look along the banks of the island where young herons learn to feed alongside the adults.

Opportunistic Young Hooligans

Since many anglers also enjoy the numerous fish below the dam, watch for brave young herons that may try to steal an easy meal such as a recent catch, or even your bait.



Can You Spot A Great Blue Heron?

The Great Blue Heron is one of Alabama's most distinctive birds. This tall long-necked blue-gray heron is often seen stalking the shadows of shallow water. Look for the long pointed dull-yellow bill, pale face and crown. Great Blue Herons often have a shaggy appearance due to the long plumes

on their neck and back. Adult birds also have distinctive long dark plumes on the back of their neck that often blow around in the wind. After leaving the nest and attaining adult size, young birds are distinguished by their darker overall coloring on the head and neck and lack of long plumes.

Great Blue Heron nest with chicks/Quincey Banks



Double-crested Cormorant/Walt Burch

Successful Immigrant

The Double-crested Cormorant has been gradually increasing in the Tennessee River Valley. These infamous fish-eaters may move into heron rookeries and take up residence as opportunity allows. Over the years, their numbers have increased substantially to outnumber the herons in certain locations.



Immature Yellow-crowned Night-Heron/Quincey Banks

Post-breeding Dispersal

In late summer when the nesting season is over, herons from elsewhere in the region visit Wilson Dam. At this time, many young birds wander away from where they were raised in search of food. Look for Great and Cattle egrets, both Black and Yellow-crowned Night-Herons as well as more unusual visitors such as Snowy Egrets or Little Blue Herons.