

Best Management Practices

MISSOURI DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION



Snowy egret

Egretta thula

Common name • Snowy egret

Scientific name • *Egretta thula*

State status • Endangered

Ecology

Snowy egrets inhabit wetlands and shores of lakes, ponds and small rivers along the western, eastern and southern coasts of the United States and from Missouri to Nevada. In Missouri, they use marshes and lowland forests in the southeastern corner of the state along the Mississippi River. Beginning in May, snowy egrets nest in colonies in trees or low-growing marsh plants. Their nests are typically 5-10 feet above the ground and are made of twigs and sticks. Clutches have three-six eggs. Young hatch after approximately 18 days of incubation and are fed by both parents until they leave the nest in 20-25 days. Snowy egrets prey on a variety of foods, including earthworms, fish, small rodents, amphibians, reptiles and crayfish.

Reasons for Decline

Beginning in the late 1800s and continuing until the early 1900s, people began killing snowy egrets for the beautiful plume feathers the birds grow during the breeding season. Although they rebounded from this near catastrophe, snowy egrets now face new threats. Loss of suitable nesting sites and habitat due to destruction of wetlands and riparian corridors, human disturbances at nest sites and degradation of water quality in wetlands continue to threaten these birds.

Specific Recommendations

Snowy egrets are closely associated with riparian and wetland habitat. Protection and restoration of quality wetlands are important for many species, including the snowy egrets.

→ Project activities should not occur within 100 feet of a wetland nor in the riparian corridor where this species nests between April 15 and July 31 to prevent disturbing birds.

→ Erosion and sediment controls should be implemented, maintained and monitored for the duration of the project.

→ Disposal of wastes and garbage should be done in designated areas far from wetlands.

→ Draining or destroying permanent, emergent wetland habitat should be avoided.

→ Avoid clearing trees and vegetation within the 100-foot buffer of a wetland or river.

→ Dams and other impoundments should not be constructed on rivers within the range of this species.

General Recommendations

Refer to Management Recommendations for Construction Projects Affecting Missouri Wetlands and Management Recommendations for Construction Projects Affecting Missouri Streams and Rivers.

Information Contacts

For further information regarding regulations for development in wetlands, rivers and streams, contact:

Missouri Department of Conservation
Policy Coordination Section
P.O. Box 180
2901 W. Truman Blvd
Jefferson City, MO 65102-0180
Telephone: 573/751-4115

Missouri Department of Natural Resources
Division of Environmental Quality
P.O. Box 176
Jefferson City, MO 65102-0176
Telephone: 573/526-3315

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
Regulatory Branch
700 Federal Building
Kansas City, MO 64106-2896
Telephone: 816/983-3990

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
Water, Wetlands, and Pesticides Division
901 North 5th Street
Kansas City, KS 66101
Telephone: 913/551-7307

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Ecological Services Field Office
608 E. Cherry Street, Room 200
Columbia, MO 65201
Telephone: 573/876-1911

Disclaimer

These Best Management Practices were prepared by the Missouri Department of Conservation with assistance from other state agencies, contractors and others to provide guidance to those people who wish to voluntarily act to protect wildlife and habitat. Compliance with Best Management Practices is not required by the Missouri wildlife and forestry law nor by any regulation of the Missouri Conservation Commission. Other federal, state or local laws may affect construction practices.