



Pelican Harbor

SEABIRD STATION

Arborist Information Sheet

Things for arborists to know about wildlife they may encounter while pruning and removing trees

- There are 196 species of breeding birds in Florida. Almost all of these species nest in or near trees.
 - Most of these species nest in the spring or summer months, May to August. Therefore if both you and your client are willing and the tree is not potentially dangerous, it is best to wait until the fall and winter months to prune or trim the tree.
 - Grey Squirrels, some bats, and opossums may also nest in tree hollows in the spring and summer months.



Mother Squirrel and her four babies inside a tree hollow



Woodpeckers also nest in Tree Hollows, and are especially susceptible to the cutting down of old palm trees



Blue Jays are another species whose nests are very vulnerable to tree trimming from mid March to July

- **If it is not a viable option to wait until the fall month to trim the tree we recommend a few things...**
 - Do a preliminary wildlife survey - This would mean doing a quick look at the surrounding area and the tree itself to check for signs of nesting birds or mammals. Signs may include a nest, adult birds, feces or feathers at the bottom of the tree, etc...This can be very quick and can be done before starting work on the tree at the same time as other prep that needs to be done.
 - Be on the lookout for nesting birds all year-round, not just during the spring nesting season. Nesting birds can be found at any time of year, especially in warmer 'sunbelt' climates. Woodpeckers and owls often use nest cavities in dead limbs for shelter in winter.
 - Inspect trees and other vegetation in the work area for bird activity before climbing or trimming. If possible, survey the work area at dawn or dusk when birds are more active, and check the area with binoculars. Look at all sides of the tree, and make sure you can see the tallest branches. Look for any movement or shapes that do not fit the branch patterns.
 - Listen for vocalizations or alarm calls of birds or other animals as you examine the tree. Talk to neighbors and tree owners to see if they have any additional information about resident animals.

- **What to Do if You Find an Active nest?**
 - If you find an active nest while you're working, stop and call the FWC or a local wildlife agency. Both our contact information and the contact information of several other professional organizations in the South Florida area can be found at the bottom of this sheet.
 - Do not touch or try to move the nest. Stay 50 feet away from active songbird nests, and 500 feet away from active hawk and owl nests, or as far back as you can given the size of the area you are in.
 - If you do find a baby bird out of the nest the best thing to do is always to try to re-nest the bird if possible and if the bird does not have any visible injuries. To re-nest you will just need a plastic container with holes for drainage, like a strawberry basket. You can fill the basket with dead leaves and place it in a tree or bush in the area you found the baby bird. If you are unable to re-nest the bird yourself you can contact one of the organizations below.

- If you find a nestling that you believe to be in danger, contact your local wildlife rehabilitation agency such as Pelican Harbor Seabird Station. You can find our contact info along with other wildlife rehab centers at the bottom of this sheet. Removing a nestling is an absolute last resort and should only be done if the bird is in serious danger. You may see nestlings on the ground during the fledging period, the period where they have developed most of their feathers and are beginning to learn to fly. But they are still being cared for by their parents.
- If you find a nest with nestlings or eggs, please whenever possible, do not trim branches supporting the nest or protecting the nest from weather or predators both below and above the nest.

- **Legal Repercussions -**

- There are over 800 species of birds protected by the Migratory Bird Treaty Act of 1918, Including common birds. **Disrupting the nests, eggs or nestlings of these birds can result in huge fines** which we are sure everyone would like to avoid.

If you work with trees, you will necessarily encounter wildlife. I think it stands to follow that working safely and respectfully with wildlife should be an important component of the arborist training program, but it is our hope that arborists take the time to educate themselves about these important issues. If you want to learn more about safety measures for working with wildlife, visit the Wildlife Training Institute website or consider enrolling in their Certified Wildlife Protector Program.

Contact Information for local Wildlife Rehabilitation Centers

Name	Area and Address	Contact Information
Pelican Harbor Seabird Station	1279 NE 79th st Causeway Miami, Fl, 33138	305-751-9840
South Florida Wildlife Center	3200 SW 4th ave. Ft. Lauderdale Fl, 33315	954-524-4302
Wildlife Rescue of Dade County	Homestead, Fl	305-342-1075