

DFW Heronries

TEXAS
PARKS &
WILDLIFE

Brett Johnson
Urban Wildlife Biologist
Texas Parks and Wildlife Dept.

A photograph of a residential street with a mailbox in the foreground, trees, and houses in the background. The text is overlaid on the image.

Today's Topics

Species of Interest

Protection issues

Early Detection

Deterrent Methods

Habitat Modification

A photograph of a residential street with a mailbox in the foreground, trees, and houses in the background. The scene is brightly lit with shadows cast on the pavement.

Today's Topics

Species of Interest

Protection issues

Early Detection

Deterrent Methods

Habitat Modification



Cattle Egret

**Historically native to parts of
Asia, Africa, and Europe**

Extremely fast range expansion

Seem to follow spread of cattle

**“Empty Niche”-no real
competition**

1st Appear-1941

**1st US breeding-1953
most abundant species in
heronries**



Cattle Egret

Regarding the MBTA

“The Cattle Egret got here by means of a natural range expansion. They were not intentionally introduced or accidentally released. They followed the increase of cattle production worldwide, and have long range migration. They also pose no immediate threat to “native” species. So they ARE legally covered under the MBTA.”

USFW Wildlife Biologist

Cattle Egret



Bill—yellow to orange

Short, thick neck

Hunched posture

Yellowish legs

Fly in “V” pattern formation

Breed-Late April-October



Little Blue Heron

**Typically 2nd most
abundant***

Dark slaty-blue body

Maroon-brown head, neck

Legs blue-green

**Breeding season
extends from late
March to late July**



Snowy Egret

3rd Most Common

Bill is thin, long, and black

Black legs

Bright yellow feet

Long, slender neck

**Breeding season extends
usually from late March to
early August**



Great Egret

Big, white bird

bill is long and yellow

Legs and feet are black

in heronry varies a lot

**breeding season
extends from early
March to early August**



Black-crowned Night Heron

**Black crown, 2-3 white
plumes**

**Stout body, short neck
and legs**

Usually 0-12 pairs

**Secretive, don't fly until
sunset**

**Breeding season
extends early
February through
late July**

A photograph of a residential street with large trees casting shadows on the pavement. In the background, there are houses and a mailbox on a post. The text is overlaid on this scene.

Today's Topics

Species of Interest

Protection issues

Early Detection

Deterrent Methods

Habitat Modification

Migratory Bird Treaty Act of 1918

- **1918 implemented the 1916 convention between the United States and Great Britain (for Canada)**
- **Similar conventions between the United States and Mexico (1936), Japan (1972) and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (1976)**
- **Each new treaty has been incorporated into the MBTA as an amendment and the provisions of the new treaty are implemented domestically.**
- **Established Federal responsibilities for the protection of nearly all species of birds, their eggs and nests.**
- **836 species are legally protected, 58 legally hunted**

MBTA Protection

- Made it illegal for people to "take" migratory birds, their eggs, feathers or nests.
- **Take** is defined in the MBTA to include by any means or in any manner, any attempt at hunting, pursuing, wounding, killing, possessing or transporting any migratory bird, nest, egg, or part thereof.

What can and cannot be done legally?

“Simply put, it is prohibited to kill the birds or harass them in some way that would cause the abandonment and death of eggs or hatchlings. Anything short of this is not a violation of the MBTA.”

USFW Wildlife Biologist

What is the difference between roosting and nesting?

“Birds don't typically sit on a nest when roosting outside the nesting season. Anything can be done to drive them away when they are only roosting.”

USFW Wildlife Biologist

When is it too late to harass the birds?

**“The window of opportunity is
fairly short, from the time the
birds first arrive until an egg is
laid in a nest.”**

USFW Wildlife Biologist

What about destroying nest BEFORE nesting?

“A newly built nest can be destroyed up until the moment an egg is laid in it. After that, it may be removed only after the nest is no longer used by the parent birds rearing offspring.”



End of nesting season nest removal

“In cases where a colony is no longer active (*i.e.* no evidence of the colonial species using the colony site for nesting purposes in the current year), then those old nests may be destroyed at any time **without the need for a permit.**”

Interim Empty Nest Policy of the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Region 2

“Take of nests in partially or fully active colonies must be done by trained Wildlife Services personnel”

Interim Empty Nest Policy of the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Region 2

“Active or Partially Active Colonies. Once egg laying has commenced by any of those birds, all nest destruction must cease. Destruction of empty nests in an active or partially active colony will likely threaten surrounding nests that contain eggs or nestlings; therefore it will not be allowed except on a case-by-case basis as determined by the Migratory Bird Permits Office.”

Interim Empty Nest Policy of the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Region 2

“Nest destruction may resume at the end of the nesting season without a permit only after all nesting activities by all birds in the colony have ceased, which should be by October 1 (*i.e.* after all nestlings have fledged and left the site and no eggs are being incubated by late nesters). At such time nests containing infertile/abandoned/dead eggs or longdead nestlings may also be destroyed without permit.”

Interim Empty Nest Policy of the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Region 2

If the window on harassment and before the first egg is in the nest-

“Permits to take active nests (containing eggs or nestlings) of colonial species for Depredation Control purposes will not be issued by the Migratory Bird Permits Office. **Destruction of such active nests must be done by trained personnel of the U.S.D.A. - Wildlife Services.**”

A residential street scene with trees, a mailbox, and houses in the background. The scene is captured from a low angle, looking down a paved road that curves to the right. A concrete curb separates the road from a grassy area where a mailbox stands. In the background, there are several houses with brick and siding, and large trees with dense foliage. The lighting suggests a bright, sunny day, with dappled shadows cast across the road.

Today's Topics

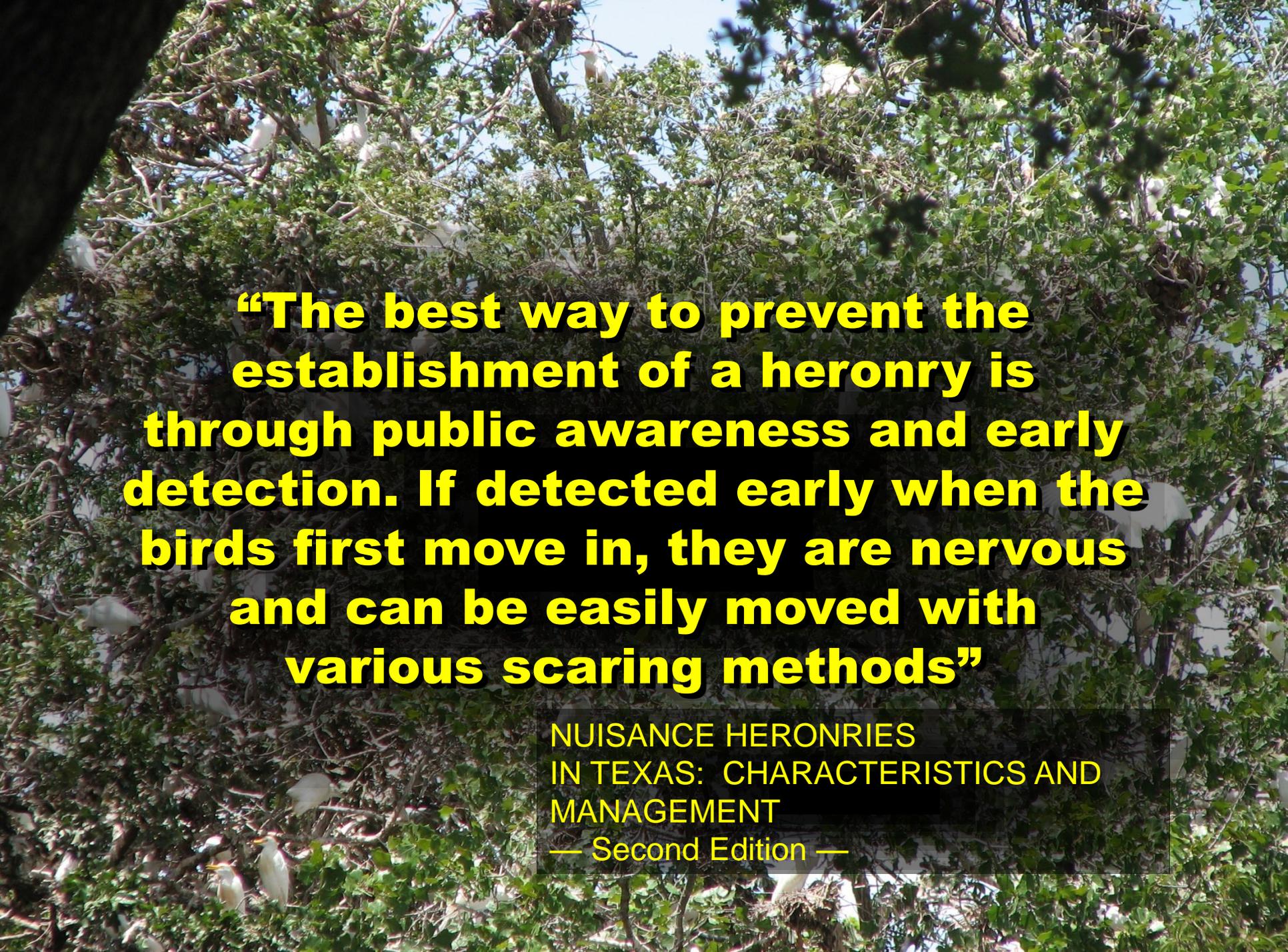
Species of Interest

Protection issues

Early Detection

Deterrent Methods

Habitat Modification

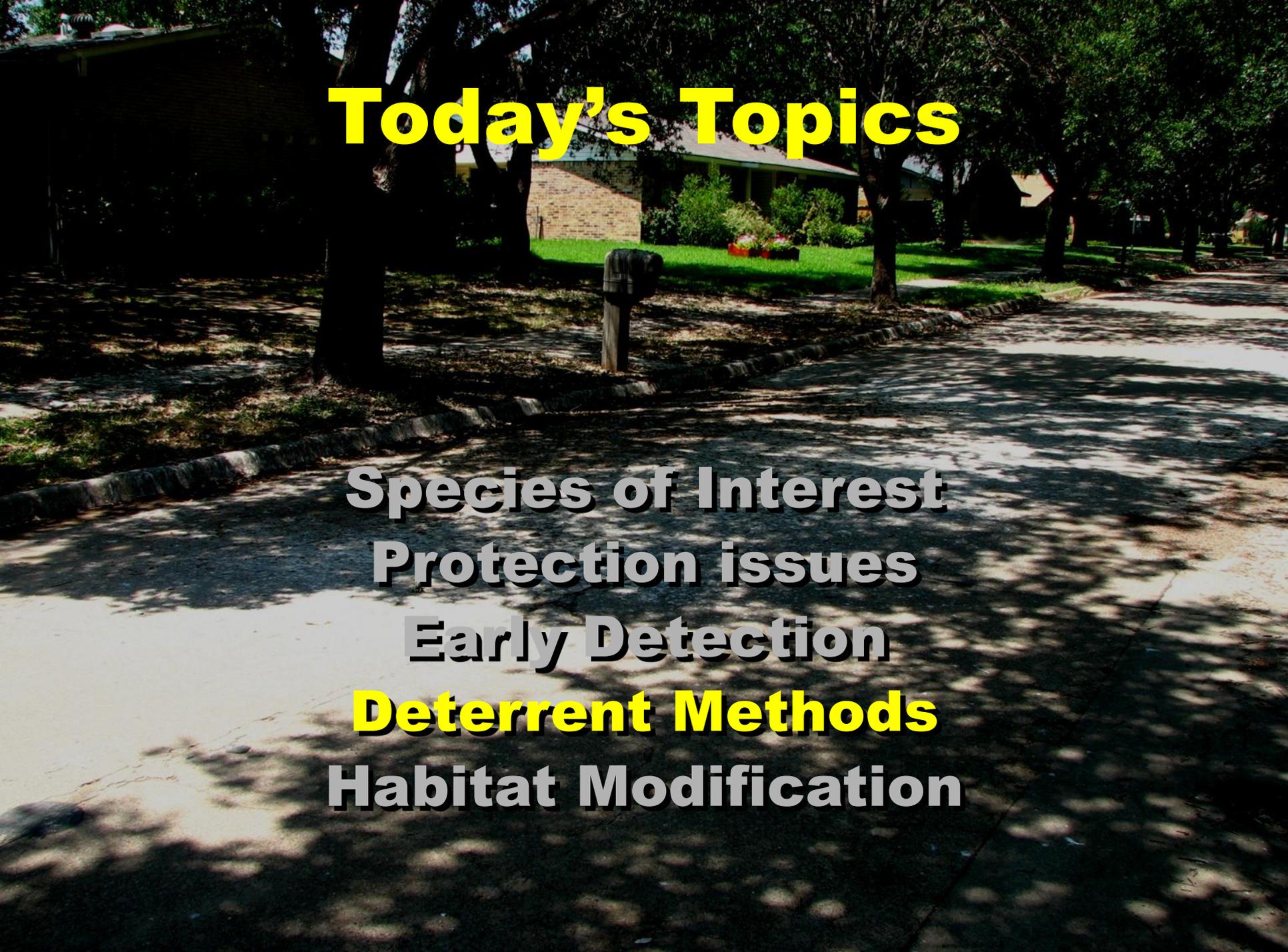


“The best way to prevent the establishment of a heronry is through public awareness and early detection. If detected early when the birds first move in, they are nervous and can be easily moved with various scaring methods”

NUISANCE HERONRIES
IN TEXAS: CHARACTERISTICS AND
MANAGEMENT

— Second Edition —

“Municipal administrators should consider providing training information on heronry characteristics and initiation to city police, maintenance personnel, and interested volunteers. A comprehensive vigil during the early spring could avert later undesirable circumstances for both people and birds.”

A photograph of a residential street scene. In the foreground, a paved road is dappled with shadows from trees. A concrete curb separates the road from a grassy area. A wooden mailbox stands on the grass. In the background, there are several houses with brick and siding, and many large, leafy trees. The overall atmosphere is bright and sunny.

Today's Topics

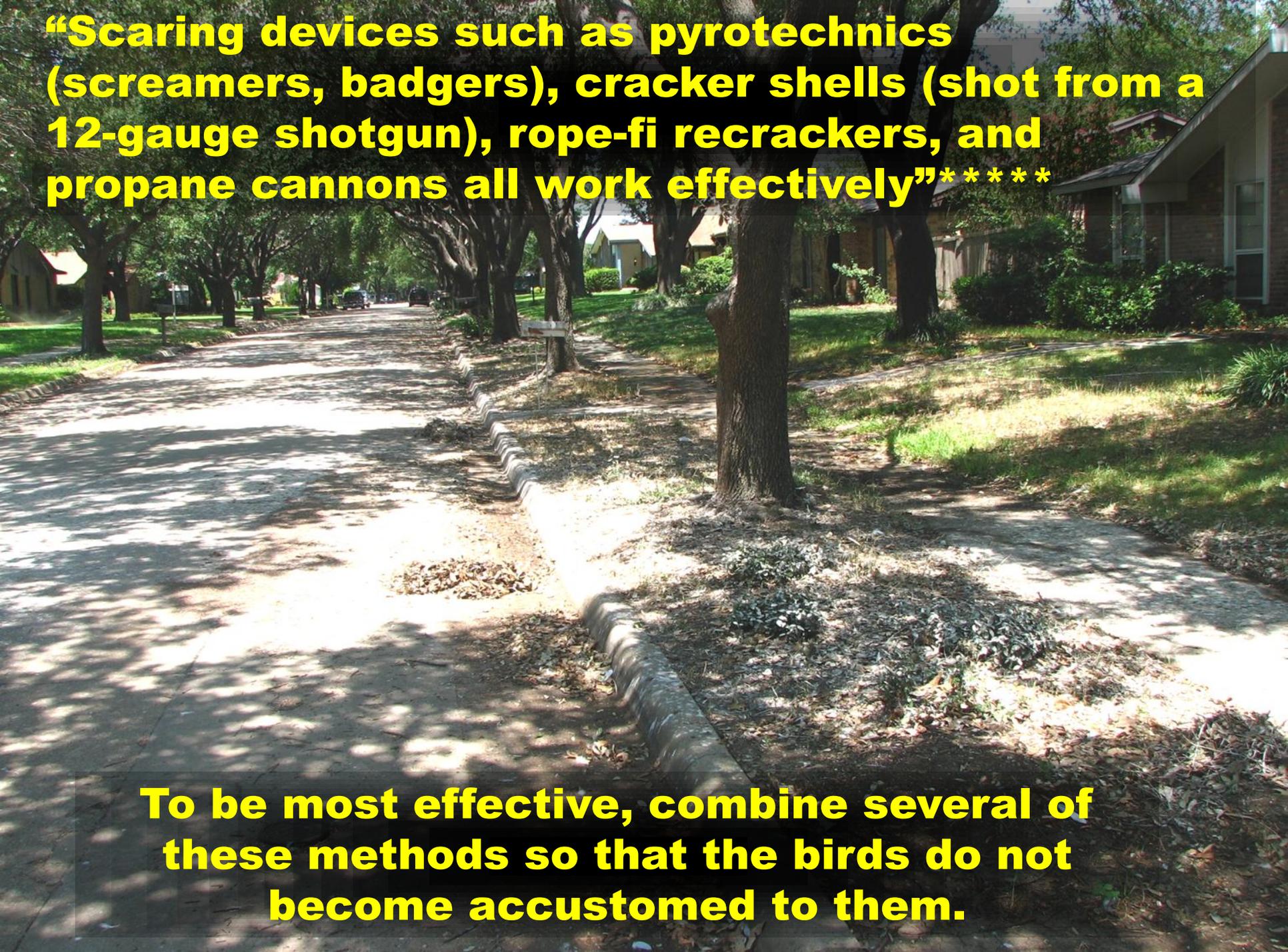
Species of Interest

Protection issues

Early Detection

Deterrent Methods

Habitat Modification

A photograph of a residential street lined with trees and houses. The street is paved and has a concrete curb separating it from the sidewalk. The trees are large and mature, casting shadows on the road. The houses are visible in the background, partially obscured by the trees. The overall scene is a typical suburban neighborhood.

“Scaring devices such as pyrotechnics (screamers, badgers), cracker shells (shot from a 12-gauge shotgun), rope-fi recrackers, and propane cannons all work effectively”****

To be most effective, combine several of these methods so that the birds do not become accustomed to them.



**Scare Eye type balloons
have been effective with
SENTRY birds**

A photograph of a residential street scene. In the foreground, a paved road is dappled with shadows from trees. A concrete curb separates the road from a grassy area. A wooden mailbox stands on a post in the grass. In the background, there are several trees and a brick house with a green roof. The overall scene is bright and sunny.

Today's Topics

Species of Interest

Protection issues

Early Detection

Deterrent Methods

Habitat Modification

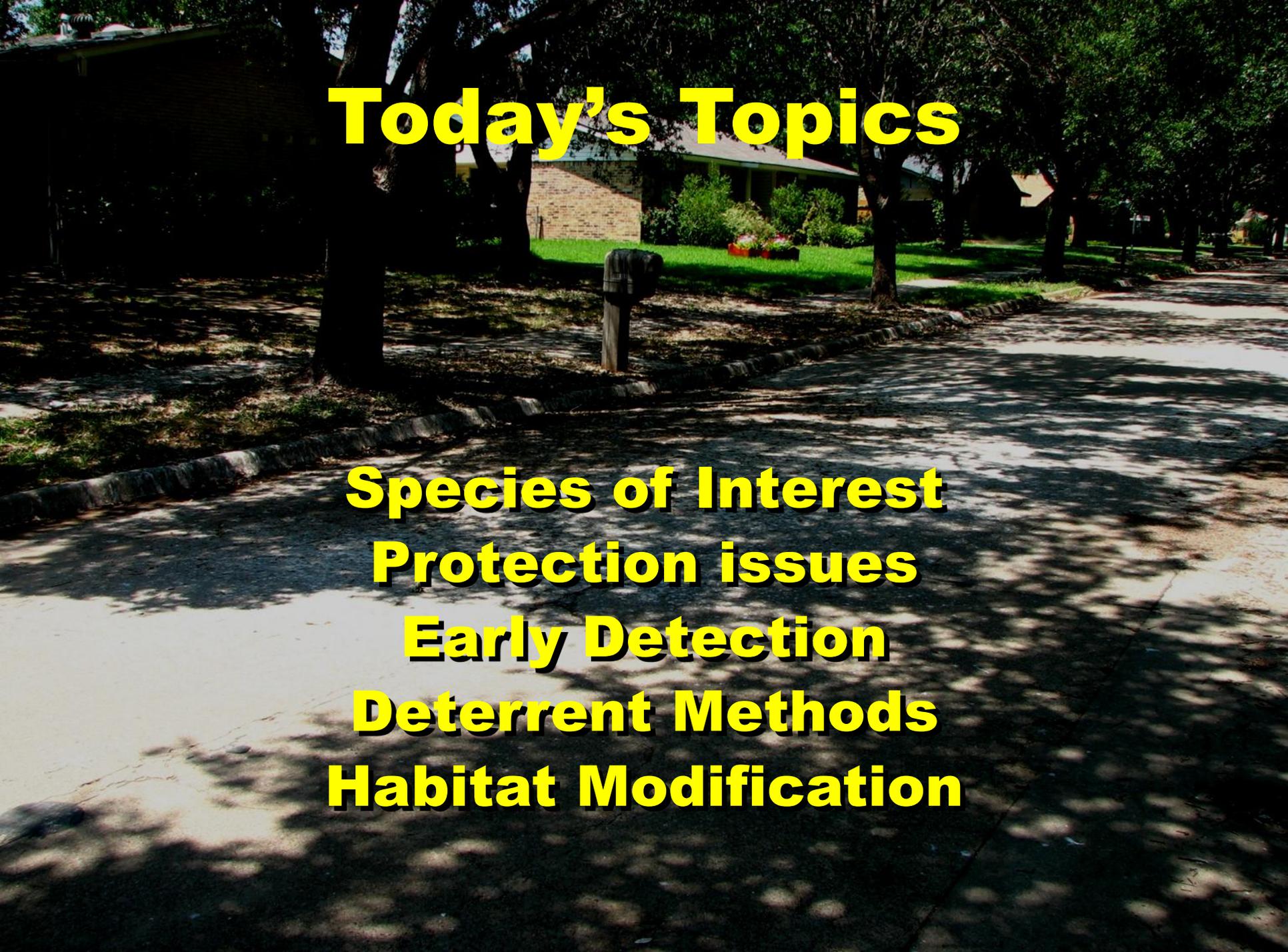
A photograph of a residential street lined with trees and houses. The street is paved and has a concrete curb on the left. The trees are large and mature, casting shadows on the road. The houses are single-story and have a mix of colors, including yellow and brown. The overall scene is a typical suburban neighborhood.

“Dramatic changes are not necessary and such modifications of a potential nesting area usually produce longer lasting prevention than other methods”

Spacing between tree canopies

A photograph of a residential street lined with trees. The trees are spaced out, and their canopies do not overlap significantly, creating large areas of sunlight on the road and sidewalks. The street is paved, and there are houses visible in the background. The overall scene is bright and sunny, with many shadows cast by the trees.

**Open canopies, they LIKE
>75% canopy closure**

A photograph of a residential street with a mailbox in the foreground, trees, and houses in the background. The scene is brightly lit with shadows cast on the pavement.

Today's Topics

Species of Interest

Protection issues

Early Detection

Deterrent Methods

Habitat Modification



Any Questions?

Brett Johnson

Urban Wildlife Biologist

Texas Parks and Wildlife Department

972-293-3841

dallasbiologist@airmail.net