

Great Blue Heron

What is happening to the great blue heron population in Cuyahoga Valley National Park?

The great blue heron plays an important role in the aquatic (water) ecosystems of CVNP. These birds are highly dependent upon the quality of their habitats. Because of that, the health of this bird population can be used to measure the progress in water quality within the Cuyahoga River watershed.



Jim Schmidt

Great blue herons, not known to nest in the park before the 1980s, raise young in three heronries within or adjacent to the park boundary. Visitors have observed herons carting sticks to repair or build nests at two sites: along the Cuyahoga River north of Route 82 and along the south side of Bath Road just east of the Cuyahoga River. (The herons have built a third heronry north of Bath Road, but it is hard for visitors to access.) Heron nest monitoring has found hundreds of nests perched high above the river and filled with squawking, awkward young herons from May to July.

Data Collection

Citizen science volunteers visited the heronries (colonies of heron nests) on a weekly basis to record changes in activity. Spotting scopes and binoculars were used to view nesting behavior. Observations began early in January when birds begin nest building and ended in June when young fledge develop feathers and leave the nests.

Below is data from the beginning of this study until 2008.

Year	# Nests	# Chicks
1993	42	105
1994	57	116
1995	69	158
1996	94	170
1997	71	118
1998	128	292
1999	123	350
2000	148	315
2001	155	374
2002	160	396
2003	176	441
2004	145	288
2005	167	364
2006	146	263
2007	129	316
2008	131	320

1. What is the independent variable?
2. What are the dependent variables?
3. What kind of graph could you make?

Create a graph of the data above. Don't forget to label your axes and include a title. Remember to have consistent intervals on the axes.