

# GREAT BLUE HERONS

## @North Star Nature Preserve



Unusual in its high elevation and location in spruce trees, the great blue heron colony at North Star has fluctuated in numbers, relocated at least once (from the west side of the river to the east side in 2006) and declined over time. As of 2017, great blue herons have not been actively nesting at North Star, although they have been observed actively flying and foraging within the preserve every summer.

### What influences heron nesting?

- ▶ **Habitat**
  - Stands of tall trees near water
  - Foraging habitat
- ▶ **Disturbance**
  - **Human activity:** construction, recreation...
  - **Predators:** eagles, raccoons, bears, skunks, etc.
- ▶ **Climate/Weather**
  - Favorable conditions at nesting time
- ▶ Scientists typically monitor heron populations within a region rather than by nest stands, as small colonies are often ephemeral

### Conservation Status

- Not endangered, threatened or of great conservation concern
- One of the most widespread wading birds in North America
- Population numbers are increasing nationwide and in Colorado

### *Actions taken to protect this place ...and all the life it supports!*

- ✓ Protected 175 acres of critical wetlands, floodplain, riparian and wildlife habitat.
- ✓ Prohibited human activity on the majority of the property (all land West of the river)
- ✓ Adopted Management Plan that guides activities and closures in and around North Star Nature Preserve (2000)
- ✓ Updated Management Plan in response to new issues and realities including increased river use and parking (2015)
- ✓ Increased education & outreach efforts via increased programming, signage, designated quiet zones, and ACES naturalists on-site to help educate all users
- ✓ Increased enforcement of rules and regulations
- ✓ Instituted a permit system for commercial use on this stretch of river to help preserve its character
- ✓ Conducted several new ecological studies on plants, wildlife and hydrology to assess conditions and monitor changes