

**A special  
treat:  
Great  
Horned  
Owls  
nest  
nearby**

by Betty Long

Visitors to Timber Park this winter and early spring have had the privilege to witness a rare event. A pair of Great Horned Owls built their nest in an exposed location and raised two owlets directly over the park path. Great Horned Owls are not an unusual sight in Green Trails. The opportunity to easily observe their nesting *is* unusual.

Typically, the owls attract mates and carve out their territories in winter. In this case, owls were heard hooting as early as Thanksgiving, and it became evident in December that Timber Park was attracting more owl activity than in prior years. Multiple owls were seen in the park, but eventually two had made it their territory.

In January, one owl was seen working on a nest. Typically, Great Horned Owls adapt the nest of another large bird, and a nearby resident later commented that this had been a hawk's nest last year.

In February, one owl was regularly brooding on the nest. Wikipedia says that the average incubation period is 33 days, and that an adult broods continuously until the owlets are about two weeks old. Presumably, the pair shares this duty. The owlets were first sighted on March 6, which indicates that the eggs had been laid in January. When first observed in March, the owlets already appeared to be about 8" tall.

After that time, one adult owl was almost always visible during the days, usually sleeping on a nearby limb. She(?) returned to shelter the little ones from rain/snow or severe cold, until they grew too large. Both adults could be seen in the park hunting for food at dusk.

Visitors to the park very much enjoyed observing the owl family as the little ones quickly grew. They left the nest on April 7 and were sighted in nearby trees for a few more days.



Owlets: passive and fierce expressions 3/14



Three lower photos 3/26/09