

BREEDING COLORS

SOME
OF
THE NEWS
FROM
HARBOR
ISLAND
NATURALLY

BY
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Spring brings a wide range of color changes to our birds

These colors fade quickly once eggs are laid.

Our birds put on quite a show of color and plumage during the mating season. From mid April into June our birds change colors and sport exotic feathers.

My topic this month is the color changes that occur. The egrets, both Snowy and Great show, us changes in the lores, that patch between the bill and the eye. Great egrets turn lime green while the Snowy turns vivid red. The Tricolor Heron becomes brilliant blue and the Green



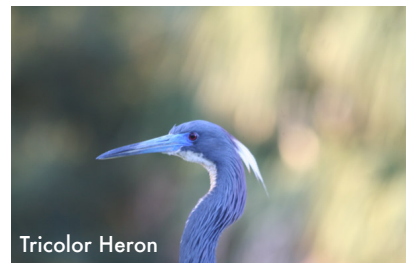
Heron's legs become bright red. These are just a few of the color changes that assist some of the birds to select a mate.

Recent studies from Arizona State University suggest that the darker breeding colors among male birds come from an abundance of testosterone. Males that were darker bred more often and earlier than lighter birds.

Whatever the cause this fleeting show is one of the marvels of living on a barrier island. Taking a look in the rookeries is a visual delight

Arizona State University. "Feather Colors Affect Bird Physiology, Barn Swallows Show." Science-Daily 3 June 2008. 30 April 2009

<http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2008/06/080602121302.htm>



All photographs are by John Albert

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