

Boot Island National Wildlife Area - May 10, 1984  
Bird Colony Census

NWA  
Boot  
Island  
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A census of bird colonies on Boot Island National Wildlife Area (NWA) was conducted on May 10, 1984 by nine personnel from the Canadian Wildlife Service, Sackville, New Brunswick and Acadia University, Wolfville, Nova Scotia. The colonial nesters on Boot Island NWA are Double-crested Cormorant, Great Blue Heron, Great Black-backed Gull and Herring Gull. Complete nest search coverage of areas occupied by those species was undertaken.

The open (herbaceous and small woody vegetative cover) upland area and adjoining saltmarsh fringe was systematically searched for gull nests. The nine enumerators aligned themselves some 5-10 m apart and made successive sweeps through the open upland habitat. The main upland area was covered by making sweeps in NE and SW directions beginning at the SE end (Figure 1). The small upland knoll (Cyril's Island) was covered in one sweep from the east to west end. A search for gull nests was also made along the woodland margin and earth bank on the north side of the island.

Each nest encountered was recorded according to species and contents. The content categories were:

- 1) No eggs (well formed bowl)
- 2) Eggs only and
- 3) young .

Clutch sizes were recorded by one enumerator. Nests with no eggs were assigned to either of the two species according to their location relative to nests with eggs and observation of attending birds.

Double-crested Cormorant and Great Blue Heron nest counts were obtained by systematically working through the colonies. One party of four

enumerators began at the southeast end of the nesting area and another party of three at the northwest end and they worked towards each other. Great Blue Heron nests were counted from the ground and each nesting tree marked as it was encountered. Double-crested Cormorant nests were largely counted from tree tops within areas defined in conjunction with ground observers. Contents of Great Blue Heron and Double-crested Cormorant nests were not recorded.

Total nest counts for the four colonial species were:

- 1) Double-crested Cormorant - 147;
- 2) Great Blue Heron - 44;
- 3) Great Black-backed Gull - 1314 and
- 4) Herring Gull - 661.

The only previous colony census of a similar nature was that conducted on May 19, 1976. The results of that census were:

- 1) Double-crested Cormorant - 93;
- 2) Great Blue Heron - 25;
- 3) Great Black-backed Gull - 1005 and
- 4) Herring Gull - 712.

Compared to those counts the 1984 results show a 58% increase for Double-crested Cormorant, a 76% increase for Great Blue Heron, a 31% increase for Great Black-backed Gull and a 7% decrease for Herring Gull.

Information on location and contents of gull nests by species is presented in Table 1. Clutch size data for 160 Great Black-backed Gull nests and 59 Herring Gull nests from the 1984 census are presented in Table 1. In addition to the single Great Black-backed Gull nest with young three others were in the process of piping.

Double-crested Cormorant and Great Blue Heron nests that were observed well enough to determine their contents appeared to have complete or nearly complete clutches.

The approximate locations and extents of nesting areas occupied by the colonial species on Boot Island NWA in 1984 are shown on Figure 1.

Census Personnel were:

Cyril Coldwell, Reg Newell, Nancy Lutz - Acadia University; Tony Erskine, Ron Hounsell, Jocelyne Gauvin, Colin Mackinnon, Sylvie Roussel, Peter Barkhouse - Canadian Wildlife Service.

Peter Barkhouse

May 17, 1984



Table 1. Information on location and contents of Herring Gull and Great Black-backed Gull Nests on Boot Island NWA from May 10, 1984 and May 19, 1976 Colony Census.

Species and Location	No Eggs	Eggs Only	Young	Total
<u>May 10, 1984</u>				
Herring Gull - Main Colony	245	403	-	658
- Small Colony	-	3	-	3
- Total	245	406	-	661
Great Black-backed Gull - Main Colony	94	856	1	951
- Small Colony	23	340	-	363
- Total	117	1196	1	1314
<u>May 19, 1976</u>				
Herring Gull - Main Colony	35	636	15	686
- Small Colony	-	26	-	26
- Total	35	662	15	712
Great Black-backed Gull - Main Colony	49	499	232	780
- Small Colony	9	128	88	225
- Total	58	627	320	1005

Clutch size for sample of nests from May 10, 1984 Census

Species	No Eggs	One Egg	Two Eggs	Three Eggs	Young	Total
Herring Gull	19	7	13	20	-	59
Great Black-backed Gull	16	5	23	115	1	160

Minas Basin



Legend

- D.-c. Cormorant - o
- G B Heron - o
- G B-b. Gull - ■
- Herring Gull - x
- Woodland - ≡

Figure 1. Location and Extent of Nesting Areas of Colonial Species on Boot Island NWA.