

AQUATIC PARK PROPOSAL FOR LAKE WINNIPEGOSIS, KAWINAW AND PELICAN LAKES

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In the summer of 1969, I surveyed colonies of White Pelicans, Double-crested Cormorants and Great Blue Herons by float plane in Manitoba. Lake Winnipegosis, Kawinaw and Pelican Lakes (Fig. 1) impressed me as having the richest avifauna for those species in the Canadian prairie provinces. Lake Winnipegosis, with 1,403 nests of Double-crested Cormorants (Vermeer, 1969a), has as many cormorants breeding there as in the provinces of Alberta (Vermeer, 1969b) and Saskatchewan (Vermeer, in press, a) combined. Great Blue Heron colonies were also observed to be more numerous at Lake Winnipegosis than at any other lake in the prairie provinces (Vermeer, 1969 c; 1970; and unpublished observations for Sas-

katchewan). Pelican Lake with 1,670 nests and Kawinaw Lake with 1,560 nests of White Pelicans in 1969 possess the second and third largest colonies for that species in Canada, while Lake Winnipegosis has a pelican colony with 410 nests (Vermeer, in prep.). Besides herons, pelicans, and cormorants, numerous colonies of California Gulls, Herring Gulls, Ring-billed Gulls, Caspian Terns and Common Terns breed on islands in these lakes. Many of the above species breed in association with one another. Figure 2, for example, shows an island in Kawinaw Lake, where Ring-billed Gulls, Common Terns, White Pelicans, and Double-crested Cormorants nest on the ground, where Great Blue Herons nest in trees and where many Western Grebes nest in the marshy areas of the island. Canada Geese and White-winged Scoters also breed on that island.

Pelican and cormorant colonies have been declining in number in the prairie provinces, apparently because of human disturbance (Vermeer, 1969a; 1969b; in press; in prep.). Protection is urged for at least the major breeding colonies at Pelican and Kawinaw lakes. It is especially urgent for the latter as a new road, number 327, between highway number 6 and Easterville, provides easy access for the launching of power boats. Invasion by boats and frequent visits to the colony will cause the birds to leave their eggs which then become susceptible to extensive predation by Herring Gulls which nest on another island in that lake. It is only a matter of time before bird colonies at Pelican Lake and Lake Winnipegosis will be accessible to many tourists. Drent and Guiguet (1961:123), in a plea for protection of sea-bird colonies along the British Columbia Coast, state in this



Fig. 1 Lake Winnipegosis, Kawinaw and Pelican lakes, Manitoba

context: "A new form of disturbance is now making itself felt, however, and has already reversed the trend of increase at several colonies. This threat is 'misguided tourism'. The post-war craze for small motor boats, especially ever speedier outboard models, has filled south coast waters with swarms of whining 'sharks' that penetrate every channel. Formerly small boating was confined to relatively slow inboards, and fishing was the primary objective. Now, however, a new class of boat enthusiasts is involved, with often no goal in mind other than to cover distance at speed, landing on islets here or there to break the monotony of travel. The result has been an ever-increasing disturbance of the more accessible colonies. Those with definitely malicious intent are few; the damage is caused by curious but well-meaning folk."

This unique lake region of Manitoba should be set aside as a federal or provincial aquatic park in which islands with bird colonies could be protected by inhibiting landing on them

during the breeding season. Some of the larger islands could be provided with camping facilities for boaters. Boats with outboard motors could be restricted to areas where nesting colonies would not be affected adversely and where boaters would not interfere with the enjoyment of naturalists, swimmers, sailors, canoeists and others who prefer more quiet, natural surroundings.

LITERATURE CITED

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Fig. 2. Aerial photo of island in Kawinaw Lake with nesting colonies of pelicans, cormorants, gulls, terns, herons and grebes.