



Common Egret, Middle Quill Lake. June 30, 1976.

Keith Roney

SECOND SASKATCHEWAN BREEDING RECORD FOR THE COMMON EGRET

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During the summer of 1976, I conducted a survey of colonial birds for the Saskatchewan Museum of Natural History. At 4:30 p.m. on June 30, while surveying the Quill Lakes area, I noticed a large white bird standing on the south shore of Mud Lake (Middle Quill). It and a second white bird immediately took flight. Using my 7x35 binoculars, I identified the birds as egrets, however, they quickly flew around a point of land and disappeared before I could distinguish the species. I returned to the car for my camera and a 300 mm. telephoto lens, then walked around the point of land and spotted the egrets feeding in a bay.

The long black legs and feet and yellow bill identified the birds as Common Egrets (*Casmerodius albus*). As they flew once again, I managed to get a few distant photos. After flying across the bay, they alighted on a tree already occupied by three other egrets.

I returned to the car and prepared to check the White Pelican and Double-crested Cormorant colonies on the north shore of the lake. I heard sounds coming from an aspen grove which I recognized as those of a Great Blue Heron colony. Since the wind was increasing, I decided to check the pelican and cormorant colonies before investigating the heronry.

On returning to the heronry (Sec. 10 T34 R16 W2), I was excited to discover the egrets nesting among the herons. The egrets were occupying two nests among the 19 active heron nests. Both egrets and herons appeared to be incubating. Pieces of broken eggshell were found lying at the base of the trees indicating that young were present. The calls of the young were also audible. As no young were observed, I was unable to determine whether there were egret young present. The egret nests were situated about 25-30 feet high in aspen poplar (*Populus tremuloides*). The egrets reacted aggressively to any approach by the larger herons. When a heron landed on a tree occupied by an egret nest, the egrets chased it off. During my short observation period, the herons did not appear to be aggressive to the egrets and tolerated them at close range.

I took a few photos of the birds at their nests but to prevent any further disturbance I did not climb up to check the contents. I was unable to return to the colony during the summer to check on nesting success. This also was the first time the heronry had been recorded for the province.

The only previous nesting record of the Common Egret was reported by E. L. Fox who, in September, 1955, confirmed the nesting site of this species in the Qu'Appelle Valley approximately 7 miles east of Craven.

There have been other reported sightings of the Common Egret for Saskatchewan but this is only the second breeding record.

FOX, E. L. 1955. *Great American Egret*. Blue Jay 13(4): 7.



OSPREY - BALD EAGLE RELATIONSHIPS IN SASKATCHEWAN

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While reviewing Osprey nesting in northern Saskatchewan, one of us (JMG) suggested that Ospreys tend to be more tolerant of human disturbance than Bald Eagles, and may gradually partially replace eagles as roads are pushed farther into the forested areas of Saskatchewan. To test this hypothesis, we plotted all Osprey and Bald Eagle nests found on our aerial surveys of the boreal forests of central Saskatchewan and determined their relationship to roads. The study area is shown in Figure 1 and has been described in detail previously.¹⁷

We feel that our method allows a reasonable comparison between the two species in different regions, despite the fact that the Osprey nests were found on surveys for Bald Eagle nests, that eagles may be more conspicuous, and that a higher percentage of eagle than Osprey nests may be found along the shoreline routes. Each survey unit is a block of 30 minutes latitude measuring roughly 35 miles in a north-south direction and nearly 40 miles east-west. There are also three smaller survey units along the eastern Saskatchewan boundary. For each sur-