

AVIAN HIGHLIGHTS FROM DUCK MOUNTAIN PROVINCIAL PARK, SASKATCHEWAN — 1981

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While employed by the Park Development Branch of the Department of Tourism and Renewable Resources, the author was involved in a resource inventory of the flora and fauna of Duck Mountain Provincial Park. David R. M. Hatch and Associates was hired by the Park Development Branch to work with the author. Besides the author and David Hatch, field workers included Kelvin Krieger and Louis L'Arrivee from Winnipeg. The actual field work commenced in May and terminated in November of 1981.

During the study, 170 species of birds were recorded within the park and an additional 3 species were seen within a few kilometers of the park. An additional 11 species have been documented in the park by Robert Long (July and August 1970) and Bob Luterbach (July 1973). For the purpose of the 1981 inventory the 170 species recorded within the park were broken down into 5 categories: summer residents (123 species of which 50 were recorded breeding), summer visitors (10), year-round residents (15), winter visitors (8), and transients (14). Combined, these reports give a total of 181 species of birds recorded within the park and an additional three found in the immediate vicinity.

An attempt was made to gather as many bird observations as possible for all areas of the park. Observations were made while travelling the network of roads and trails and from ground checks made in all habitat types. The initial report gives the status of each

species identified according to criteria similar to that used in Margaret Belcher's *Birds of Regina*.² For some species not enough data was gathered to determine the bird's status in the park. Regular surveys were made throughout the park from 1 June to 11 September 1981, and intermittently over the next 2 months. Surveys were conducted at various times of day. Usually surveys started in mid-morning and ended before noon and in the evenings from 1800 to 2100. During June additional counts were made during early morning, 0330 to 0600, and during the night, 2100 to 2400. An aerial survey of the park was also made 17 June.

The following is a summary of 20 of the more interesting bird species recorded during the study. Three other lists of birds of the Madge Lake area (one of highlights and two complete) have been published for the periods, 6 May - 19 June 1926, 15 May - 22 June 1951, and 9, 10 June 1956.^{1 3} The absence of many of the following species in these earlier surveys is noted.

WHITE PELICAN. Fairly common summer visitor. Groups of 50, 10 & 30 were observed on Ketchamonia Lake and 15 on a small lake immediately east of the Manitoba-Saskatchewan border during the aerial survey 17 June. Twenty were seen on Batka Lake on 19 June. A flock of 50 was seen on Bear Head Lake on 9 July and 12 August. A group of 11 was observed on Bear Head Lake on 10 September. Pelicans were not recorded on previous lists. (photo)

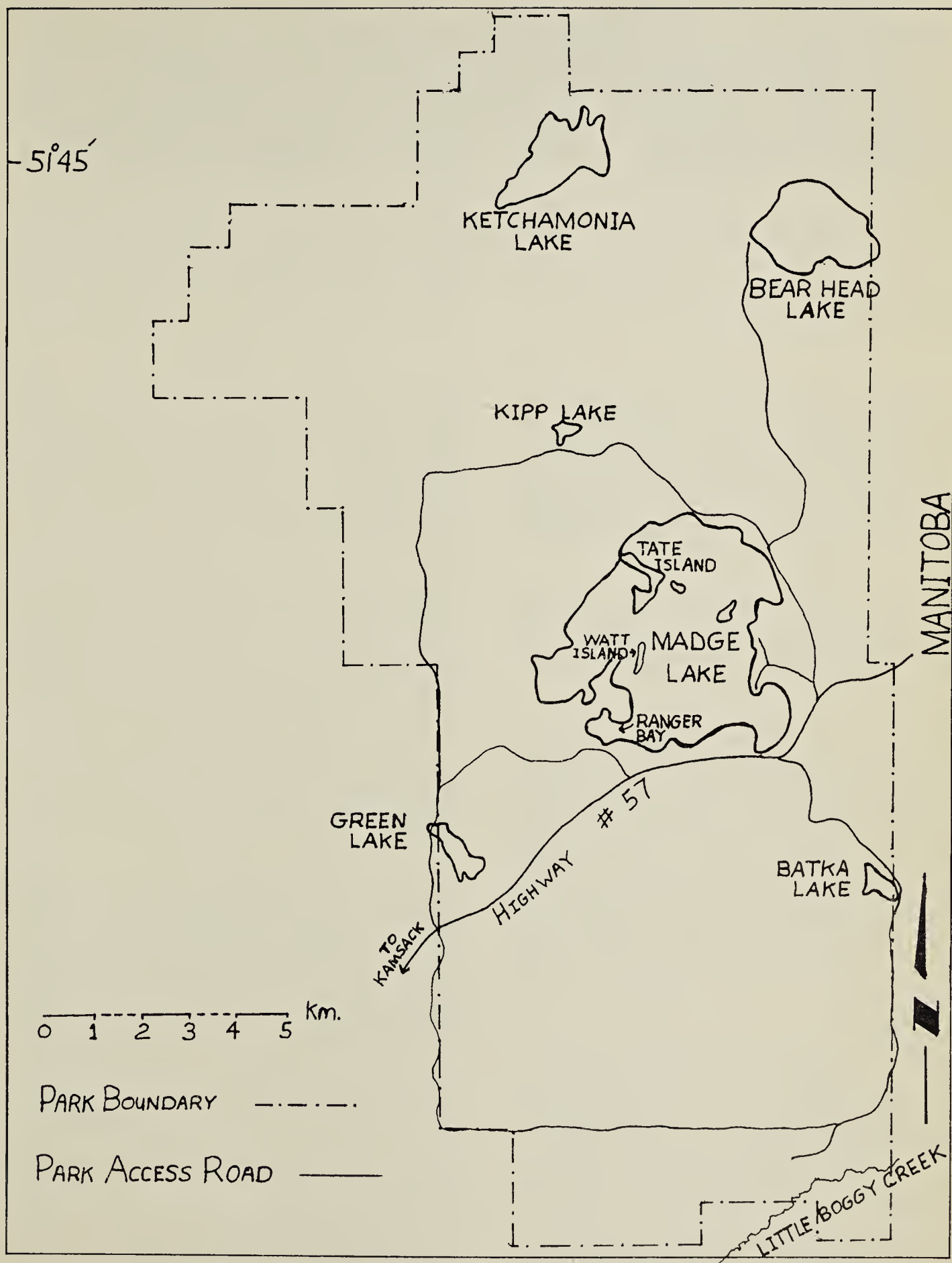


Figure 1 — Map of Duck Mountain Provincial Park showing the park boundary, access roads and major water bodies.



American White Pelican.

Larry Morgotch

DOUBLE-CRESTED CORMORANT. Uncommon summer visitor. Approximately 40 were observed resting in dead trees on a small island at Ketchamonia Lake during the aerial survey 17 June. A thorough survey revealed no evidence of breeding. Not on previous lists. (photo)

GREAT EGRET. Very rare transient. A single bird was observed at the north end of Ketchamonia Lake during the aerial survey 17 June. Not on earlier lists.

GREAT BLUE HERON. Common summer resident. An established colony is located on Watt Island at Madge Lake. Approximately 22 nests containing young were counted on the island by Herb Copland during the 1981 breeding season. Adults can regularly be seen over Madge Lake flying to and from Watt Island during June and July. Single birds were also seen at Little Boggy Creek and along highway 57. One was heard at Little Boggy Creek 8 September.

WHITE-WINGED SCOTER. Uncommon summer resident. A successful nester at Green Lake. Three pair were observed on Green Lake on several visits during June. A female with a gang brood of 21 ducklings was observed on Green Lake 12 August.

TURKEY VULTURE. Common summer resident. Adults can be seen regularly at the garbage dump and over Little Boggy Creek. Twenty adults were seen sunning themselves on the fence surrounding the garbage dump 13 August. Adults were also

seen over Madge Lake's Pelly Point and Tate Island. Three adults and 3 immatures were seen at the garbage dump 8 September. Thirteen adults with 4 immatures were seen at the garbage dump 9 September. (photo)

BALD EAGLE. Rare summer visitor and uncommon transient. Formerly believed to have nested on one of the islands at Madge Lake. No active or old nests were spotted within the park during the aerial survey. One adult was observed soaring over the northwest end of Maple Lake and later landed in a spruce tree on Roy Island 16 July. An adult and an immature were observed over Madge Lake 5 November. Not noted on 1956 list.

OSPREY. Rare summer visitor, but too few records to determine status accurately. Nests in Manitoba's Duck Mountain Provincial Park. An adult with a fish in its talons was seen over the southeast corner of Duck Mountain Provincial Park, Saskatchewan 17 June. An adult was seen over Ranger Bay 9 September. It is interesting to note that Bonaparte's Gulls were harassing both of the birds sighted. Not on 1956 list.

BONAPARTE'S GULL. Uncommon summer resident, fairly common transient. A pair was nesting in a black spruce tree at the southeast corner of the park 17 June. One adult was observed over Madge Lake 18 June. Four were seen chasing an Osprey over Ranger Bay and approximately 10 were seen over the core area 9 September. Ten immature birds were seen over Bear

Head Lake 10 September. Not considered breeding in 1951. (photo)

SCREECH OWL. Possible uncommon year-round resident. One was heard calling early in the morning from an aspen-white spruce stand near Batka Lake 3 June. Only record during the study and therefore the status of this species is open to question. Not on other lists.

PILEATED WOODPECKER. Uncommon year-round resident. One was heard and seen along the west park boundary, south of highway 57, 2 June. Individuals were also heard at Jubilee Subdivision, 4 June and at Little Boggy Creek 16 June. One was seen in a black spruce area at Jubilee Cottage Subdivision, 5 November. (photo)

WHITE-BREASTED NUTHATCH. Fairly common summer resident and possibly permanent resident. A pair was found nesting in an aspen tree along the Whitethroat Nature Trail on 15 June. One was heard and seen near the bicycle trail 15 July. Two adults and one immature were observed near Kipp Lake 12 August. Individuals were also reported at Batka Lake, along the Red Squirrel Nature Trail and near the south park boundary road. One was seen near the ball diamond area 5 November. Not noted on previous lists 1926 and 1951.

BROWN CREEPER. Uncommon summer resident. One was observed along the Whitethroat Nature Trail 4 June. A nest was found in a dead balsam fir along the Pelly Point Trail 24 June. One was seen along Pelly Point Trail 15 July. One was observed in a white spruce stand along the Red Squirrel Nature Trail 14 August. One was seen in aspen trees near Batka Lake 9 September and one observed south of the core area 1 October. Not recorded on earlier surveys.

WINTER WREN. Rare summer resident. A family group of four was seen and heard among deadfall along the road to Bear Head Lake 25 June. Not in earlier reports.

SOLITARY VIREO. Uncommon summer resident. One pair was observed building a nest in a birch tree along the Pelly Point

Nature Trail 24 June. A pair was observed in birch trees along the Red Squirrel Nature Trail 25 June.

CONNECTICUT WARBLER. Probable summer resident. Singles were seen along the Whitethroat Nature Trail 4 June and along the Pelly Point Nature Trail 20 July. Reported in 1926 but not in 1951; noted with question mark in 1956.

CANADA WARBLER. Uncommon summer resident. Two were heard and seen at different locations near Kipp Lake 3 June. One was heard and seen along the Pelly Point Nature Trail 23 and 24 June. One male was heard and seen along the road to Bear Head Lake 12 August. Reported only on the 1951 list.

INDIGO BUNTING. Rare summer resident. A male was heard and seen near the entrance road to the Jubilee Cottage Subdivision 4 June. Two males were seen along a trail near Little Boggy Creek 16 June. Not in earlier reports.

LARK SPARROW. Rare summer resident. One was heard and seen in a grassy area near Little Boggy Creek 18 June. One was seen near Little Boggy Creek 8 September. Not reported earlier.

SWAMP SPARROW. Fairly common summer resident. Heard and seen near Batka Lake, along the east park boundary, Spruce Island and Bear Head Lake during June. One was heard near Little Boggy Creek 17 July. One was observed at the east side of Batka Lake 9, 10 and 11 September. A single was seen near Bear Head Lake 10 September.

¹ ANONYMOUS. 1956. Birds of Madge Lake. *Blue Jay* 14:53-54.

² BELCHER, MARGARET. 1980. Birds of Regina. *Sask. Nat. Hist. Soc. Special Publ.* 12.

³ SASKATCHEWAN NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY. 1956. List of birds recorded at Madge Lake, June 9, 10, 1956. *Blue Jay* 14:103.