

1980 NEST CENSUS OF SASKATCHEWAN'S PELICAN AND CORMORANT COLONIES

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A 1980 census of White Pelican and Double-crested Cormorant nests was conducted in Saskatchewan as part of a continuing program to monitor the nesting status of these species in the province. Twelve pelican and seventeen cormorant colonies were surveyed with a total of 15,427 and 7,410 nests counted respectively. This represents an increase in numbers of both pelican and cormorant nests since the 1978 survey.

Methods

The census was conducted from 30 May - 7 June at what should be the height of incubating activity. Survey time ranged from 0745 to 0915 (Central Standard Time). The Cypress Lake colony was surveyed from the ground and all incubating adults were counted to determine the number of active nests. All the other colonies were surveyed by means of aerial photographs taken from a plane window with a handheld Pentax KX camera and a 200 mm lens. Kodachrome 64 color slide film was used. All photos were taken from a minimum altitude of 230 m as close as possible to vertical. This height did not disturb the birds. The slides were examined under a binocular microscope to count incubating adults.

The Preston Lake colony was surveyed by the Canadian Wildlife Service in Saskatoon. A report of cormorants nesting at Reed Lake was received late in the summer and was checked 18 August.

Results and Discussion

Twelve active pelican colonies located on nine different waterbodies were surveyed in 1980. Quill, Suggi and Primrose Lakes each contained two nesting islands. The total was 15,427 nests (Table 1). This is an increase of 3,148 nests or 26% over the 12,279 nests recorded in 1978.¹ All colonies maintained or increased their numbers with the exception of the Kazan Lake colony which decreased from 952 nests to 768 nests.

The Old Wives Lake colony remained stable while Lavallée and Primrose Lake colonies showed moderate increases of 771 and 827 nests respectively and Redberry, Quill and Suggi Lakes experienced sharp increases in colony size of 96, 423, and 839 nests respectively. Even though the latter increases appear less dramatic than for the Lavallée and Primrose Lake colonies, the actual percentage and relative increase in the size of these colonies was greater. Lavallée Lake colony increased by 26% and Primrose Lake colony by 21% while Redberry Lake colony increased by 133%, Quill Lake by 182%, and Suggi Lake by 92%. Kazan Lake colony decreased by 19%.

The colonies at Preston and Lenore Lakes were first surveyed in 1980. Although only recently reported and checked, these colonies have been in existence for a number of years. In 1935, Mr. S. C. Ells, a geologist with the Geological Survey, studied and photographed a colony of about 150 adult

Table 1. CENSUS OF PELICAN AND CORMORANT COLONIES IN SASKATCHEWAN, 1980

<i>Location</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Pelican Nests</i>	<i>Cormorant Nests</i>
Preston Lake ^a	May 18	275	—
Old Wives Lake	May 30	3,075	693
Last Mountain Lake	May 31	—	789 (2) ^d
Quill Lake	May 31	655 (2)	75 (2)
Cypress Lake ^b	June 2	—	283
Redberry Lake	June 4	168	43
Lenore Lake ^c	June 4	110	670
Suggi Lake	June 5	1,752 (2)	1,153 (2)
Lavallée Lake	June 6	3,790	747
Doré Lake	June 6	—	849 (2)
Primrose Lake	June 7	4,834 (2)	459 (2)
Kazan Lake	June 7	768	1,587
Churchill Lake	June 7	—	—
Reed Lake ^c	Aug. 18	—	62

a — Surveyed by C.W.S.

b — Ground survey

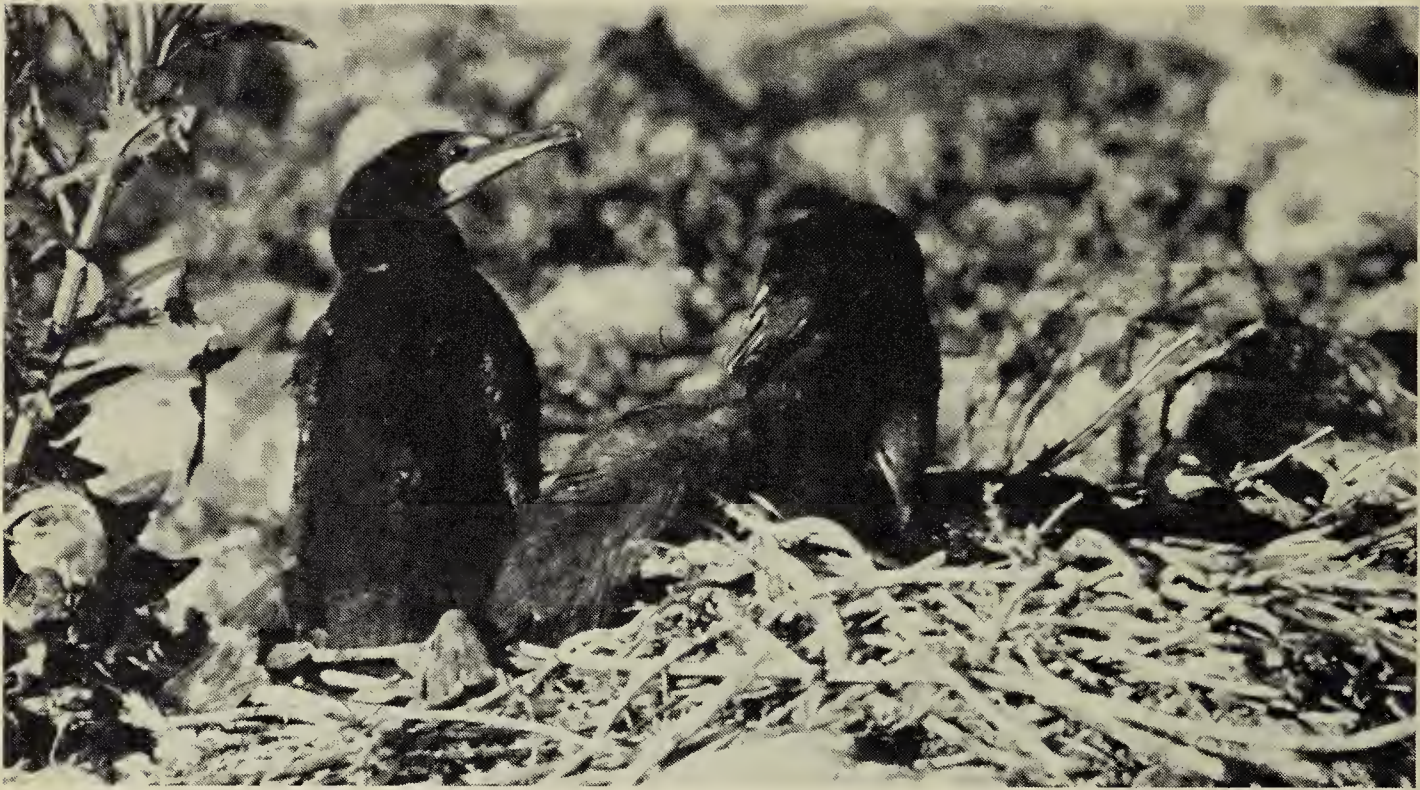
c — First surveyed in 1980

d — Indicates number of nesting islands, if more than one



Pelican/cormorant colony, Quill Lakes.

Keith Roney



Double-crested Cormorants.

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pelicans on an island in Preston Lake (W. E. Godfrey, pers. comm.). Residents in the vicinity of Lenore Lake indicated that this colony had been active for many years (D. Mevel, pers. comm.).

Seventeen active cormorant colonies located on twelve different water-bodies were surveyed in 1980. Two nesting islands were located on each of Last Mountain, Quill, Suggi, Doré and Primrose Lakes. The count was 7,410 nests (Table 1). This is an increase of 3,443 nests or 87% over 1978.¹ Old Wives and Quill Lake colonies remained stable while a moderate increase of 15% occurred on Lavallée Lake. Increases of 134% occurred in Last Mountain Lake, 79% in Redberry, 99% in Suggi, 214% in Doré, 270% in Primrose and 111% in Kazan Lake. The Cypress Lake colony declined by 28% and the Churchill Lake colony which contained 104 nests in 1978 was deserted in 1980.

Lenore Lake was first surveyed in 1980. A cormorant colony at Reed Lake was reported late in the summer (C. Harris, pers. comm.) and 62 nests were counted on 18 August.

The numbers of White Pelican and Double-crested Cormorant nests have been increasing since the monitoring program began in 1976. Local colony production and/or recruitment from other colonies have been sufficient to replace any losses. The total increase may be due to increased management and monitoring of these species. There is also increasing awareness of and concern for native wildlife by the general public.

Acknowledgments

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¹ RONEY, K. 1979. Saskatchewan's Pelicans and Cormorants in 1978. *Blue Jay* 37(4):216-218.