

1985 CENSUS OF PELICAN AND CORMORANT COLONIES IN SASKATCHEWAN

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A census of American White Pelican and Double-crested Cormorant colonies in Saskatchewan was jointly conducted by Saskatchewan Parks and Renewable Resources and the Saskatchewan Museum of Natural History in 1985. Thirteen pelican and 26 cormorant colonies were censused between 3 and 8 June 1985. Aerial photographs of the colonies were taken during this peak incubation period, and incubating adults were counted from the photos to determine the number of nests.

Totals of 17,931 pelican nests and 16,626 cormorant nests were counted. This is an increase of 15.8% (2451) in pelican and 51.5% (5655) in cormorant nests over the 1982 census.¹ There was also an increase in the number of active colonies; there were three pelican and two cormorant nesting colonies censused which were not active in 1982.

The Cypress Lake pelican colony which was last recorded active in 1969, was reestablished in 1985.² The new colony at Basin Lake was reported by the Conservation officer at Humboldt to be active in 1984 (Harvey Janke, pers. comm.). The third additional pelican colony was at Suggi Lake. This nesting site has been used before, but the pelicans have tended to fluctuate between the two nesting islands in Suggi Lake from year to year. However, in 1985, the pelicans occupied both nesting islands. No pelican colonies were abandoned since the 1982 census.

Two pelican colonies, those at Old

Wives and Primrose lakes, experienced a decline in the number of nests. Of the seven colonies that increased in numbers the largest increases in numbers of nests occurred at the Lavallee, Suggi, and Kazan lakes' colonies. The greatest percentage increase in the size of the colonies occurred at Lenore, Kazan, Preston and Suggi lakes. All increased by more than 50%, with the Lenore Lake colony almost tripling in size. Comparing the 10 colonies in 1982 with the same 10 colonies in 1985, there was an increase of 560 nests or an average increase of 56 nests per colony.

A new cormorant colony was censused at Basin Lake. It was first reported in 1984 at the same time as the new pelican colony found there.

A new nesting site was established at Dore Lake, bringing the total to three nesting islands occupied at this lake. Three additional nesting islands were used at Churchill Lake, bringing the total there to seven. Since the 1982 census, one nesting site at Last Mountain Lake has been abandoned by cormorants, as have the colonies at Alkali Lake and on the South Saskatchewan River, resulting in a reduction of one in the number of known cormorant colonies in the province.

The three cormorant colonies at Old Wives, Reed and Redberry lakes showed decreases since the 1982 census. The most significant increases in the numbers of nests in a colony occurred at Churchill, Dore, Lavallee, Kazan and Last Mountain

Table 1. 1985 NEST CENSUS OF AMERICAN WHITE PELICAN AND DOUBLE-CRESTED CORMORANT COLONIES IN SASKATCHEWAN

Location	Date	Census Time	Pelican Nests		% Change	Cormorant Nests		% Change
			1985	1982		1985	1982	
Alkali Lake ^a	June 4	0800	-	-	-	15	-15	-100
Basin Lake ^b	June 3	1810	227	-	-	-	new	-
Churchill Lake	June 6	0910	-	-	-	790(4)	+1718	217.5
Cypress Lake ^d	June 4	1240	90	-	-	329	+224	68.1
Dore' Lake	June 6	1030	-	-	-	1464(2)	+740	50.5
Kazan Lake	June 7	0900	1145	609	+536	2544	+576	22.6
Last Mountain Lake	June 3	1835	-	-	-	1202(4)	+562	46.8
Lavallee Lake	June 6	1545	4897	3569	+1328	1615	+716	79.6
Lenore Lake	June 3	1740	162	42	+120	853	+202	31.0
Mud Lake	June 3	1710	462	437	+25	26	-1	-3.7
Old Wives Lake	June 4	0930	2184	2617	-433	96	-51	-34.7
Preston Lake	June 5	1510	157	95	+62	-	-	-
Primrose Lake	June 8	1445	6652(2)	6822(2)	-170	1041(2)	+176	16.9
Redberry Lake	June 4	1625	347	240	+107	43	-10	-18.9
Reed Lake	June 4	1000	-	-	-	45	-96	-68.1
South Saskatchewan River	June 4	1300	-	-	-	2	-2	-100
Suggi Lake	June 5	1020	1608(2)	1049	+559	1837(2)	+171	10.3
TOTAL NUMBER NESTS			17,931	15,480	+2451	16,626	+5655	51.5
Number of islands			(13)	(10)	(+3)	(26)	(+2)	
Average nests/island			1379	1548	-169	639	+182	39.8

^a Abandoned since 1982 census.

^b First reported active in 1984.

^c Number of nesting islands, if more than one.

^d Last reported active in 1969.



Cormorant Colony, Perry's Point, Last Mountain Lake

Gary Anweiler

lakes. Highest percentage increases in colony size occurred at Churchill, Lavallee, Cypress and Dore lakes, with all increasing by more than 50%. The Churchill Lake colony more than doubled in size. Comparing the 24 colonies common to the two surveys, there was an increase of 2739 nests or an average increase of 114 nests per colony.

In conclusion, the pelican and cormorant picture is an optimistic one. Both species experienced an increase in the total number of nests as well as an increase in the average number of nests for the same established colonies between the 1982 and the 1985 counts. Also of great importance is the establishment of new nest sites for both species. This factor speaks well for assuring the continuance of these species. Continued protective legislation and public awareness is also

essential in maintaining the present population levels of these two species.

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- ¹ RONEY, K., and M. HLADY. 1984. 1982 Census of Saskatchewan White Pelican and Double-crested Cormorant Colonies. *Blue Jay* 42:77-82.
- ² VERMEER, K. 1970. Colonies of Double-crested Cormorants and White Pelicans in Saskatchewan. *Canadian Field - Naturalist* 84:39-42.