

PIG'S EYE HERON ROOKERY CENSUS - 1984

The 1984 survey of the heron rookery on Pig's Eye Island in the Mississippi River, St. Paul, Ramsey County, Minnesota was conducted with the assistance of Kevin Winker and Steven Stucker from June 19 through 27. High water from heavy rains in late May and early June had left only about one acre of the island above water during the census period. Nearly the entire survey had to be done by canoe. Dense vegetation and floating debris (mostly logs) prevented complete survey of some areas, particularly in the northern end of the island. We estimate that up to 25, perhaps as many as 50, nests may have been missed as a result.

Nests were counted by a number per tree method. Each tree was identified to species, then the nests were counted. If no Minnesota Department of Natural Resources metal tag was found on a tree, each tree was marked with a temporary flag and number or its position was mapped in relation to nearby marked trees. No special effort was made this year to get an accurate count of young in the nests. Prior to the 1985 surveys all nest trees will be marked with Minnesota DNR metal tags.

Summary Results:

Double-crested Cormorant

A total of 26 nests and 18 young were counted. Many of the juveniles were flying off and returning to nests by the end of the census.

Great-blue Heron

Nest total was 178 with 61 juveniles about 2/3 grown and still on the nests - i.e. all were about the same size. No young were seen flying.

Great Egret

Our estimate of 272 nests was made by extending the percentage of Great Egret nests that comprised the number of "large nests" of known species and of unknown species combined. Large nests are those that are larger than nests of the Black-crowned Night Heron and Yellow-crowned Night Heron or are larger nests and higher in the trees than these night herons. The 60 juveniles counted, all still on the nests, varied in size from downy chicks to nearly adult size. This variation in the size of young was in marked contrast to the condition in the Great Blue Heron in which species the young were all about the same size.

Black-crowned Night Heron

A total of 646 nests were counted. Of the 143 young noted, a few were flying but most were standing either on the nests or on branches near the nests. A few of the adults appeared to be incubating.

Yellow-crowned Night Heron

Although we found only one nest, at least 2 pairs were present. On 19 June an adult appeared to be incubating and a brood of more than one young appeared to be recently hatched on 27 June, the last day of the census.

The following list is of all birds seen at the rookery during the census period in 1984. An * denotes nesting.

Double-crested Cormorant *
Great-blue Heron *
Great Egret *
Cattle Egret
Black-crowned Night Heron*
Yellow-crowned Night Heron *
Mallard
Blue-winged Teal
Wood Duck
Spotted Sandpiper
Forster's Tern
Black Tern
Rock Dove
Mourning Dove
Ruby-throated Hummingbird
Belted Kingfisher
Great Crested Flycatcher
Eastern Wood Pewee
Common Flicker
Tree Swallow *

Bank Swallow
Purple Martin
Common Crow
House Wren *
American Robin *
Starling *
Red-eyed Vireo
Warbling Vireo
Prothonotary Warbler *
Yellow Warbler
Common Yellowthroat
American Redstart *
House Sparrow
Red-winged Blackbird *
Common Grackle
Northern Oriole *
Northern Cardinal
Rose-breasted Grosbeak
Indigo Bunting
American Goldfinch

The plan for 1985 is to survey for active nests and to mark all trees with nests just before full leaf out of the trees on the island. A second census for young at fledging stage will be made for the purpose of obtaining some more meaningful data on reproductive success of this rookery.

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by
Dwain W. Warner