

A SURVEY OF NESTING HERRING GULLS  
ON SELECTED SITES, ALONG THE NORTH SHORE OF LAKE SUPERIOR  
FROM KNIFE RIVER TO THE PIGEON RIVER - 1989

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Comments

The total North Shore nesting count obtained by expanding the monitor data indicates there are 9,037 nests within the survey area. In past years this method has yielded total North Shore population estimates which were very close to the actual number. During this year's inventory, observations of non-monitor sites indicated that movement of birds was occurring which would not be detected on the monitor sites. The first indication was the abundance of birds at Encampment Island site #79, while the monitor site for this group, site #80, showed a sharp decline in nest numbers. The second indication was the absence of birds at site #68 within the Silver Bay Group and the increase in nests on monitor sites #70 and #64.

A count of nests on sites #64 through #80 indicated the monitor data was not yielding reliable data for the Silver Bay, Encampment-Knife Island Groups.

During the 1984 inventory it was noted that an unusual amount of predation was taking place on site #68. Fox were thought to be the predator. A count of this site in 1989 revealed nest numbers were down from 811 in 1984 to 137. The effect of this movement or shift of nesting sites is not fully known. I believe the increases on sites #75, #70, #70A, #71 & #79 are the result of these displaced birds and do not represent a substantial growth in the nesting populations of the two groups. An analysis of the larger sites available indicates birds displaced at site #68, selected for similar habitat within a reasonable distance. The following is a more realistic estimate of the Herring Gull nesting population along the North Shore of Lake Superior.

<u>Group</u>	<u>Number of Nesting Pairs</u>	<u>How Obtained</u>
Suzie	1,985	expansion of monitor site data
Blueberry	721	expansion of monitor site data
Marr	311	expansion of monitor site data
Grand Marais	178	expansion of monitor site data
Lutsen	73	expansion of monitor site data
Taconite Harbor	1,487	expansion of monitor site data
Illgen City	45	expansion of <u>new</u> Silver Bay data
Silver Bay	1,303	actual count
Split Rock	315	actual count
Encampment & Knife Island	1,520 -----	actual count
TOTAL NESTS	7,938 + site #70A (74) =	8,012

Notes on 1989 Survey

Suzie Island Group - Date Visited: 5/22/89

- \* No hatching taking place on May 22nd
- \* Most nests had three eggs - 121 nests
- \* Remainder had one or two eggs - 86 nests
- \* Nests were in good condition
- \* No indication of predation
- \* Frogs heard on Island #16
- \* Sites counted: #12, #13 & #16

Blueberry Island Group - Date Visited: 5/22/89

- \* No hatching occurring on May 22
- \* Majority of nests had three eggs - 213 nests
- \* Remainder had one or two eggs - 175 nests
- \* Two destroyed nests were found on Island #24. Crows are believed to have been the cause.
- \* Crows sighted on Island #25
- \* Nests were in good condition
- \* Mallard nest with nine eggs on #23
- \* Sites counted: #23, #24 & #25

Marr Island Group - Dated Visited: 5/16/89

- \* No hatching occurring on May 16
- \* 164 nests contained three eggs
- \* 104 nests had one or two eggs
- \* The percentage of one to two egg nests was highest on the seaward side of the island as opposed to the land side: 58% to 26%
- \* No migrant shore birds seen - to early?
- \* Sites counted: #31

Grand Marais Group - Date Visited: 5/16/89 and 5/22/89

- \* No hatching occurring on either date
- \* Island #37 was visited on 5/16 and 58% of the nests contained one or two eggs
- \* Island #36 was visited on 5/22 and 38% of the nests contained one or two eggs
- \* No sign of predation
- \* Nests in good shape
- \* Sites counted: #36 & #37

Taconite Harbor Group - Date Visited: 5/21/89

- \* No hatching occurring on May 21
- \* Most nests contained three eggs - 947 nests
- \* One and two eggs accounted for 36% of the total nests - 531 nests
- \* No sign of predation
- \* Island #48 had one pair of Canada Geese incubating eggs. Another nest was found which appeared to have been destroyed.
- \* Island #49 had two pair of Canada Geese. One pair incubating eggs.  
The second pair had successfully hatched three young.
- \* Nests in good condition
- \* Sites counted: #48 & #49

Silver Bay Group - Date Visited: 5/12/89

- \* No hatching occurring on May 12
- \* Most nests contained three eggs - 195 nests
- \* Remaining nests had one or two eggs - 129 nests
- \* Nests in good condition

- \* No sign of predation
- \* Sites counted: all sites
- \* Site #66 - pair of Canada Geese nesting, male was banded on left leg
- \* During the monitoring it was observed that site #68 had very few birds. This is not a monitor site, however, has been the largest nesting site within this group
- \* A count of this site revealed a substantial drop in the number of nests which was not reflected in the monitor sites.

Split Rock Group - Date Visited: 5/20/89

- \* No hatching occurring on May 20
- \* 22% of the nests had one or two eggs - 31 nests
- \* Remainder contained three eggs - 111 nests
- \* No sign of predators
- \* Sites counted: all sites

Knife River Island Group - Date Visited: 5/10/89 & 6/5/89

- \* No hatching occurring on May 5
- \* Most nests contained three eggs, only a few with one or two eggs on first visit
- \* 90% hatched on second visit (June 5) and chicks large, some with tail feathers
- \* A few dead chicks and several crows on island

Calculation of Total North Shore Nesting

<u>Group</u>	<u>Site</u>	<u>Nest Count</u>				
		<u>1989</u>	<u>1984</u>			
Suzie	12	34	29	$\left( \frac{207-158}{158} + 1 \right)$	1515	=1985
	13	36	26			
	16	<u>137</u> 207	<u>103</u> 158			
Blueberry	23	87	65	$\left( \frac{304-259}{259} + 1 \right)$	614	=721
	25	<u>217</u> 304	<u>194</u> 259			
Marr	31	268	223	$\left( \frac{268-223}{223} + 1 \right)$	259	= 311
Grand Marais	36	73	62	$\left( \frac{107-82}{82} + 1 \right)$	133	= 178
	37	<u>34</u> 107	<u>20</u> 82			
Lutsen	use Grand Marais factor			$\left( \frac{107-82}{82} + 1 \right)$	56	= 73
Taconite Harbor	48	376	393	$\left( \frac{1478-1303}{1303} + 1 \right)$	1311	= 1487
	49	<u>1102</u> 1478	<u>910</u> 1303			
Illgen City	use Silver Bay factor			$\left( \frac{324-234}{234} + 1 \right)$	66	= 91
Silver Bay	64	58	49	$\left( \frac{324-234}{234} + 1 \right)$	1899	= 2629
	70	<u>266</u> 324	<u>185</u> 234			
Split Rock	77	142	136	$\left( \frac{142-136}{136} + 1 \right)$	303	= 316
Knife Island & Encampment	80	598	759	$\left( \frac{598-759}{759} + 1 \right)$	1582	= 1246
Estimated Total North Shore Nests					9037	