

# RECENT BIRD NOTES FROM THE BLUE SEA LAKE AREA IN QUEBEC

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A PAPER ON THE summer birds of Blue Sea Lake was published by the writer (Gabrielson, 1938) and subsequently some supplementary information covering the time spent in this area from 1938 to 1947 inclusive was printed (Gabrielson, 1949).

Since that time I have been in the Blue Sea area nearly every summer up to and including 1961. I have visited most of the other lakes, marshes, fields, and forests covered in the earlier reports though not as extensively as in the earlier years. Obvious changes in bird populations have taken place, some of which appear to be clearly associated with ecological changes; in others the relationship is not at all obvious if indeed they are at all connected with local ecological patterns.

Among the water birds loons and Common Mergansers have shown a marked decrease especially on Blue Sea Lake itself. There has been a considerable growth of human use of the shores and islands on which these two species formerly nested which could account for this change in numbers.

Since 1948 Ring-necked Ducks have been completely absent from the small ponds on which they formerly bred; although I can see no obvious ecological change nor any change in human use of the lakes or the adjacent shoreline. All of the emergent and submerged acqautics that were common years ago are still present though there may be differences in their relative abundance.

On the other hand Pied-billed Grebes, Black Ducks, Hooded Mergansers and Ring-billed and Herring gulls are more numerous both on Blue Sea Lake and the adjacent lakes which I visit regularly.

There has been no obvious change favorable to the grebes, Black Ducks or Hooded Mergansers that would account for their increased abundance but the fact remains that both individuals and the number of broods seen have increased.

There is no gull colony known to me in the territory regularly worked and the build-up in the number of individuals in late July and August indicates a considerable post-breeding movement into the territory.

Until 1947, three to six Herring gulls were the usual number present while since that time the species has been more regular and in some years, notably 1959, more numerous.

The Ring-billed Gull was not noted until 1953 and has been the most numerous water bird since about 1956.

Among the land birds the following species have been noticeably less numerous since 1948: Bald Eagle, Osprey, Bluebird, Red-eyed Vireo, Black-and-white Warbler, Magnolia Warbler, Black-throated Blue Warbler, Chestnut-sided Warbler, Ovenbird, Canada Warbler, Redstart, and Indigo Bunting.



The reduction in the number or the frequency of observation of the Bald Eagle, Osprey, and Bluebird are perhaps associated with the widely reported decrease of these species, the reduction in Magnolia and Chestnut-sided Warblers and Indigo Buntings in the territory studied is probably due to obvious vegetative changes that have taken place; but I am not able to associate the lesser numbers of Red-eyed Vireo, Black-and-white Warbler, Black-throated Blue Warbler, Ovenbird, Canada Warbler or Redstart with any significant vegetative changes in the areas they have always occupied. All these forms are present but in smaller numbers.

On the other hand the Red-shouldered Hawk, Broad-winged Hawk, Barred Owl, Nighthawk, Blue Jay, Raven, Nashville Warbler, Bay-breasted Warbler, Blackburnian Warbler, Cowbird, Red-winged Blackbird, Evening Grosbeak, and Purple Finch have increased. The two hawks and the Barred Owl may have extended their breeding range to include this local area and the Evening Grosbeaks certainly have done so. I am not able to give any logical reason for the upswing of some of the woodland warblers that utilized much the same habitat as some of those that have decreased markedly in recent years.

The following species accounts bring up to 1961 the more noticeable changes that have occurred since 1947.

*Gavia immer* (Brünnich): Common Loon

Noticeably less abundant on Blue Sea Lake and on many of the neighboring lakes.

*Podilymbus podiceps podiceps* (Linnaeus): Pied-billed Grebe

Much more frequently seen and more numerous on several lakes, marshes and ponds especially in 1949 and 1953.

*Anas rubripes* Brewster: Black Duck

Definitely more abundant since 1949. Greatest numbers of broods and individuals seen in 1953 and 1955 but it has been more common until 1961. In that year the number of broods dropped considerably.

*Mareca americana* (Gmelin): American Widgeon

On July 31, 1952, a female with five partly-grown young were seen on a little lake just north of Lake Baskatong. This is the only record for the species.

*Aythya collaris* (Donovan): Ring-necked Duck

I have not seen a single individual of this species since 1948.

*Bucephala clangula americana* (Bonaparte): Common Goldeneye

One of two birds was collected on Blue Sea Lake on October 4, 1951, and a female with four young was watched for some time on a small wooded lake near the Lapine Depot on the Gene de Terre River.



*Lophodytes cucullatus* (Linnaeus): Hooded Merganser

This bird has become more numerous as the Common Merganser has decreased. It is now second in numbers to the Black Duck among the water-fowl. Broods seen nearly every season since 1949.

*Mergus merganser americanus* Cassin: Common Merganser

Greatly decreased as a breeding bird on Blue Sea Lake and some decrease on adjacent lakes. Formerly two or more broods were seen regularly on Blue Sea but in recent years the sight of a brood excites comment.

*Accipiter gentilis atricapillus* (Wilson): Goshawk

A single bird at Lapine Depot July 31, 1952; a bird near Ellard Island on Blue Sea Lake on July 30, 1954; and another individual at the north end of the same lake on August 18, 1954.

*Buteo lineatus lineatus* (Gmelin): Red-shouldered Hawk

This species is seen more frequently since 1949. One or more birds are seen several times each season about Ellard Island and Sheep Islands in Blue Sea Lake. Occasional birds have been seen on other lakes since 1950.

*Buteo platypterus platypterus* (Vieillot): Broad-winged Hawk

This species bred on Big Island in 1947 and in several subsequent years I have seen newly fledged young on the island. In addition individuals have been seen in widely scattered localities in the territory. It is now one of the more common hawks in the area.

*Buteo lagopus s. johannis* (Gmelin): Rough-legged Hawk

On August 6, 1959, a specimen in typical plumage was seen along the road on the west side of Blue Sea Lake. It is the only one noted in the territory at any time.

*Haliaeetus leucocephalus* (Linnaeus): Bald Eagle

The Bald Eagle was never common but I have only seen one since 1942 and that was a single individual on July 15, 1958. It has not been observed in a much larger territory in recent years.

*Pandion haliaetus carolinensis* (Gmelin): Osprey

Only two Ospreys were observed since 1947, one at Blue Sea Lake on July 30, 1954, and another on August 6, 1959.

*Falco sparverius sparverius* Linnaeus: Sparrow Hawk

This species has become somewhat more numerous since 1949. It has been seen frequently with records of two to four individuals on one day. The highest daily count was on August 6, 1959.

*Canachites canadensis* (Linnaeus): Spruce Grouse

Two specimens taken near Forks Lake on August 1, 1950.



*Tringa solitaria solitaria* Wilson: Solitary Sandpiper

Two birds noted near Lapine on July 27, 1949.

*Totanus melanoleucus* (Gmelin): Greater Yellowlegs

One bird on a beach on Big Island on July 19, 1952.

*Larus argentatus smithsonianus* Coues: Herring Gull

*Larus delawarensis* Ord: Ring-billed Gull

The Herring Gull, which has been present each year in small numbers, has increased noticeably since 1955. The Ring-billed Gull was first recorded on August 25, 1953, when a single bird appeared on Blue Sea Lake. It was present in 1955 and 1957 and has been numerous each year since that time. The largest number of birds actually counted was 83 on one little island on August 24, 1959. This was a mixed flock with the Ring-bills greatly outnumbering the Herring Gull. Similarly sizable flocks were seen in that and subsequent years.

*Zenaidura macroura* (Linnaeus): Mourning Dove

A single bird was noted sitting on a telephone wire near Grand Remous on August 1, 1952.

*Bubo virginianus* (Gmelin): Great Horned Owl

A single horned owl was seen on the north side of Lake Baskatong on August 22, 1950, and again on August 1, 1952.

*Strix varia varia* Barton: Barred Owl

While Taverner's notes listed one as seen by R. M. Anderson in October 1922, this species was not noted again until 1957. I did not visit the area that year but a Dr. Fred Glenny reported that it nested on Big Island. Since that time it has been present every summer. Adults and young (sometimes as many as four) have been seen each summer. A young male was collected August 11, 1959.

*Dryocopus pileatus abieticola* (Bangs): Pileated Woodpecker

This species has become markedly more common and since 1950 has been regularly seen on the larger islands and adjoining mainland of Blue Sea Lake. It has also been seen frequently on the shores of other lakes in the territory.

*Nuttallornis borealis* (Swainson): Olive-sided Flycatcher

On August 1, 1949, one of two birds was collected west of Blue Sea Lake near Eagle River. Two were seen in the same area July 27, 1950, single birds on both August 20 and 21 near Lake Baskatong and others in the same area on July 31 and August 2, 1952. A single bird was noted on August 6, 1959, on the west shore of Blue Sea Lake.



*Petrochelidon pyrrhonota pyrrhonota* (Vieillot): Cliff Swallow

A good sized nesting colony of this regular summer bird was first discovered near Eagle Depot on July 27, 1950.

*Perisoreus canadensis canadensis* (Linnaeus): Gray Jay

Taverner's notes furnished the only records until I collected specimens near Lapine Depot on July 29, 1949. Since then I have several times seen them about Baskatong Lake and one bird appeared on Ellard Island on Blue Sea Lake on September 23, 1951.

*Cyanocitta cristata bromia* Oberholser: Blue Jay

Noticeably more numerous since 1950. It has been noted more regularly and in greater numbers.

*Corvus corax principalis* Ridgway: Common Raven

Recorded only once prior to 1951. Since then it has been seen on many occasions in Blue Sea Lake, Long Lake, and Lake Baskatong. On July 14, 1958, four were seen on Big Island and a similar number on Lake Baskatong on July 18 of the same year.

*Sitta carolinensis cookei* Oberholser: White-breasted Nuthatch

I collected one near Eagle River on August 1, 1949, and saw two others there the next day. One bird was seen on Big Island on August 23, 1953.

*Telmatodytes palustris dissaepetus* (Bangs): Long-billed Marsh Wren

I am able to add a second record of this bird as one was seen on the north end of Blue Sea Lake on July 29, 1959.

*Sialia sialis sialis* (Linnaeus): Eastern Bluebird

There has been a marked decrease in this species since 1950 with no records at all since 1953 in the territory normally worked. A few have been noted outside the area.

*Sturnus vulgaris vulgaris* Linnaeus: Starling

The Starling has occupied all the suitable area in the territory and is now a conspicuous and abundant species.

*Vireo olivaceus* (Linnaeus): Red-eyed Vireo

Found regularly in all suitable area but has been noticeably less numerous since 1953.

*Vireo philadelphicus* (Cassin): Philadelphia Vireo

Two recent records of this species were obtained on Big Island, one on August 31, 1953, and the second on August 26, 1960.

*Mniotilta varia* (Linnaeus): Black-and-white Warbler



*Dendroica magnolia* (Wilson): Magnolia Warbler

*Dendroica caerulescens* (Gmelin): Black-throated Blue Warbler

*Seiurus aurocapillus aurocapillus* (Linnaeus): Ovenbird

*Setophaga ruticilla tricolora* (Müller): American Redstart

The above warblers have all been noticeably less numerous on the islands and shorelines of Blue Sea Lake since 1949 and 1950.

*Vermivora ruficapilla ruficapilla* (Wilson): Nashville Warbler

*Dendroica fusca* (Müller): Blackburnian Warbler

*Dendroica castanea* (Wilson): Bay-breasted Warbler

These three species have become more numerous than the numbers of the preceding groups in the same habitats. The Nashville has increased since 1951, the Blackburnian since 1947, and the Bay-breasted since 1950.

*Vermivora celata* (Say): Orange-crowned Warbler

A single bird noted on the north shore of Lake Baskatong on August 23, 1950.

*Dendroica tigrina* (Gmelin): Cape May Warbler

A newly fledged juvenile was collected out of a group of four on Big Island on August 27, 1950, and two birds were seen on the same island on July 30, 1954.

*Dendroica striata* (Forster): Blackpoll Warbler

Two birds on Big Island on August 31, 1953, and others on August 26 and 28, 1955.

*Wilsonia pusilla pusilla* (Wilson): Wilson's Warbler

One on Big Island on August 25, 1960, the second record for the area.

*Passer domesticus domesticus* (Linnaeus): House Sparrow

Regularly seen about farm yards, towns and grain fields but in smaller numbers since 1950.

*Agelaius phoeniceus phoeniceus* (Linnaeus): Red-winged Blackbird

The noticeable increase in the breeding population of this bird seems to be due to the birds going into fields, the edges of thickets, and other previously unused nesting sites.



*Molothrus ater ater* (Boddaert): Brown-headed Cowbird

This bird has become fairly regular since it was first collected July 13, 1955, on Blue Sea Lake. It has been noted in most subsequent years. Taverner's notes furnished the only prior record.

*Passerina cyanea* (Linnaeus): Indigo Bunting

The Indigo Bunting is no longer present in the areas where it was formerly a regular resident. The progress of natural reforestation has changed the environment to the extent that the birds have abandoned it and are now found in other places mostly outside the area worked.

*Hesperiphona vespertina vespertina* (Cooper): Evening Grosbeak

The most striking change in the bird life has been the invasion of the Evening Grosbeak as a breeding species. Prior to 1949 I had a single summer record and one fall record.

On August 1, 1949, a single bird was noted in the village of Caymont on the southern corner of the area and on July 27, 1950, I saw two birds at Cedar Lake. On August 2, 1950, a number were seen near Forks Lake just north of Lake Baskatong. On August 20, 1950, a flock of ten were seen along the road near Lapine Depot and 10 or 12 were feeding about our camp near Forks Lake that afternoon. On August 22 about 25 grosbeaks, about 15 White-winged Crossbills and a number of Purple Finches were present apparently eating dirt near an old lumber camp cook shack. It is probable that sale or some other substance had been spilled there. On August 20, 1955, I watched a female feed a well-fledged young in Maniwaki and saw numbers in the same part of town on August 23, 1955. On August 21 one bird was near our cabin on Blue Sea Lake. Again on September 8, 1955, the street trees in Maniwaki held numbers of grosbeaks including several young that frequently begged for food. In 1956 and 1958 I was not in the territory long enough to make any extended field trips, in 1957 I did not get there at all and in 1960 I was able to observe only the birds I could see from the cabin or from a boat in Blue Sea Lake so my notes are confined to Blue Sea Lake itself in those years. On July 26, 1959, four birds were seen at the north end of Blue Sea Lake and three birds were present on the west shore on August 6. No grosbeaks were noted at either Maniwaki or the Baskatong although both areas were worked. In 1961 a part of the territory around Baskatong and all of the other parts of the area were worked without seeing any grosbeaks. The peak year of abundance according to my notes was 1955 but they could have been equally abundant in any of the three succeeding years when I was not able to do the normal amount of field work. Birds collected were of this race.

*Loxia curvirostra* Linnaeus: Red Crossbill

Four Red Crossbills were seen near Forks Lake on August 21, 1950. A group of four or more were noted from our cabin on August 27, 1959.



*Loxia leucoptera leucoptera* Gmelin: White-winged Crossbill

Several were collected and a flock of fifteen noted near Forks Lake on August 22, 1950.

## REFERENCES

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## OCCURRENCES OF THE ORCHID *LISTERA AUSTRALIS* IN THE VICINITY OF QUEBEC CITY

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IN 1947, THE WRITER discovered a few plants of the Orchid *Listera australis* Lindl., in a small and shallow boggy area in Sillery, P.Q., a suburb of Quebec City. The entire bog was destroyed the next year by a housing development. The unexpected discovery, however, at least trained the eye to find this most inconspicuous plant and gave hope that the occurrence was not unique for the area. Subsequent visits to other areas within easy reach of Quebec City soon fulfilled this hope.

*Listera australis* appears to be quite widely distributed in the Quebec area, being found in a majority of the sites which seem to meet its habitat requirements. In this region the preferred habitat probably is acid peat bogs, but primarily those parts of the bog offering a rather specific range of micro-climate. Since the following conclusions are derived from a limited number of observations, they are only tentative.

Plants were found growing amid living *Sphagnum*, with the root system buried to a depth of three or four inches, so that it lay in a zone of saturated, dead but undecomposed moss. The plants always occurred among rather thin growths of shrubs, primarily *Kalmia polifolia*, which would provide a little broken shade. They were not found in heavy shade. *Listera australis* seems to prefer very bright light. It is perhaps noteworthy that all the plants observed grew singly in open patches of *Sphagnum* at least two or three inches from the nearest shrub stems.





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