

VERTEBRATE MONITORING:

Avian Observations – Greenwoods Conservancy

William Butts¹

Nesting Herons

The Woods Hole pond site has served as a rookery for the Great Blue Heron, *Ardea herodias*, in past summers and several nests have been constructed in tall dead trees at the site. Some of these nests are readily observed from State Land Road from the site where the Marcy South powerline crosses the road and continues down hill across the impoundment. The two highest nests and one lower one can be viewed from this site.

On April 15, 2004, an adult heron was seen perched on the side of one of the nests. The following is an annotated record of subsequent observations.

Date	Observation
IV-20	No birds visible
IV-28	One bird flew from a high nest
V -4	No birds visible
V -14	One heron perched on each of the two high nests
V -20	One bird on one high nest; other not occupied
VI- 3	One heron on each of the two high nests
VI -7	One high nest with 2 (possibly a third) young visible. No birds were seen on the other high nest from this date.
VI-10	Two young birds visible in high nest
VI-14	One young bird visible in high nest
VI-17	No birds visible
VI -23	Adult heron perched on side of high nest
VI -26	Adult perched on nest with one (or more?) young herons in nest.

On the above date, the author approached the nest site from the Cranberry Bog Road access. On the high nest (seen from the bank on the Cranberry Bog Road side) one adult was perched and three young birds were seen in the nest. From this vantage point a second nest in a lower tree in the impoundment could be seen (but could not be seen from State Land Road). An adult perched on this nest which contained two young birds, considerably smaller than those in the high nest.

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VI-28	No birds visible from State Land Road. When approached from Cranberry Bog Road 2 adult birds were perched on high nest and two young birds were visible therein. Upon approach one adult flew away from the nest and the young birds withdrew into it so as to become invisible from view.
VII-8	No birds visible from State Land Road
VII-12	No birds visible from State Land Road. From ground level (Cranberry Bog Road entry) adult flew away from high nest. Heads of two young birds visible above rim of nest. One young bird visible in low nest across from pond.
VII-29	No birds visible from State Land Road. From ground level, one bird in high nest apparently large, young bird withdrew from sight into nest. Two adult birds and one (smaller) young bird nest across pond.
VIII-11;24	No birds visible in or around either nest from State Land Road or from ground.
IX-13; 21; 29	No birds visible from State Line Road.

COMMENTS

The presence in the high nest of three young birds which attained a size nearly indistinguishable from the adults may represent the optimum level of survival in nature. Although clutch size may vary from 3-7 eggs with four as the most common number, two or three full grown young birds per nest represents the most common level of rearing success. Whether any of the birds observed were actually fledged is unclear; however, the three young in the high nest were nearly indistinguishable from adults by size and the time span from the first until the last observation of young in the high nest is well within the approximate 60 days from hatching to fledging noted by authors (Palmer, 1962).

REFERENCES CITED

Palmer, R.S. 1962 Handbook of North American birds. Vol I: VII+563pp. Yale Univ. Press, New Haven