

Vertebrate Monitoring

Avian Observations – Greenwoods Conservancy

William Butts, PhD

Nesting Herons

The Woods Hole rookery was occupied by nesting pairs of the Great Blue Heron, *Ardea herodias*. Observations were made from State Land Road where the Marcy South Power Line crosses and from the water's edge on the south bank with pedestrian access from Cranberry Bog Road. Initial observation on April 26 was made from State Land Road only and no herons were visible. The following is a chronological record of subsequent observations. Those seen from State Land Road = SLR; those seen from the south bank = SB. Low nest in tree closer to north bank not visible from SLR.

Date	Observation
V.3	No birds visible (SLR); adult bird perched on large hemlock (SB); no birds on any nest.
V.11	No birds visible (SLR); adult flew from low nest (SB) vocalizing. (Adult probably same bird) flew to perch on a high nest.
V.18	Adult heron perched on high nest (above wood duck nesting box) (SLR); no birds visible on any other nests (SB). Two adults in flight, vocalizing softly.
VI.7	Adult heron on high nest (SLR); no others visible; no observation from (SB). Other nests appear to be in disrepair.
VI.15	One adult on high nest visible from (SLR) no other birds visible. Two Adults on high nest not visible from (SLR), one flew away, vocalizing. Adult on low nest with (at least) two young birds (ca. ½ grown). No bird left nest on my approach.
VI.21	No birds visible on or around any nest (SLR). No entry to (SB).
VI.29	One adult on high nest visible from (SLR) (Flew from nest when approached from (SB). Second adult two young birds in nest. Adult and (at least) two young birds in low nest (smaller than young in high nest).
VII.6	No birds visible from (SLR). Three large juvenile birds (nearly full grown) on high nest. All remained on nest when observed from directly below (SB). Four birds on low nest – two notably smaller.

- VII.20 No birds visible (SLR or SB). One adult flew up from water to perch on tree, then flew out of sight (SB).
- VI.27 No birds visible (SLR). One large juvenile bird in low nest, did not leave when approached to water's edge.

No birds were seen in subsequent observations on VIII.10, 17, 24, 29; IX.12,21. At time of last observation all high nests but one were in varying states of disrepair and low nest was also exhibiting decline in integrity.

Although young birds were observed in one high nest and the low nest, no birds that could be identified as fledglings were observed outside the nests. It would appear however, that all young birds were either fledged or lost. The decline in number of active nests and the loss of integrity of older unused nests (two of which are barely recognizable as such) indicate a lower level of utilization of the rookery than in previous years.