

1984 & 1985 RESULTS--ILLINOIS HERON COLONY SURVEYS

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In 1983 the Avian Ecology Program initiated an annual survey of Illinois heron colonies. Some of the identified colonies actually occur on the Iowa or Missouri side of the Mississippi River. The 1983 results were printed by the Department in the Avian Ecology Program Periodic Report No. 23.

The surveys of known colonies and search for new colonies were continued again in 1984 and 1985. Ground surveys were completed for all of the northeastern and most of the southern colonies as well as a few of the Mississippi and Illinois river colonies; however, the remaining colonies were surveyed by air--the nesting population and composition of each colony being estimated from a fixed-wing aircraft while making a circle around the colony about 500 feet above tree level. All colonies along the Mississippi and Illinois rivers in 1983 remained active in 1984 and 1985; furthermore, six new colonies were discovered. Two more new colonies (Black-crowned Night-Herons at Lake Calumet in 1984 and Great Blue Herons at Fermilab in 1985) were located in northeastern Illinois while two colonies there (Volo in 1984 and Richmond in 1985) were abandoned for unknown reasons.

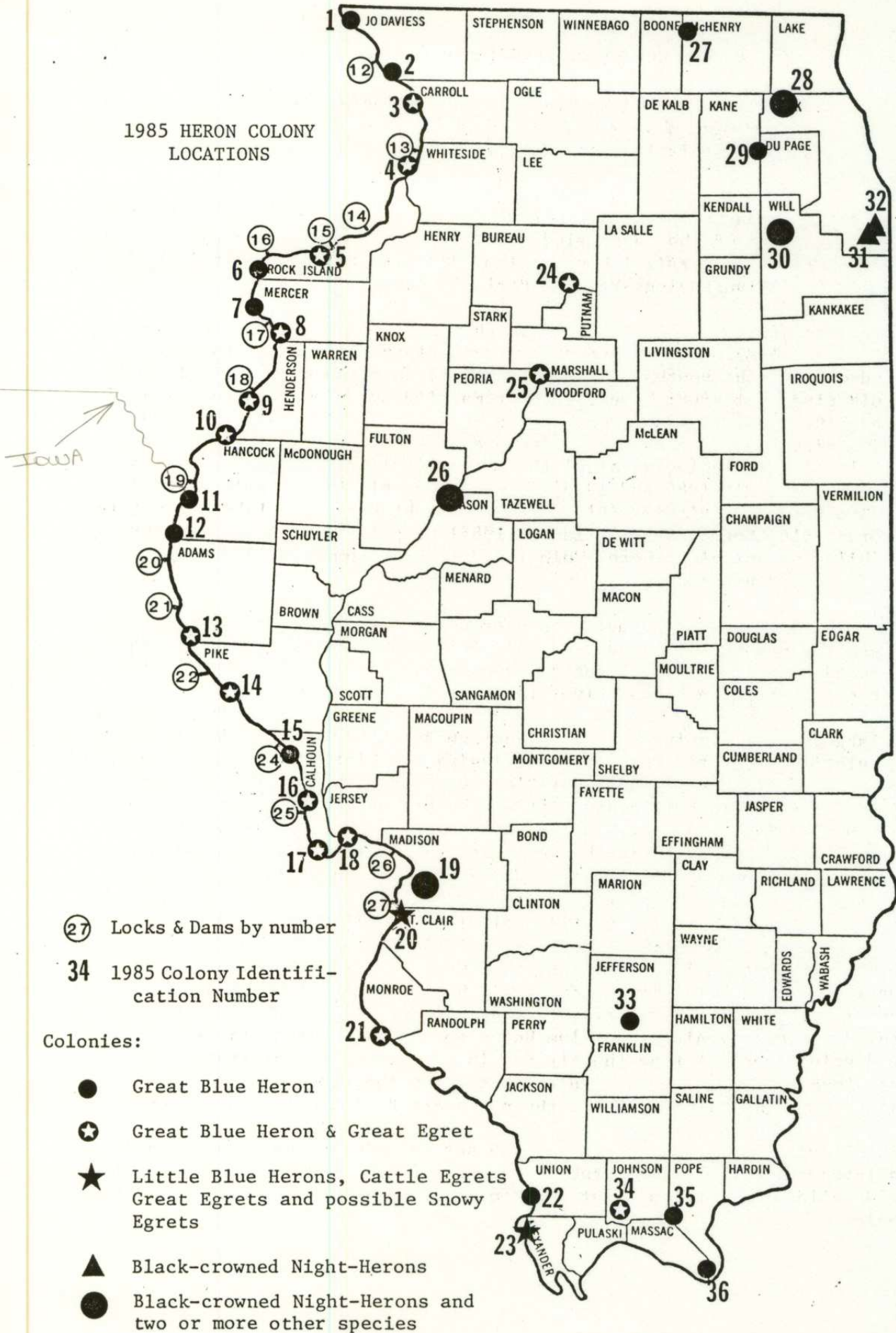
A major discovery was the multi-species colony (including two and perhaps three endangered species) northwest of Gale (Alexander County) in 1985. The birds selected a small woodlot along a drainage ditch surrounded by open fields. Nests were constructed in Swamp Privot (Foresteria acuminata).

The large, multi-species colony at Pontoon Beach has practically lost its entire population of Cattle Egrets and is losing its Little Blue Herons; however, there were record numbers of nests for Black-crowned Night-Herons (520) and Great Egrets (25). The Cattle Egrets and Little Blue Herons have moved to a site closer to the Mississippi River just south of MacArthur Bridge in St. Clair County. A detailed investigation has not yet been made on this new colony; perhaps it will include nesting Great and Snowy egrets as well.

The total number of active nesting colonies identified in 1985 was 36 (up from the 32 of 1983). Some of the newly identified Mississippi River colonies may have been present in 1983--however, they were not detected until 1984 or 1985; it is possible that other colonies may still be discovered. With three years of experience in making aerial surveys, the estimated number of nests at each colony has improved; however, only Great Blue Heron and Great Egret nests are visible (but not distinguishable) from the air and in many cases are scattered over a wide area, forming sub-colonies. In cases such as the Black Bottoms colony, an aerial estimate is difficult when the nests are scattered among 194 trees.

The following map shows where the 1985 active colonies are located and provides information about their species composition. The accompanying tables indicate detailed information about each colony and statewide populations of each species.

1985 HERON COLONY LOCATIONS



②⑦ Locks & Dams by number

34 1985 Colony Identification Number

Colonies:

- Great Blue Heron
- ★ Great Blue Heron & Great Egret
- ★ Little Blue Herons, Cattle Egrets, Great Egrets and possible Snowy Egrets
- ▲ Black-crowned Night-Herons
- Black-crowned Night-Herons and two or more other species

1985 COLONIES

	No. of Colonies		No. of Nests at a Colony		Estimated Total No. Nesting Pairs
	Total	(Exclusive)	Min.	Max.	
Great Blue Heron	33	(17)	1	350 \pm	3460 \pm
Great Egret	18	(0)	1	102	450 \pm [@]
Snowy Egret	1	(0)	*	*	10* [@]
Little Blue Heron	3	(0)	7 \pm	95 \pm	125 \pm [@]
Cattle Egret	4	(0)	13	120 \pm	180 \pm [@]
Black-crowned Night-Heron	6	(2)	37	520	1460 \pm

* Present in both the Pontoon Beach and Gale North colonies, but only one nest (Pontoon Beach) was identified; there may be as many as 10-15 pairs in each of these and the new colony discussed below.

@ The Pontoon Beach colony is losing its Little Blue Herons and has lost its Cattle Egrets. Nesting, the extent of which has not yet been determined, did occur just south of MacArthur Bridge in St. Clair County close to the Mississippi River in a protected area. It is possible that Great and Snowy egrets, perhaps even Black-crowned Night-Herons, are nesting in this new location.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Much appreciation is expressed to all persons who assisted with the colony surveys. Those conducting extensive ground surveys deserve special recognition: Andy West and Mark Benson (Black Bottoms, Little Black Slough and Gale North); Deborah Jacques (Black Bottoms, Little Black Slough, Reevesville and Ware); Ken Pierson (Casey Fork); Richard Bjorklund (Clear Lake); Sue Elston, Dave Combs and Keith Ryder (Lake Calumet and O'Brien Locks); John Rogner, Jim Hooper and Skip Bergmann (Lake Calumet); James Landing (O'Brien Locks); Joe Milosevich (Lake Renwick); Robert Montgomery, Steve Byers, Conrad Drust and Cris Ancor (Baker's Lake); Fran Harty, Randy Heidorn and Bill Glass (Chemung, Richmond and Volo); Mark Pennington (Fermilab); Jon Duyvejonck (Andalusia); Norman Emerick and Tim Feavel (Bogus Island); Phil Covington and Fritz Reid (Denmark Island); Robert Cecil (Eagle Island); Scott Jackson (Island 525); Ed Anderson (MacArthur Bridge); Lucas Wrischnik, Bill Rudden, Ron Goetz, Richard Cole, Mike Sweet, Maggie Cole, Linda Chapman and Jeff Ward (Pontoon Beach); John Robinson and Al Balliet (Gale North). Also, many thanks to Jeff Ward for assisting on all of the aerial surveys. Finally, much appreciation to the Department of Transportation pilots who made it possible to obtain the aerial counts.

ILLINOIS HERON COLONY SURVEYS--1984 & 1985

1985 I.D. #	Colony Name	Location	Species	Number of Nests	Method of Survey*	Observers	1984/1985
	MISSISSIPPI RIVER AREAS						
1.	East Dubuque	At Miss. R. mile #576	Great Blue Heron	130±/150±	F-W/F-W	V.Kleen/V.Kleen, J.Ward	31 May/31 May
2.	Savanna Army Depot	1 mi. e. of Miss. R. mile #556	Great Blue Heron	40±/70±	F-W/F-W	V.Kleen/V.Kleen, J.Ward	31 May/31 May
3.	Sabula	Just w. of Miss. R. mile #538	Great Blue Heron	250±/350±	F-W/F-W	V.Kleen/V.Kleen, J.Ward	31 May/31 May
4.	Camanche	1/2 mi. w. of Miss. R. mile #514 (Clinton Co., IA)	Great Blue Heron	120±/150±	F-W/F-W	V.Kleen/V.Kleen, J.Ward	31 May/31 May
5.	Andalusia	1/2 mi. s. of Miss. R. mile #477 (Rock Island Co., IL)	Great Blue Heron	60±/120±	F-W/F-W	V.Kleen/V.Kleen, J.Ward	31 May/31 May
6.	Blanchard Island	At Miss. R. mile #451 (Rock Island Co., IL)	Great Blue Heron	50±/80±	F-W/F-W	V.Kleen/V.Kleen, J.Ward	31 May/31 May
7.	Bogus Island	At Miss. R. mile #443.6 (Mercer Co., IL)	Great Blue Heron	12±/15±	n.c./F-W	N.Emerick/V.Kleen, J.Ward	8 Aug./31 May
8.	New Boston	1/2 mi. n. of Miss. R. mile #434 (Mercer Co., IL)	Great Blue Heron	200±/200±	F-W/F-W	V.Kleen/V.Kleen, J.Ward	31 May/31 May
9.	Otter Island	1/2 mi. NW of Miss. R. mile #408 (Des Moines Co., IA)	Great Blue Heron	80±/80±	F-W/F-W	V.Kleen/V.Kleen, J.Ward	31 May/31 May
10.	Lomax	3/4 mi. e. of Miss. R. mile #396 (Henderson Co., IL)	Great Blue Heron	70±/100±	F-W/F-W	V.Kleen/V.Kleen, J.Ward	31 May/31 May
11.	Eagle Island	3/4 mi. SE of Miss. R. mile #362 (Hancock Co., IL)	Great Blue Heron	0 / 45±	-- / F-W	-- / V.Kleen, J.Ward	-- / 31 May
12.	Hackley Island	1/2 mi. e. of Miss. R. mile #353 (Hancock Co., IL)	Great Blue Heron	0 / 30±	-- / F-W	-- / V.Kleen, J.Ward	-- / 31 May
13.	Armstrong Island	1/2 mi. e. of Miss. R. mile #313 (Adams Co., IL)	Great Blue Heron	30±/75±	F-W/F-W	V.Kleen/V.Kleen, J.Ward	22 May/10 June
14.	Denmark Island	1/2 mi. e. of Miss. R. mile #292.5 (Pike Co., IL)	Great Blue Heron	50±/85±	F-W/F-W	V.Kleen/V.Kleen, J.Ward	22 May/10 June
15.	Clarksville Island	1/2 mi. NE of Miss. R. mile #272 (Cahoun Co., IL)	Great Blue Heron	90±/130±	F-W/F-W	V.Kleen/V.Kleen, J.Ward	22 May/10 June
16.	Red's Landing	1/2 mi. NE of Miss. R. mile #253 (Cahoun Co., IL)	Great Blue Heron	80±/80±	F-W/F-W	V.Kleen/V.Kleen, J.Ward	22 May/10 June
17.	Hat Island	1/2 mi. SE of Miss. R. mile #236 (Cahoun Co., IL)	Great Blue Heron	60±/80±	F-W/F-W	V.Kleen/V.Kleen, J.Ward	22 May/10 June
							(6 June) / --
						(P.Govtng- / ton)	
							(n.c.) / --
							(113) / --
							(7) / --

1985 I.D. #	Colony Name	Location	Species	Number of Nests 1984/1985	Method of Survey* 1984/1985	Observers 1984/1985
18.	Island 525 @	1/4 mi. s. of Ill. R. mile #2 (Cahoun Co., IL)	Great Blue Heron Great Egret	0 / 40± 0 / 10±	-- / f-w	-- / V.Kleen, J.Ward -- / 10 June
19.	Pontoon Beach	Just n. of Pontoon Beach (Madison Co., IL)	Black-crowned Night-Heron Great Egret Snowy Egret Little Blue Heron Cattle Egret	394/220 10/25 + / 1± 72/95 1 / 13 158 / 0	n.c./n.c.	V.Kleen, V.Kleen, M.Cole, B.Rudden, L.Wrischnik, R.Goetz, J.Ward L.Wrischnik 25 May/24 May
20.	Mac Arthur Bridge	1/2 mi. SE of Miss. R. mile #179 (St. Clair Co., IL)	Cattle Egret Little Blue Heron (Great Egret) (Snowy Egret)	-- / 50± -- / 7± -- / (?) -- / (?)	-- / est.	-- / E.Anderson -- / 12 July
21.	Rush Island	3/4 mi. SW of Miss. R. mile #146 (Jefferson Co., MO)	Great Blue Heron Great Egret	60±/60± 0 / 15±	f-w/f-w	V.Kleen/V.Kleen, J.Ward 22 May/10 June
22.	Ware	At SW corner of woods w. of Ware along Miss. R. (Union Co., IL)	Great Blue Heron	20±/15±	f-w/f-w	V.Kleen/V.Kleen, J.Ward 22 May/10 June
23.	Gale North @	3/4 mi. NW of Gale; 1/2 mile from Mississippi River (Alexander Co., IL)	Little Blue Heron Cattle Egret Great Egret (Snowy Egret)	-- / 25± -- / 120± -- / 15± -- / (+?)	-- / n.c.	-- / A.West -- / 30 May
ILLINOIS RIVER AREAS						
24.	Lake DePue	1 1/2 mi. SW of DePue (Bureau Co., IL)	Great Blue Heron Great Egret	180±/200± 10±/20±	f-w/f-w	V.Kleen/V.Kleen, J.Ward 31 May/31 May
25.	Marshall County	2 mi. NE of Chilliicothe (Peoria Co., IL)	Great Blue Heron Great Egret	80±/125± 5±/10±	f-w/f-w	V.Kleen/V.Kleen, J.Ward 31 May/31 May
26.	Clear Lake	extreme NW corner of (Mason Co., IL)	Great Blue Heron Great Egret Black-crowned Night-Heron	174/241 50/102 43/37	n.c./n.c.	R.Bjork-R. Bjorklund Lund 21 June/May-July
NORTHEASTERN ILLINOIS AREAS						
	Lindenwood	1/4 mi. e. of Lindenwood (Ogle Co., IL)	Great Blue Heron	6/0	f-w/f-w	V.Kleen/V.Kleen, J.Ward 31 May/31 May
27.	Chemung	2 mi. NW of Chemung (McHenry Co., IL)	Great Blue Heron	77/52	n.c./n.c.	F.Harty, F.Harty, B.Glass R.Heldorn 26 June/13 June
	Richmond	1 mi. SE of Richmond (McHenry Co., IL)	Great Blue Heron	18/0	n.c./n.c.	F.Harty, F.Harty, B.Glass R.Heldorn 26 June/13 June
	Voio	1 1/2 mi. SE of Voio (Lake Co., IL)	Great Blue Heron	30/1 ^d	n.c./n.c.	F.Harty, F.Harty, B.Glass R.Heldorn 26 June/13 June

1985 I.D. #	Colony Name	Location	Species	Number of Nests	Method of Survey*	Observers	1984/1985
28.	Baker's Lake	1 mi. SW of Barrington (Cook Co., IL)	Great Blue Heron Great Egret	23/21 8/8	n.c./n.c.	R.Mont-/R.Montgomery, Gometry, C.Trust, C. S.Byers Ancor	10 Sep./25 July
29.	Fermitlab @	NE corner of Section 36, 3 mi. SW of Batavia (Kane Co., IL)	Great Blue Heron	-- / 12	-- / n.c.	-- / M.Pennington	-- / June
30.	Lake Renwick	1 mi. SE of Plainfield (Will Co., IL)	Great Blue Heron Great Egret Cattle Egret	57/73 73/66 14/17	n.c./n.c.	J.Milos-/J.Milosevich	May-July/May-July
31.	O'Brien Locks	½ mi. N. of n. edge of Calumet City city limits (Cook Co., IL)	Black-crowned Night-Heron	275±/136	n.c./n.c.	S.Elston,/S.Elston, et al.	4 Sep./10 June
32.	Lake Calumet @ (NE Wetland)	116th St. Wetland adjacent to Lake Calumet (Cook Co., IL)	Black-crowned Night-Heron	266/492	n.c./n.c.	S.Elston,/S.Elston, et al.	31 May/29 May
SOUTHERN ILLINOIS AREAS							
33.	Casey Fork	Casey Fork Mgmt Area W. of Bonite (Jefferson Co., IL)	Great Blue Heron ^f	200±/275±	f-w/f-w	V.Kleen/V.Kleen, J.Ward	22 May/10 June
34.	Little Black Slough	E. of Cypress (Johnson Co., IL)	Great Blue Heron Great Egret	150±/200± 0 / 2+	f-w/f-w	V.Kleen/V.Kleen, J.Ward	22 May/10 June
35.	Reevesville	About 1 mi. NE of Reevesville (Pope Co., IL)	Great Blue Heron	+h / 75±	est./f-w	D.Jacques/V.Kleen, J.Ward	11 Mar./10 June
36.	Black Bottoms	About ¾ mi. SE of Unionville (Massac Co., IL)	Great Blue Heron ^f	150±/200±	f-w/f-w	V.Kleen/V.Kleen, J.Ward	22 May/10 June
				(350)/(308)	(est.)/(n.c.)	(D.Jacques)/(A.West, M. Benson)	(12 Apr.)/(21 May)

* Method of Surveys include: f-w = fixed-wing aircraft; n.c. = nest count from the ground; est. = estimated number of nests from the ground.

@ New colonies located in 1984 or 1985; some of these may have been present, but not identified or located, in 1983 (or 1984). The Hackley Island colony (#12) was probably the former "Taylor Island" colony reported prior to 1978 and the Eagle Island colony (#11) may have been the former "Lee County (Iowa)" colony reported prior to 1978. The Island 525 colony (#18) may also be an older colony in a new location.

- a - A ground survey in mid-January (1985) showed a distinct colony expansion that had not been detected from the air in 1984.
 b - The Missouri team reported 113 birds and 113 nests at the same time.
 c - No explanation why 1984 aerial and ground surveys were close and 1985 surveys were so different.
 d - Cause for abandonment not clear, but storm damage possible reason.
- e - Black-crowned Night-Herons have been attempting to relocate since original Islands are being crowded by Great Blue Herons and the understory is being destroyed by beavers; the new site, within Lake area, needs better protection from human disturbance since large numbers of nests have been abandoned both years.
 f - Corps of Engineers ground survey included count of nests in marked trees with extensive tree data available.
- g - The colony was not thoroughly counted in 1984, hence, just an estimate; the colony was visited by canoe in dense foliage in 1985, therefore a suspected low count.
 h - The colony was visited only briefly in March (1984) by ground and not located by air; only noted by air in 1985.
 i - More than 190 trees with nests in this colony; aerial estimate difficult to establish adequately since the colony is so widespread.