

**Duck Blinds as Nesting Sites for Great Blue Herons on the South Texas Coast.**—Many birds have adopted man-made structures for nesting sites. In the majority of cases these sites directly involve or are at least close to human habitation. The case related here seems to be important enough to affect the general welfare of one large bird, over several hundred square miles, but it involves a simple man-made structure, always far distant from any human habitation.

Redfish Bay on the south Texas coast is largely an area of shallow flats only a few inches deep. In winter it is frequented by several species of anatine ducks. With the ducks come the hunters and their blinds. On the Texas coast the blinds are covered with brush cut from heavy stands of the Sweet Bay (*Persea borbonica*). These stand throughout the year and some 200 or more spot the whole bay along the Port Aransas causeway, which leads across the bay to Harbor Island.

While riding in a boat across this bay with Mr. Vernon N. Johns, the National Audubon warden, on May 20, 1954, I noticed that many duckblinds had one or more Great Blue Herons (*Ardea herodias*) standing on top. I became curious about the possibility that the blinds were used as nesting sites by these big herons. All blinds are in shallow water, six inches to one foot deep and sometimes less with a low tide, and they cannot be approached closely by boats. After some searching, Johns and I found one where we could get within reasonable wading distance. Two parent birds flew away as we approached. The blind supported two nests, built on top. One was empty and the other contained two young birds, well-feathered out and about the size of their parents. They squatted down in the nest when approached. After a few moments we left.

Many other blinds with Great Blue Heron nests have been seen since then, and the use of duck blinds for nesting seems to be a common habit with this heron. Fortunately, the blinds are not easily approached by curious fishermen or predators from land. Thus, they would appear to be excellent nesting sites for all herons, but other species have not been seen using blinds for that purpose and it appears that the smaller species are more gregarious than the Great Blue Heron when it comes to nesting activity. A few thousand of these blinds spot the shallow bays of South Texas, and they are rebuilt every year. Thus it seems, that so long as the ducks and hunters last, Great Blue Herons will not suffer from lack of nesting space on the Texas coast.—GORDON GUNTER, *Gulf Coast Research Laboratory, Ocean Springs, Mississippi*.

**On the Reluctance of Gulls to Fly under Objects.**—The causeway between Aransas Pass and Port Aransas, Texas, is bordered by telephone wires and two sets of electric lines, the so-called high lines. Pelicans and herons will occasionally fly under these lines, but gulls seldom do, so far as my observation goes. In several other instances, I have noticed the reluctance of gulls to fly under objects, even when there was ample clearance. An outstanding example happened several years ago. I have held off recording it in the hope of repeating the observation, but the opportunity has not occurred and there is no reason to defer the account further.

After making a trawl station during an ecological study in Copano Bay, I cleaned the deck by throwing the fish and shrimp overboard to the gulls. It was my habit to throw the fish in the air for the gulls to catch. Quite a flock of Laughing Gulls (*Larus atricilla*) and a few Royal Terns (*Thalasseus maximus*) gathered and followed along behind the boat as it went down the bay.

Parenthetically, it should be noted here that I have engaged in this simple pastime many times during the past twenty-four years on the Louisiana and Texas coasts and the chief followers are always Laughing Gulls and a few Royal and Caspian

(*Hydroprogne caspia*) terns. The terns are much the more adept at catching fish in the air and can swoop in sideways, taking thrown fish on the run, so to speak. Conversely, gulls usually cannot catch a fish unless it is thrown straight at them, and even then they often misjudge the rate of fall and miss the catch. In their efforts they sometimes sprawl clumsily in the air with legs, as well as wings, outstretched, shrieking all the while. Young birds are not able to catch thrown fish under the best circumstances but they can be trained. Gulls following shrimp boats when the trash fish are being thrown overboard are common sights in these waters. They often fly close, ten to twenty feet overhead, and about the same distance behind the boat. The terns fly farther back and higher on the outskirts of the screeching flock. Thus it was in Copano Bay.

While I was busily engaged in feeding the gulls, the boat ran under the Copano Causeway, the mast having been removed for that purpose so that we would not have to wait for the drawbridge to be raised. I continued to throw the fish and waved at the gulls, but although the boat was in plain sight under the causeway, and was at first only a few feet away, the whole flock hung suspended where they were when the boat went under the drawbridge. They acted as if they could not see the boat at all and, to all intents and purposes, as if it had vanished into a solid wall. The birds remained suspended and stationary in that fashion, while the boat proceeded down the bay at about eight miles an hour. After it had gone two to three hundred yards, the elapsed time being 50 to 75 seconds, a tern flying higher than the gulls sighted the boat from above the causeway and came to it. The gulls saw the tern and streamed over the causeway to resume their feeding behind the boat which apparently had only reappeared to their view when they saw it from above the causeway.

Birds accustomed to flying in and out of trees are not loath to fly under overhead objects. The habitat and habits of gulls are quite different, and they are clearly reluctant to fly under overhead objects, even when there is ample leeway. The above observation suggests the possibility that gulls may have some mental occlusion which prevents them from seeing through or beyond overhead structures even though there are no physical obstructions to a clear view.—GORDON GUNTER, *Gulf Coast Research Laboratory, Ocean Springs, Mississippi*.

**Some Early Drawings of Canadian Birds.**—A publication little known to ornithologists and deserving of a brief description is the following: *Les Raretés des Indes: "Codex Canadensis,"* Librairie Maurice Chamonal, Paris (1930). In March, 1949, I saw the album of original drawings which has since been acquired by an unknown private collector. The first part of the title is that of the binder of the original album and the second part, "Codex Canadensis," was added when the drawings were reproduced. The album contains 56 drawings of birds, 67 of mammals, 18 of plants, 33 of fishes, and several of reptiles, batrachians, and insects.

The identity of the artist is not known with certainty. All that is known about him is contained in the brief preface to the reproduction by Baron Marc de Villiers. The quotations from uncited documents indicate that the artist was Charles Bécard de Granville, who was born in Quebec in 1675, and who died in that city on January 2, 1703. De Villiers inferred from the little documentary material available that the drawings were executed in 1701. De Granville is stated to have been the only person in Canada at the time capable of drawing a map. The artist was without formal training but showed sufficient talent that, to permit him to perfect himself in drawing, an annual gratuity was sought for him from Louis XIV. The coat of