

The First Nest Record of the Greater Yellowlegs (*Tringa melanoleuca*) in Nova Scotia

The Greater Yellowlegs (*Tringa melanoleuca*) has long been thought to breed on the plateaus of northern Cape Breton Island, Nova Scotia. Tufts (1962) relates the reports of A. W. Cameron on 12 July 1945 and of Erskine on 23 July 1952, who were both subjected to persistent scolding in such a way as to indicate that young or a nest were present. Godfrey (1966) lists Cape Breton as a breeding area. Wayne Neily, former park naturalist at Cape Breton Highlands National Park, observed young Greater Yellowlegs.

The authors were at Cheticamp Lake, in the central plateau of Cape Breton, from 24 to 27 June 1974 and during this period of time observed several Greater Yellowlegs displaying breeding behavior. The birds would hover or swoop towards our heads while continually giving an alarm call. The nature of the vegetation prevented us from ascertaining whether in fact eggs or young were present.

The forest around Cheticamp Lake is composed largely of black spruce (*Picea mariana*), balsam fir (*Abies balsamea*), and red maple (*Acer rubrum*), which grow in a very tangled manner. Also near the lake are large open hummocky barrens thickly covered by ericaceous plants. In the barrens are many boggy lakes.

On 27 June 1974 in an open barren 2/3 mi east of Cheticamp Lake and slightly southwest of Two Islands Lake we flushed a Greater Yellowlegs and after considerable searching discovered its nest. It was an inconspicuous shallow depression lined with dead leaves of sheep laurel (*Kalmia angustifolia*), and with bits of lichen of the genus *Cladonia*. Inside were four extremely pale green eggs with many irregular brown spots. The nest was photographed and a copy of the photograph will be deposited with the Maritimes Nest Records Scheme. During the period of examination the bird was continually diving at our heads.

Bent (1927) says the following about the nesting of the Greater Yellowlegs: "Considering the fact that the Greater Yellowlegs is such a common and widely distributed bird, remarkably little has been published on its nesting habits, and comparatively few nests have been found, in spite of the fact that it does not go very far north to breed and its breeding grounds are fairly accessible. I know from personal experience with it that its nest is very hard to find."

He also cites the observations of Brewster (1883), Nelson (1877), and Norman (1915), who had similar difficulties in finding Greater Yellowlegs nests. Thus the long interval required to establish definitely the breeding of this species in Cape Breton is not an atypical situation.

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