

R. J. Barnhurst

### Location

On the south shore of the St. Lawrence River, 30 kilometers west of Montreal, Quebec.

### Description

The power dam lies between the St. Lawrence Seaway and the St. Lawrence River and controls the flow of water between the two. The water passes through turbines and emerges into a system of four runout channels before entering the river. The channels contain a rich source of food in the form of small fish, which attract thousands of gulls and terns throughout the year. Extensive lawns alongside the channels provide resting and preening areas for birds and excellent observation sites for birders.

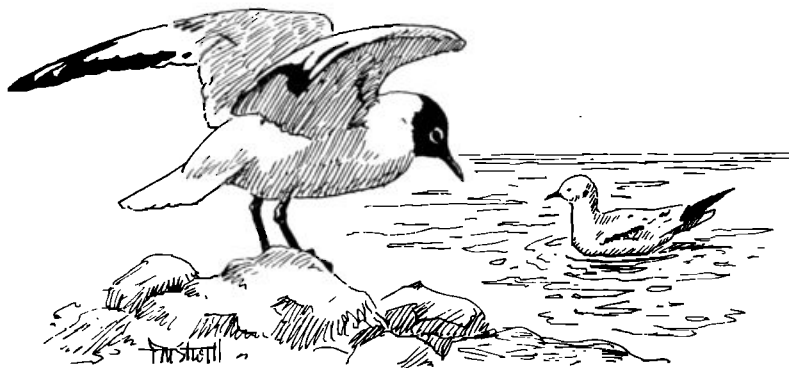
### Access

Access is via Highway 132 west from Montreal. Take either the Champlain Bridge or the Mercier Bridge from Montreal Island and watch for signs for Highway 132. Follow 132 west through Chateauguay continuing to the town of Beauharnois. After passing through the town, continue on Highway 132 for approximately 3 kilometers, at which point the highway crosses the runout channels of the power dam. After crossing the fourth channel, turn right onto a gravel road that follows the channel down to the end of the seaway peninsula. Cars may be parked anywhere along this road. In winter, access is blocked by snow drifts, but parking is still possible in the ploughed area at the beginning of the road, or alongside the highway just east of the first channel.

### Accommodations

Motels and hotels are located both east and west of the dam. The closest hotel is one kilometer west in Melochville, and the nearest year-round motel is 4 kilometers west on Highway 132. There is also a campground near Valleyfield, 25 kilometers west of Beauharnois.

## Beauharnois Power Dam Montreal, Quebec



### *An outstanding inland location for studying gulls and terns*

### Birding

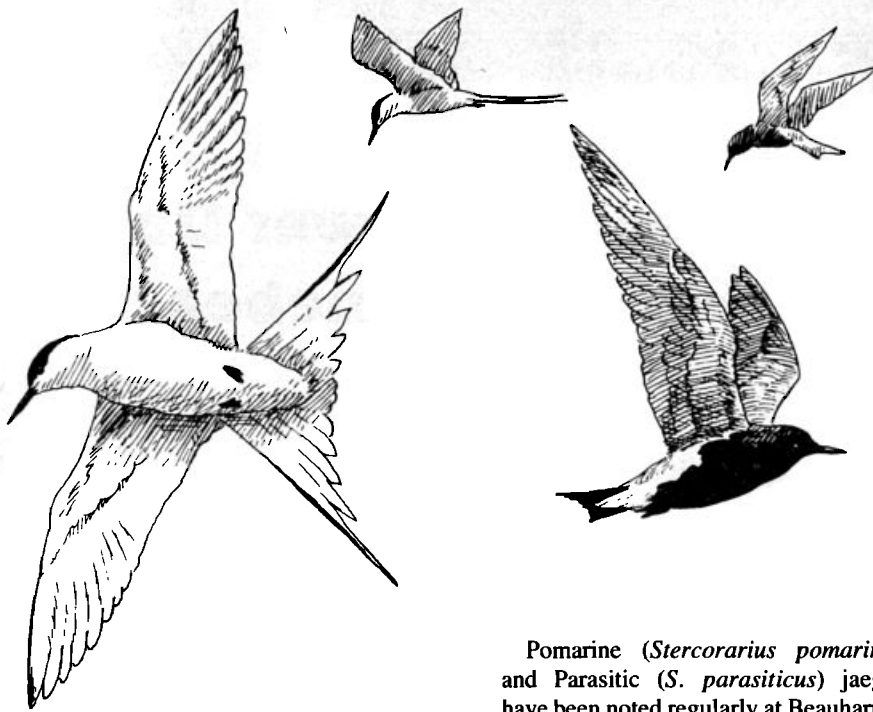
Beauharnois Power Dam is an outstanding inland location for studying gulls and terns. In this respect it is a close rival of the famous Niagara Falls area and the same species are recorded. During a typical year, gull populations reach an estimated 25,000 birds from October through December. During the months of April, May and June, the populations approach 5000 birds. The major tern concentrations occur April through June and August and September, during which time up to 750 terns may be viewed on any given day.

Altogether, fifteen species of gull, five species of tern and two species of jaeger have been recorded here.

Ring-billed Gulls (*Larus delawarensis*) are the most common birds seen at Beauharnois, and are present from March to December. The largest concentrations occur in April when 3000-4000 birds may be present, and in late October and November, when 10,000 is not uncommon. Herring Gull (*L. argentatus*) is the next most numerous species, with a concentration of up to 15,000 in November

and December. Smaller numbers visit during the spring on their way to breeding grounds.

Other less common species have also been observed. Up to 200 Bonaparte's Gulls (*L. philadelphia*) are present in April, May and June, and August through September. Occasionally a bird will stay as late as November or early December before migrating south. Among the Bonaparte's, adult and immature Little Gulls (*L. minutus*) are found in small but regular numbers in May, June, August and September, again with an occasional bird being sighted up to early December. Adult Common Black-headed Gulls (*L. ridibundus*) appear irregularly in spring and fall. Adult and immature Franklin's (*L. pipixcan*) and Laughing (*L. atricilla*) gulls, though rare, occur almost annually. The majority of the records for these two species are for spring and fall. Ivory Gulls (*Pagophila eburnea*) have been seen on several occasions; always with more than two birds involved. All records have been established in January. Black-legged Kittiwakes (*Rissa tridactyla*) are accidental in spring, but regular every November and



In addition to the gulls, look for flocks of diving ducks in spring and especially fall. King Eider (*Somateria spectabilis*) has occurred in winter. In addition to the more common species of shore birds for the area, Baird's (*Calidris bairdii*), Buff-breasted (*Tryngites subruficollis*) and Purple (*Calidris maritima*) sandpipers have all been recorded at Beauharnois from time to time. Look also for Snowy Owls (*Nyctea scandiaca*) and possible Peregrine Falcon (*Falco peregrinus*) and Gyrfalcon (*Falco rusticolus*) in late fall and winter.

### Seasonal Rating

Spring (April-June) ★★★  
 Summer (July-August) ★★  
 Fall (September-November) ★★★  
 Winter (December-March) ★★★★★

December, the majority of records being of immature birds. However, in 1983, a large flock of 85 occurred in November. Immature Sabine's Gulls (*Xema sabini*) were noted in 1975, and annually in September since 1980. In September 1983, two birds visited the dam and stayed for well over a week. Mew (or Common) Gull (*Larus canus*) has occurred at least twice in fall and may have been overlooked in other years.

Among the larger gulls, adult and immature Glaucous (*L. hyperboreus*) and Iceland (*L. glaucoides*) gulls are regular winter visitors. These gulls have also been noted in October and April. Thayer's Gulls (*L. thayeri*) can be identified with caution in very small numbers October to December and rarely in March. Lesser Black-backed Gulls (*L. fuscus*) have also become yearly visitors as singles or in pairs during November and December.

Common (*Sterna hirundo*) and Black (*Chlidonias niger*) terns can be seen throughout spring and fall, but most birds depart by the end of September. Arctic Terns (*Sterna paradisaea*) may join the flocks in late spring and rarely in fall when bad weather grounds them. Forster's Terns (*S. forsteri*) have been increasingly common in the east in recent years and have visited Beauharnois in several summers and have probably been overlooked in other years. There are fewer than five records for Caspian Tern (*S. caspia*) at the dam.

Pomarine (*Stercorarius pomarinus*) and Parasitic (*S. parasiticus*) jaegers have been noted regularly at Beauharnois to date, but the numbers are small, and the appearance of a Long-tailed Jaeger (*S. longicaudus*) is perfectly feasible. Records to date have occurred in October and November.

With all of this activity, especially among those gulls originating from the Arctic, a record of Ross' Gull (*Rhodostethia rosea*) is quite possible in the future.

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