

NOTES

FIRST RECORD OF THE LITTLE BLUE HERON FOR BRITISH COLUMBIA AND WASHINGTON

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In late October 1974, an immature Little Blue Heron (*Florida caerulea*) was reported by Bud Anderson from Judson Lake, a small lake (about 1.5 km long) lying astride the British Columbia-Washington boundary, about 7 km southwest of Abbotsford, British Columbia. Local residents later told us that the bird had been present since about 15 October. On 2 November 1974 Eugene Hunn visited the lake and confirmed Anderson's identification. On 3 November the heron was studied by Wayne Weber and by many other experienced observers, and it was seen frequently until 10 November on both the Canadian and American sides of the lake. The only subsequent sighting was on 5 January 1975, when Ian D. MacDonald again saw the bird at the lake. During this two-month gap in records, the heron may possibly have visited other small lakes in the vicinity.

Detailed field notes on the bird were taken by Michael Force, J. E. V. Goodwill, Al Grass, Eugene Hunn, Ian D. MacDonald, David M. Mark, John Toochnin and Wayne Weber. Hunn's notes are on file at the T. H. Burke Memorial Museum, University of Washington, Seattle, and the others at the British Columbia Provincial Museum, Victoria. A summary of relevant field marks noted is as follows: size of bird, close to or slightly greater than that of a Snowy Egret (*Egretta thula*); plumage, completely white except for dark tips on at least some of the primaries; a single short plume extending out and down from the crown; iris, pale yellow, surrounded by a thin dark ring; legs and feet, uniformly pale greenish or olive greenish; bill, bluish-gray at the base and black on the distal one-third or so; bill shape, thicker than a Snowy Egret's bill. Although immature Little Blue Herons and Snowy Egrets can be confused, the Judson Lake bird was clearly distinguishable from the latter species by the absence of yellow lores and of any black color on the legs, by the dark tips on the primaries (noted by at least one observer), and by the bill shape.

The heron spent much of its time wading in rather deep water, and was frequently seen to catch and eat frogs and small fish. Color slides of the bird obtained by Ervio Sian and David M. Mark have been deposited as No. 373 in the Photoduplicate File for British Columbia vertebrates (see Campbell and Stirling 1971), now housed at the Provincial Museum. Additional color slides by Ken Brunner and Eugene Hunn are on file at the Burke Memorial Museum. Sian's photographs are particularly good, and clearly show the bird's diagnostic features.

Northward dispersal of juvenile herons is well-known (Bent 1926:183-185, Coffey 1943, Rydzewski 1956), but the Little Blue Heron of Judson Lake must surely be an extreme example of this phenomenon. To our knowledge, this is the first record of the species, not only for British Columbia and Washington, but also

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for the entire Pacific Northwest. It has occurred in all the Southwestern states, but even in California is considered only a casual visitor, with no records north of Marin County (Small 1974:45). Breeding has been reported in New Mexico, but not until 1975 (Witzeman et al. 1975). Thus the Judson Lake bird must have wandered 2600 km or more from its birthplace, whether it came from the nearest colonies east of the Rocky Mountains (in Oklahoma and Texas) or from the Pacific coast of Mexico.

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