

GENERAL NOTES

Flight speed of Common Loon (*Gavia immer*).—About a hundred miles up the St. Lawrence River from Montreal, Quebec, at 10 a.m., E.S.T., on October 20, 1950, I had a very favorable opportunity to check the speed of a flying Common Loon for a distance of about five miles. The bird was flying upstream, roughly southwest, possibly migrating, at a height of about four feet above the water. The highway I was driving along paralleled the river quite accurately, and I estimate that, despite the slight curves, the road's course did not exceed the bird's by more than 3 or 4 percent at most.

To keep abreast of the loon I had to increase my speedometer pace to very nearly 55 miles an hour, so that the bird, if it had a very slightly shorter course, was making good a "ground" speed of 53 miles an hour.

There was a cold and rather strong cross wind from the northwest—with a component against the bird. Mr. D. S. Ross, Acting Officer in Charge of the Montreal Airport (Dorval, P.Q.), informs me that over most of this area on October 20 winds were reported as about 25 m.p.h. at 30 feet, and he estimates that at four feet above an open water surface the most probable speed would have been 20 m.p.h. This agrees very closely with my observations at the time. The triangle of velocities is given in Figure 1. The direction of the vector AC

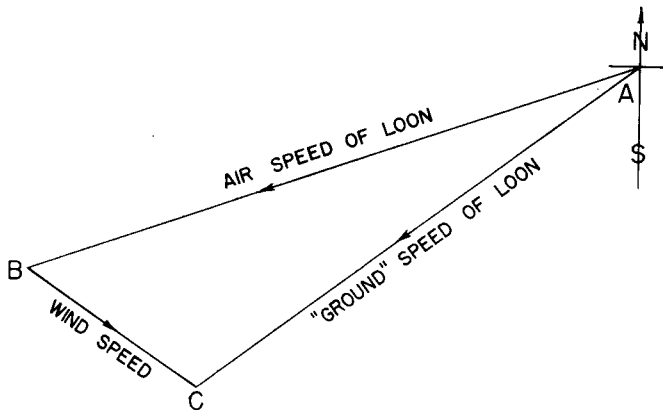


Fig. 1. Ground speed, combined with wind speed, to give air speed of flying Common Loon.

is that of the river, taken from a map. The vector BC is a combination of wind speed (from Mr. Ross's report) and wind direction (from my own observations). AB is the loon's air vector. The length of AB represents the bird's air speed, which comes out at about 62 m.p.h. —F. W. PRESTON, *Box 149, Butler, Pennsylvania*.

Present size of the Everglade Kite population at Lake Okeechobee, Florida.—Apropos of a statement in the report of the A.O.U. Committee on Bird Protection (1950. *Auk*, 67: 320) that the number of surviving Northern Everglade Kites (*Rostrhamus sociabilis plumbeus*) is not known, and also apropos of Sprunt's estimate (1950. *Audubon Magazine*, 52:

386) of a total of fewer than sixty survivors, I wish to report that on March 14, 1950, in the vicinity of the species' nesting ground at Lake Okeechobee, Mrs. Wilmoth G. Barker, of Ann Arbor, Michigan, Richard A. Herbert, of New York City, and I saw at least a dozen of the kites.

The ancient, one-eyed boatman who has watched over the kites for so many years piloted us into the marsh. Snails (*Pomacea paludosa*) were abundant: we picked clusters of their pink eggs off the reeds. For about an hour we watched the kites as they coursed back and forth hunting snails. They carried the snails in their red feet. Usually they took their prey back toward the nesting area, but occasionally we saw a female perch on a fallen post and eat a snail. We must have seen certain birds several times. Our estimate of 12 kites probably was conservative.



Male Northern Everglade Kite alighting in willow near nest. Photographed at Lake Okeechobee, Florida, May 15, 1941, by Hugo H. Schroder. That day Mr. Schroder saw 27 adult kites in the air at one time and found ten nests, each with eggs or small young.

This being our first experience with the Everglade Kite, we were surprised at noting that the bird, especially the female, seemed to resemble the Rough-legged Hawk (*Buteo lagopus*) rather than the Marsh Hawk (*Circus cyaneus*), a species with which it has often been compared. The kite's short, chunky build, and the white upper tail coverts and basal part of the tail instantly suggested the Rough-leg.

We could not but reflect that, even as this was our first view of these picturesque birds, so it might well be our last, for if the Kissimmee River dam materializes, the changing of the water-level will probably extirpate the snails on which the kites feed.—KATHLEEN GREEN SKELTON, 355 West 57th Street, New York 19, New York.