

ordinary fur or hair, covered with defensive spines. It is blamed for being injurious to dogs, which are said to get its quills into their feet; and for approaching farm buildings in order to suck the eggs of hens; and I am sorry to say in various places in the country I have found these inoffensive creatures wantonly slaughtered. On examining the stomach of one which had been shot in the Gatineau district, I found it to be literally packed with spruce leaves.

The first day's journey took us to the head of Smoke Lake, where we put up for the night in an empty hut. Next morning a merganser with her brood of ducklings was seen in the distance, near the margin of the lake on the opposite side. The mergansers differ conspicuously from other ducks in having the bill cylindrical and serrated, instead of being flattened and laminate. The sexes are unlike. In this species, the Red-breasted Merganser (*Merganser serrator*), the male has the head and neck dark green, and there is a white ring around the neck; the back is black, turning grayish lower down, the breast is tinted salmon colour on a white ground, the feet are red, and the bill and iris carmine; whilst the female has the head of a chestnut colour, the back grayish, the breast white, and the feet and bill duller coloured than in the male. Both sexes in this species have crests; whereas in the Sheldrake or Goosander (*Merganser americanus*) only the female is properly crested. The merganser constructs a downy nest concealed upon the ground, in which are deposited her buff, or yellowish drab, coloured eggs, which may vary in number from six to twelve.

In the same direction where the merganser was seen, a heron kept hovering about, and judging from its actions it is possible that it had a nest in the vicinity, for this bird although usually gregarious in its breeding habits, having extensive heronries, sometimes builds singly.

The Great Blue Heron (*Ardea herodias*) is our typical representative of the *Ardeidae*, and is often erroneously called the crane.¹ This bird has its own especial way of attracting notice; noiselessly and suddenly it is seen on the wing, flying somewhat clumsily, with its neck folded in, and its long legs stuck out be-

¹The herons are the true allies of the bitterns, storks and ibises, HERODIONES; the cranes of the rails, gallinules and coots, ALECTORIDES.