

THE CANADIAN FIELD-NATURALIST

VOL. XXXIV.

OTTAWA, ONT., OCTOBER, 1920.

No. 7.

NOTES ON THE FAUNA OF THE MOOSE RIVER AND THE MATTAGAMI AND ABITIBI TRIBUTARIES.*

BY M. Y. WILLIAMS.

INTRODUCTION.

During a geological trip made in the summer of 1919, between the National Transcontinental railway, and Moose Factory, the writer gathered the information contained in this article, on the fauna of the region.

The trip was made by canoe, from Fauquier on the Transcontinental railway down the Groundhog river to Mattagami river, down this to Moose river and thence to Moose Factory, which is situated below tide water nine miles up river from James bay. The return route was up Moose river to the mouth of Abitibi river, up this river to Frederick House river and up this river to the landing near Clute, fourteen miles northwest of Cochrane.

The journey was commenced on August 1st, and was completed on September 5th. Rainy weather between the 22nd and 28th of August delayed travel, and hindered observations materially.

The region traversed is wooded, except for burnt areas, some of which are old and of large extent. The clay belt as seen at Cochrane extends far down river, with the muskeg areas probably predominating over the clay ridges. High sand hills are crossed in the Abitibi canyon, and are reported elsewhere. The region south of James bay is covered with marine silt which is more fertile than the soil of the clay belt.

The rivers have incised their channels from fifty to two hundred feet into the loose deposits, their character, whether slow, rapid or torrential depending upon the rock outcrops. Above the foot of the Long Portage on Mattagami river, and the Otter portage on Abitibi river, the streams are broken, by many rapids and falls, the intervening stretches of water being either slack or of moderate current: this region is underlain by pre-Cambrian gneisses, and other crystalline rocks. Lower down, the country is underlain by limestone, sandstone and shale, and the rivers have few interruptions, although long stretches of rapids occur where the rock flows over

limestone and shale ledges.

The river banks commonly rise twenty to fifty feet to a narrow terrace. This terrace which averages about 200 feet in depth, slopes upward to the general level of the country, which is principally muskeg,—a floor of spagnum moss, laurel, and Labrador tea, studded sparsely with black spruce. The terraces are well timbered with stands of white birch, white and black poplar, and white spruce. Where the region is underlain by pre-Cambrian rocks, white cedar, Jack pine, and some tamarack occur. At the water's edge, and on the sand-bars, willows and dogwood grow in dense masses, and during the summer, golden rod, and even red clover grow along the banks at favourable places.

A distinct difference is to be noted between the water of Mattagami and Abitibi rivers. The water of the former is dark in colour, but reasonably clear, while that of the latter is very muddy. This probably accounts for the absence on the Abitibi of fish ducks, fish hawks, and other birds which prey upon fish, although these occur commonly on the Mattagami. Fishing on the Abitibi is likewise very poor.

BIRDS.

COMMON LOON, *Gavia immer*. Two seen at mouth of Kapuskasing river on August 4th, flying from the direction of a small lake lying to the east.

HERRING GULL, *Larus argentatus*. Generally common along the Kapuskasing, Mattagami, and Moose rivers from the National Transcontinental railway to Moose Factory, and up as far as the second rapids above the mouth of the Abitibi river. The greatest number were seen on the Mattagami river between the mouth of the Groundhog and the foot of the Long Portage. One was seen at the foot of the Long Rapids on the Abitibi river. Immature birds in grey plumage were seen on three occasions, one being shot near the second rapids above the mouth of the Abitibi river on August 25th. Dates of observation, August 1st to 29th.

COMMON TERN, *Sterna hirundo*. Several seen almost every day spent between Moose Factory,

*Published with permission of the Geological Survey of Canada.