

JOB COMPLETION REPORT  
RESEARCH PROJECT SEGMENT

STATE California NAME Special Wildlife Investigations  
PROJECT NO. W-54-R-1 TITLE Life History and Environmental  
Factor Studies of Rare and  
WORK PLAN II Endangered Species  
JOB NO. 1 TITLE Inventory of Rookeries  
PERIOD COVERED July 1, 1968 to June 1, 1969

Abstract

An inventory of heron and egret rookeries was conducted in the spring of 1969 by the Department of Fish and Game. A total of 76 rookeries were located in 32 counties, their location documented and their current status obtained. Inventory of these 76 rookeries revealed 3,210 active nests of great blue herons, common egrets, snowy egrets and black-crowned night herons. Other conservation organizations contributed to this inventory by assisting in documenting heronry locations. It is recommended that the heron and egret rookery inventory be continued. Survey findings will reflect the current status and trends of heron and egret populations statewide.

Objectives

Establish an inventory of California heronries and conduct an annual survey program to determine the status and trends of heron and egret populations.

Techniques

Regions were requested in April 1969 to list location and report current status of all known heron and egret rookeries in their region. Audubon Society chapters and other interested conservation agencies were contacted for additional assistance in documenting rookery locations. Rookery information and pertinent data was submitted to the Wildlife Management Branch in Sacramento on data processing Form PG 881 (copy attached.)

A trinomial system of identifying the rookeries was devised to facilitate relocation of rookery data and filing data in a systematic manner; the first number refers to the region in which the rookery is located, the second refers to the county, and the third assigns a number to the rookery. Example: Rookery No. 1-8-6 indicates the rookery is located in Region 1, Del Norte County and is rookery number 6.

Original rookery inventory forms are kept in a permanent file in the Special Wildlife Investigations Section of the Wildlife Management Branch in the Department's Sacramento office. In February of each year, inventory forms are directed to the regions with request that they determine the status of these heronries and return the completed inventory forms to our central file.

Results

Following a review of the listing of 33 rookeries provided by regional personnel in 1967, a request was submitted in April 1969 to the regional offices to report the location of known heron and egret rookeries and their current status. A special inventory form was developed for this purpose. Other conservation organizations and interested people were contacted for additional assistance in documenting rookery locations. Results of the 1969 inventory are recorded in Tables 1 and 2.

Table 1  
Rookery Inventory Summary - 1969

Area	Rookeries	Nesting Species			
		Great Blue Heron	Black-crowned Night Heron	Common Egret	Snowy Egret
Region 1	13	11	6	2	1
Region 2	25	16	8	2	2
Region 3	18	18	3	1	2
Region 4	11	10	1	4	1
Region 5	<u>9</u>	<u>7</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>3</u>
State Total	76*	62	22	13	9

\*Because several species may nest in one rookery, the total rookery figure will not equal the total listed under the nesting species.

Table 2  
Rookery Summary by Species - 1969

Area	Great Blue Heron		Common Egret		Snowy Egret		Black-crowned Night Heron		Total	
	Adults	Nests	Adults	Nests	Adults	Nests	Adults	Nests	Adults	Nests
Region 1	35	106	--	73	--	25	20	319	55	523
Region 2	636	546	35	45	130	--	247	10	1,048	601
Region 3	295	273	160	115	10	152	35	436	500	976
Region 4	697	779	196	73	100	50	100	50	1,093	952
Region 5	<u>160</u>	<u>60</u>	<u>220</u>	<u>95</u>	<u>280</u>	<u>--</u>	<u>216</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>876</u>	<u>158</u>
State Total	1,823	1,764	611	401	520	227	618	818	3,572 <sup>1/</sup>	3,210 <sup>2/</sup>

<sup>1/</sup> Number of adults are those observed at rookery sites.

<sup>2/</sup> Nests are number of active nests reported.

Seventy-six rookeries were reported statewide for four nesting species: great blue heron, common egret, snowy egret, and black-crowned night heron. Of the 76 reported rookeries (Table 1), 81 percent had active great blue heron nests, 29 percent had black-crowned night heron nests, 17 percent had common egret nests and 12 percent had snowy egret nests. Twenty-six percent of the active rookeries included two or more species and 67 percent of the active rookeries included a single species nesting at the rookery site. One rookery report indicated all four species were nesting at one site in San Bernardino County.

A total of 3,572 adult birds and 3,210 active nests were reported in Table 2 for the 76 rookeries. Species composition of the active nests were: great blue heron, 55 percent; black-crowned night heron, 26 percent; common egret, 12 percent; and snowy egret, 7 percent.

The active nest figure reflects the most useable comparison data. Since the number of active nests can be counted in a relatively short period of time, this information is most useful in comparative studies and determining population trends. Results in Tables 1 and 2 are conservative.

To obtain an accurate number of adults considerably more observation effort is required. Because of the foraging activities of the adults, rookery populations are difficult to ascertain. However, estimates of adult numbers are useful in determining the relative abundance of each species. A more realistic number for adults is 6,420. This is obtained by multiplying the number of active nests by two.

Figure 1 shows the county distribution of the active heronries reported in 1969. They are most frequently found in close association with extensive wetland areas.

As subsequent reports are submitted each year for rookeries we now have in a permanent file, the current status of heron and egret populations and their trends will become known throughout the State.

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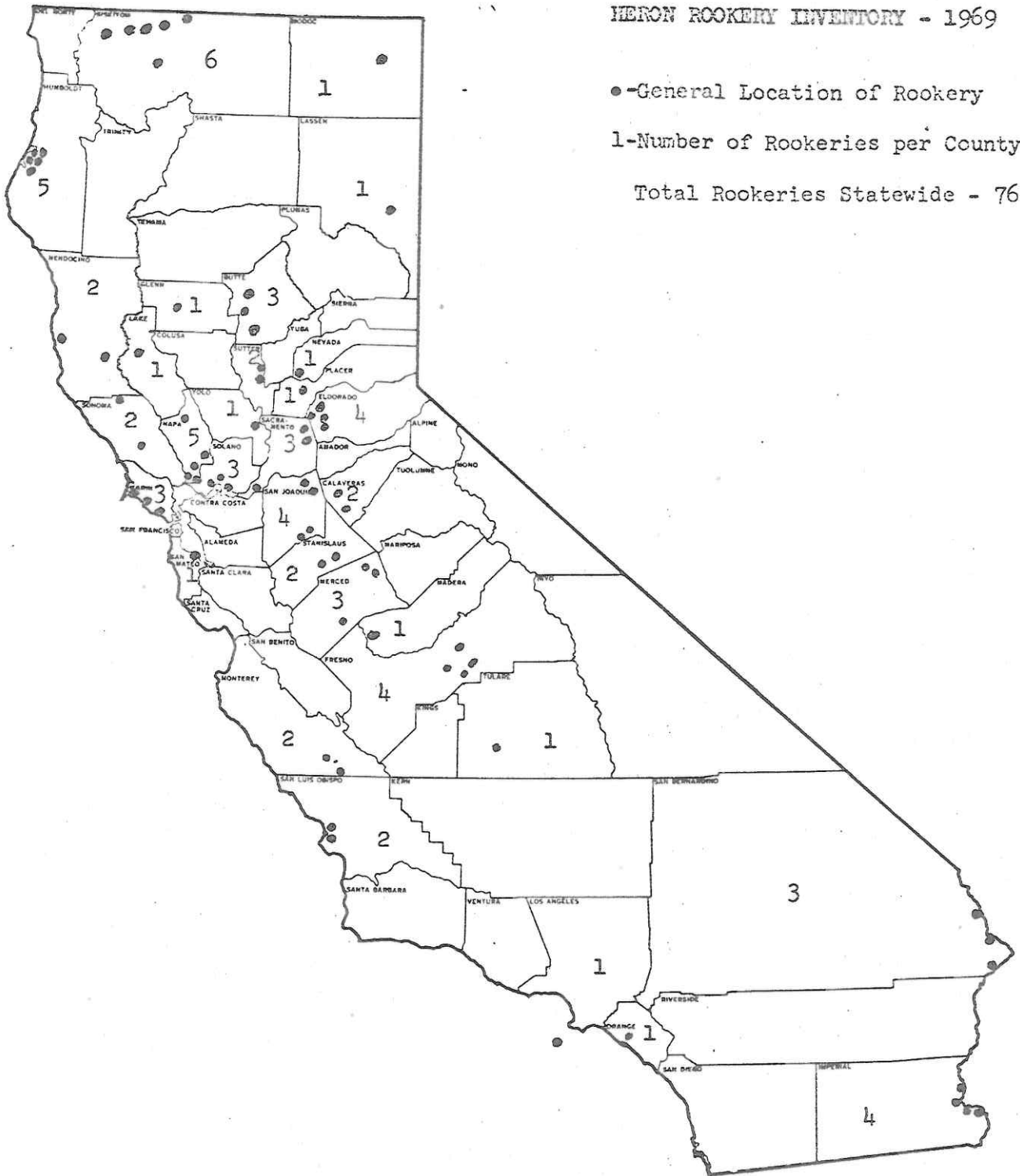
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Chief, Wildlife Management Branch

Date 2-20-70

Figure 1

HERON ROOKERY INVENTORY - 1969

- - General Location of Rookery
  - 1 - Number of Rookeries per County
- Total Rookeries Statewide - 76



EGRET AND HERON ROOKERY  
INVENTORY

ROOKERY NO. \_\_\_\_\_

ROOKERY DESCRIPTION

Species:     Great Blue Heron     Common Egret     Snowy Egret  
               Black-Crowned Night Heron     Others \_\_\_\_\_

General Location: \_\_\_\_\_  
(LOCATION IN RELATION TO NEAREST TOWN OR LANDMARK)

Specific Location: \_\_\_\_\_  
(RANGE, TOWNSHIP AND SECTION)

County \_\_\_\_\_ Region \_\_\_\_\_

Rookery Description: \_\_\_\_\_  
(GROUND COVER, LOCATION OF NESTS, ETC.)

Property Owner: \_\_\_\_\_  
(NAME AND ADDRESS)

CURRENT STATUS OF ROOKERY

Active Rookery:	Year _____		
<u>Species</u>	<u>Number of Adult Birds</u>	<u>Number of Active Nests</u>	
Great Blue Heron	_____	_____	
Common Egret	_____	_____	
Snowy Egret	_____	_____	
Black-Crowned Night Heron	_____	_____	
Others _____	_____	_____	

Inactive Rookery:

Reason for Abandonment

- Land Use Change \_\_\_\_\_
- Harassment \_\_\_\_\_
- Other \_\_\_\_\_
- Unknown \_\_\_\_\_

Observer: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

NOTES

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