

Key Site 58: Southeastern Anticosti Island, Quebec

Location: 49°3'5"N, 61°54'8"W

Size: 368 km²

Description: The 222-km long Anticosti Island is situated at the intersection of the St. Lawrence River and the Gulf of St. Lawrence, which empties in the North Atlantic Ocean. The key site is a 75-km long by 5-km wide stretch of coastal waters from Dauphiné Point to Falaise aux Goélands along the south and east coasts of the island. This stretch of water consists of extensive underwater limestone plateaus and includes the mouth of a few large but shallow rivers (e.g., Dauphiné, Bell) that empty into the Gulf.

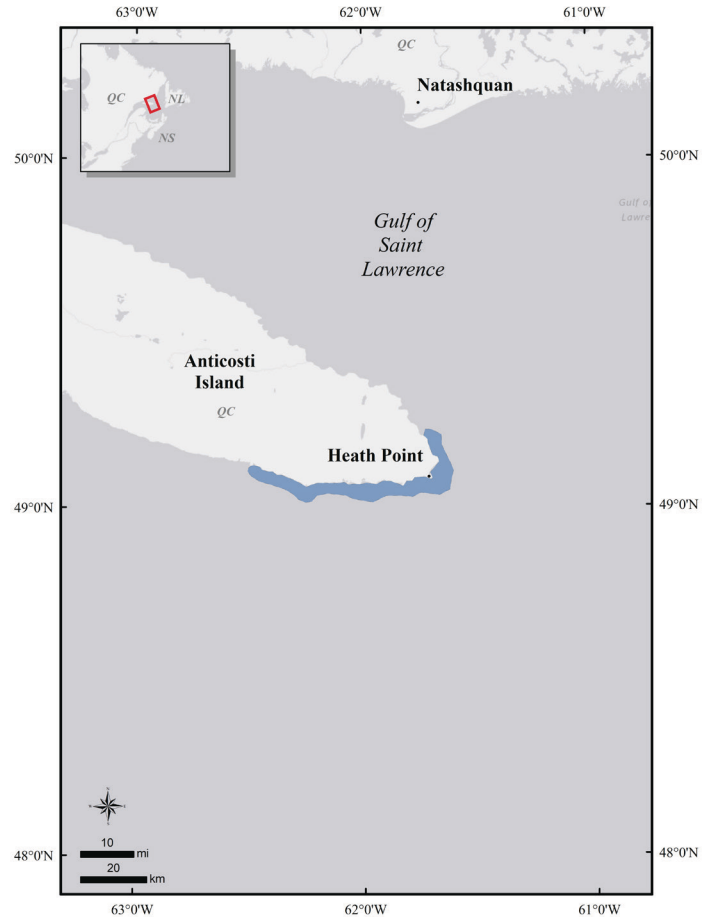
Coastal waters may freeze in winter depending on winter severity, but strong currents and winds usually prevent complete icing at Heath Point, which typically has ice-free patches.

Precision and Correction of Abundance Estimates

Presented: For the Common Eider winter survey, numbers have been photo-corrected. Otherwise, abundance estimates presented for this key habitat site have not been adjusted to account for incomplete detection or other biases. Abundance estimates should therefore be treated as minimum estimates.

Biological Value: This key site is an important Common Eider (*Somateria mollissima borealis*) overwintering area. Other sea ducks that frequent this key site during winter include Long-tailed Duck (*Clangula hyemalis*), Red-breasted Merganser (*Mergus serrator*), and Common Goldeneye (*Bucephala clangula*). Some King Eiders (*Somateria spectabilis*) are often present within Common Eider flocks (Canadian Wildlife Service unpublished data).

Use of the key site by breeding sea ducks has not been documented (Quebec Breeding Bird Atlas 2018) and use during molt and spring is apparently light. Common Eiders (*S. m. dresseri*) transit through this key site (Lamb et al. 2020), but numbers are not known. Aerial surveys conducted in the second half of May 2004–2010 along the St. Lawrence River documented daily totals of about 600 Long-tailed Ducks, 200 Common and Red-breasted mergansers, 200 Common Goldeneyes, and 100 scoters



(*Melanitta* spp.) (Canadian Wildlife Service unpublished data).

Sensitivities: Because Common Eiders forage almost exclusively on blue mussels (*Mytilus edulis*) during winter, variation in numbers of this benthic prey could affect numbers of eiders using the key site.

Potential Conflicts: Given that the St. Lawrence Seaway is one of the busiest waterways in North America and that thousands of ships and barges pass by Anticosti Island yearly, the risk of oil spills, disturbance, and ship strikes in this key site are of concern. By-catch in gill net fisheries is also a concern.

Status: The entire coastline of this key site designated as Aquatic Birds Concentration Areas recognized by the Quebec government (MELCC 2021). On the adjacent land, the Réserve écologique de la Pointe-Heath was established mostly to protect the numerous peatlands.

Literature Cited

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