

At the present time Anticosti is administered as a hunting and fishing preserve by the government of Quebec, but campers are welcome as well. With its abundance of wildlife and its unique ecological history, Anticosti is a true naturalist's paradise. I think Menier would be satisfied.

Bonaventure

In its history - both human and natural - Bonaventure Island is one of the richest spots in the Gulf of St. Lawrence. Situated three kilometers offshore from Perce Rock on Quebec's Gaspé Peninsula, Bonaventure was one of the earliest centers of fishing activity in Canada, and was the scene of many confrontations between French and English. Today the rich waters around the island attract thousands of birds, and the island is the home of the largest seabird colony in the Gulf of Saint Lawrence.

The most important seabird species is the gannet. The colony has expanded from the wide cliff ledges to spread inland from the lip of the cliff. Common murres and razorbills are also numerous on the cliff face as are black-legged kittiwakes, whose populations are rapidly expanding in eastern Canada. Kittiwakes may quite possibly nest on the Island within a few years.

The ledges these birds use for nesting are composed of a red conglomerate rock which resembles the sandstone of Prince Edward Island. The rock is rich in cobbles due to its proximity to the St. Lawrence River. By the time the current of the ancient river reached what is now P.E.I. and the Magdalens, the cobble load had all been dropped, and the sandstone bedrock of these two areas is consequently pure.

Bonaventure is close enough to the mainland that a solid ice bridge forms most winters, and the island is home to hares, foxes, and several kinds of small mammals. But the fact that there are not more species inhabiting Bonaventure Island illustrates a rule of island biogeography; namely, that the chances of extinction increase with the smallness of the island. It is highly unlikely that such mammals as squirrels, porcupines, deer and moose, which are present on the nearby mainland, never colonized Bonaventure. But since the small island (only 3 km across), could only support a limited number of a species, some natural disaster like a very severe winter or the failure of the cone crop could easily wipe out the whole population. The species would then be absent from the island until a chance migration reestablished it again.

Bonaventure Island is now a provincial park, and visitors may examine its wonders in the company of a provincial or federal naturalist.

The North Shore Islands

The North Shore of the Gulf of St. Lawrence is a remote and barren place, sparsely inhabited and visited by few outsiders. Although the 700 kilometers of coastline from Sept Isles to the Strait of Belle Isle lie roughly at the same latitude, there is a very marked gradient of ecotype from boreal spruce-fir forest in the west to sub-arctic tundra in the east. This gradient is due to the chilling influence of Arctic water and ice which split off from the Labrador current to enter the Gulf through the Strait of Belle Isle.

The North Shore of the Gulf is fronted by an astonishing number of islands; in fact there are far more islands on the coast than people. These islands were formed by flooding of coastal areas due to depression of the land by the weight of the glaciers, or by the rise of sea level, or both. In any case the hard granite hills which now emerge as coastal islands still show evidence of the glacier's retreat; with their whaleback shape and their frequently naked bedrock with glacial striations (scratches). In the eastern part of the region where the islands are thickest, the vegetative cover (where it exists) is a carpet of crowberry and other heath plants. Stunted conifers only survive in sheltered hollows and gulches.