

The gannets share Bird Rock with large numbers of common and thick-billed murres and black-legged kittiwakes, and on numerous small stacks and islets around the Magdalens, gulls and cormorants nest in large numbers. The Magdalens are also important to shorebirds, which pause in their migration to gorge on mud-dwelling invertebrates at the edges of the lagoons.

In recent years the Magdalens have become much more accessible to outside visitors, and as tourist traffic increases fragile habitat is put into jeopardy. The extensive dune system, which shelters a significant population of piping plovers, is the most vulnerable. The projected development of salt mining on the islands may have an even greater impact, since the construction of port facilities seems likely to destroy an important lobster spawning area.

Hopefully the sad tale of the walrus and the gannet will be remembered as the future course of the Magdalens is charted, and that the islands will always hold a place for nature as well as man.

### Anticosti

Anticosti is an island of contradictions. It is the largest island in the Gulf of St. Lawrence (half as big again as P.E.I.) but its total population is only 300 souls. Its mammalian fauna is now the most abundant in the Gulf, but its mammals were once limited to a single herbivore and four rare carnivores. Anticosti supports vast woodlands, but forest regeneration is so slow that fields abandoned at the turn of the century have yet to show a single seedling.

The unique character of Anticosti Island is primarily due to geography. The low conifer-blanketed hills of the island are underlain by ancient limestone bedrock, which is dissected in many places by deep river canyons. The same strong currents from the St. Lawrence River which once nourished the shellfish whose remains now compose Anticosti, now pose formidable obstacles to colonization of the island by land mammals. Thus deer mice, otter, bear, fox and marten were Anticosti's only native mammals, and the latter two must have been extremely rare because their sole prey was the deer mouse.

Human settlers, too, were slow to colonize the island because of the lack of fishing harbours. When the French chocolate manufacturer Henri Menier acquired the island around the turn of the century it was nearly uninhabited. Menier set about to turn his island into a hunter's paradise by introducing game species, and as usually happens after such broadside introductions, the basic biological character of the island was permanently altered.

The introductions included hare, beaver, muskrat, fisher, mink, wapiti, white-tailed deer, moose, reindeer and bison. Of these, the hare and the deer were immediate successes, and within a few years had expanded to populate the entire island. At the present time white-tailed deer are so abundant on Anticosti that they outnumber the total deer population of the remainder of Quebec. The high deer populations are extraordinary for an area as far north as Anticosti, and the success of the species seems to be related to the island's maritime climate with its winter thaws and ice-storms which enables the animals to circulate and feed during the critical winter period. The effects of the deer on Anticosti's vegetation have been drastic. Deciduous shrubs have been virtually eliminated from the island, and the forests now seem to be shifting towards even greater dominance by spruce, because of intense browsing pressure on balsam fir and poplar. These vegetational changes have significant effects on other animal species. For example, biologists speculate the present rarity of the black bear is due to the elimination by deer of fruit and berry-bearing plants upon which bears depend to build their winter fat reserves.

Anticosti is also the home of many kinds of birds although the decrease in vegetational diversity has probably reduced the variety of species. Bald eagles are a common sight around the island's shores, as are shorebirds during their migration. Near the eastern tip of Anticosti is located the largest colony of black-legged kittiwakes in North America.

The breeding cliff is also inhabited by a small number of gannets.