



CAUTION LOONS NESTING

Please help protect nesting loons and allow incubation of their eggs. Keep boats and other watercraft well away from the nesting platform. Avoid creating wake.



Human Recreational Pressure

Because loons cannot walk upright, they are vulnerable while on land. This means that while nesting, they often flush from the nest into the water if they perceive a nearby threat. Close approach by humans can trigger this response in incubating loons, leaving eggs unattended and vulnerable to predation, overheating, or chilling.

PLEASE KEEP WATERCRAFT WELL CLEAR OF SWIMMING LOONS, ESPECIALLY YOUNG CHICKS THAT CAN'T DIVE OR FLY

LOON NESTING PLATFORM

NORTHEAST END OF SOUTH LAKE



Due to the awareness of the loss of nesting habitat for loons due to lakeshore development and increased physical interference from human activity, including the use of watercraft and fishing activities, some concerned South Lake cottagers built and installed a floating platform for loons to nest a few years ago. This platform has been used by the loons in past years and again in 2024, the loons have successfully laid eggs and are nesting on the platform.





Conservation

All loons are protected by federal law and may not be hunted. Although loons still nest in large numbers across Canada, recent studies have shown cause for concern about low breeding success, especially of the Common Loon. Because this loon nests in populated areas of Canada and the United States, it is susceptible to the effects of pollution, development, and disturbance. Historic data show that loons have abandoned some of their former nesting areas in the southern parts of Canada and the northern areas of the central United States. Loss of breeding habitat and disturbance are probably the main causes of this reduction in the original breeding range. Loss of habitat results from lakeshore development and spills of oil and other pollutants. Physical interference with nests or young and increased boat wake on lakes, which may swamp or destroy nests, also cause loons to abandon some nesting sites.

To protect the loons on lakes we visit, boats should be kept well away from swimming birds, particularly when they are with chicks that are too young to dive or fly. Some shoreline areas should be left undisturbed to accommodate loon nests, and boaters passing these areas should travel at speeds that do not cause wash. Seaplanes should come and go as far from nesting areas as possible, taxiing to other parts of the lake. Anglers have the responsibility of using non-lead sinkers and of ensuring that no hooks or lines are left unattended or abandoned.

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Fishing Line Entanglement

Fishing line entanglement is another threat to loons that results from human recreational activities. Loons may become entangled if they catch a fish that has broken an angler's line or if they encounter loose fishing line in the water or along the shoreline. If the line is wrapped around a foot, wing, or other body part that is not the bill, loons are sometimes able to shake it off without help; however, if line becomes wrapped around a loon's bill, it makes it difficult for the loon to eat or preen. This can lead to rapid deterioration in the loon's physical state.

The loon facts:

Perhaps one of the most fascinating things about Common Loons is their haunting and variable voice. Loons are most vocal from mid-May to mid-June.

The loon chick can swim right away, but spends some time on the back of a parent to rest, conserve heat, and avoid predators

The loon has many bones that are solid, rather than hollow like those of other birds, which aid its diving ability

The adult loon can stay under water for almost a minute and dive to depths of 80 m

The loon may have to run as far as several hundred metres on the surface of the water on a calm day before it can take flight.

Loons are predators; their diet in summer consists of fish, crayfish, frogs, snails, salamanders, and leeches. Adult loons prefer fish to other food, and seem to favour perch, suckers, catfish, sunfish, smelt, and minnows.

Loons arrive in pairs on northern lakes in the spring as soon as the ice thaws. They are solitary nesters. Small lakes, generally those between 5 and 50 ha, can accommodate one pair of loons. Mating usually occurs in May

Usually two eggs are laid in early June, and towards the end of the month loon chicks covered in brown-black down appear on the water. Loon chicks can swim right away, but spend some time on their parents' backs to rest, conserve heat, and avoid predators such as large carnivorous fish, snapping turtles, gulls, eagles, and crows. After their first day or two in the water, the chicks do not return to the nest.

Loons build their nests close to the water, with the best sites being completely surrounded by water, such as on an island, muskrat house, half-submerged log, or sedge mat—a clump of grass-like water plants. Generally the birds can slip directly from the nest to water. The same sites are often used from year to year.

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Provincial bird of Ontario



The common loon is the **provincial bird of Ontario**, and it appears on Canadian currency, including the one-dollar "loonie" coin and a previous series of \$20 bills.

Sources: Canadian Wildlife Federation and Environment And Climate Change Canada : partners published 2024

<https://www.ca/en/wildlife/birds/loon.html> 2024

National Audubon Society Field Guide To North American Birds 1994