

What to Look For

Be aware of loons – be aware that if you see a loon from mid-June to September, chances are that one or two chicks will be close by.

Keep your distance!

Listen for loons – if you approach a loon and hear it start to call, this means you are too close. **Move away!**

Watch what loons do – if you see a loon “dancing” straight up out of the water and slapping with its wings, it is alarmed by your presence. **Move away!**



Report Harassment

Harassment of wildlife is against the law. If you see loons being harassed, report it to your local DNR office. Videotaping the event and/or recording the vessel's registration number is helpful



Interested in loon conservation and citizen science?

Contact the Loon Watcher Survey coordinator to get involved LoonWatcherSurvey.dnr@state.mn.us

What Everyone Can Do

- View loons from a distance
- Enjoy their lovely haunting calls; and
- Give loons their space - they need solitude to breed and raise their young. Approaching too closely can cause adult loons to leave their nests causing chilling of the eggs and nest failure.

Boaters and Loons

A Minnesota treasure is the common loon with its beautiful plumage and haunting calls. Loons make many of Minnesota's lakes their summer home and nesting area.

Loon chicks hatch as early as mid-June, which coincides with the start of the busy boating season.

Loon awareness and responsible watercraft use will help reduce the conflicts that can occur between boaters and loons.

Personal watercraft and motorboat operators can help significantly by staying away from the shore and keeping a sharp eye out for loons and other wildlife. While on the water give loons a wide distance to feed and care for their young. Loons can adapt to a variety of conditions. However, often during the breeding season, a threshold can be crossed that will cause a nest to fail or result in the death of chicks or adult loons.



BE LOON AWARE!



During the summer months when people are enjoying their favorite lakes, they should remember that they share the water with a variety of wildlife. Time spent learning their behaviors and habits from a respectable distance will benefit both humans and wildlife.

Common Loon

The Minnesota State Bird

Common loons are large diving birds that spend their summers on open fresh water lakes and their winters on the seacoast (i.e., Gulf of Mexico or Atlantic Ocean). During the summer they sport distinctive black and white breeding plumage. They are about 3 feet long, weigh about 10 pounds, and have a wingspan of 4 to 5 feet.

Watercraft and Loons

There are many ways that watercraft can have a negative effect on loons:

- Wave action from boats may flood shoreline nests.
- Fishing boat, canoes, and kayaks may approach loon nests and startle loons off the nest.
- Personal watercraft and boats pulling wakeboarders, skiers, or tubers may run over chicks.

Get the Lead Out

Loons ingest small pebbles (grit) in order to help digest their food. Unfortunately, loons are poisoned if this material contains lead, which can be in the form of small sinkers, jigs, or shotgun shot. Loons also ingest lead by eating fish with lead tackle attached.

Lead-free alternatives such as tungsten, tin, steel, and bismuth are readily available. So – **get the lead out!**



Nesting Loons



Loons start nesting as early as the beginning of May each year. They generally lay 2 eggs, which will hatch 27- 29 days later (mid- to late-June). Since loons only have one or two chicks per year, every chick counts. Loon chicks are extremely vulnerable until they are strong enough to fledge and fly south (late October through November).

Disturbance by humans or other wildlife can interrupt incubation and cause nest abandonment and failure.

Boat traffic can cause loss of eggs

Loon parents often **leave the nest** if a watercraft comes within 500 feet of the nest. This leaves the eggs without warmth or protection from predators, water and cold temperatures.

Loon parents may abandon the nest if disturbed too often. If they try to re-nest later in the season, the likelihood of chicks hatching and surviving is often lower.

Loon chicks

Boats can easily kill chicks

Young chicks are vulnerable! They need to be able to climb on their parents' back to stay warm and dry. When a watercraft comes too close, loon parents may leave their chicks to defend their territory.

Young chicks can't dive! Young chicks are very buoyant and can't dive very quickly or very deep. This makes them particularly vulnerable to being run over by watercraft, especially from June to September.

Chicks tire easily! The presence of watercraft causes chicks to keep swimming instead of feeding and resting. This can weaken them, affecting their ability to survive.

Chicks frequent open water! Loon parents frequently move their chicks away from the nesting environment, out into deeper water along more open shorelines, to avoid their natural predators. Unfortunately, this often puts them into direct conflict with watercraft – particularly personal watercraft and boats pulling wakeboarders, water skiers and tubers.

