

LoonNews

Notes on the 2005 Maine Audubon Loon Count

By Susan Gallo

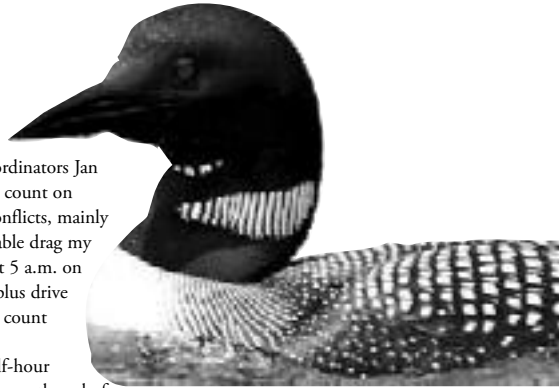
For several years, Lincoln County's loon count coordinators Jan and John Faulstich have invited me to help them count on Pemaquid Pond in Nobleboro. I've always had conflicts, mainly with those pesky visitors from away, but this year I was able drag my husband out of bed at 5 a.m. on July 16 for the hour-plus drive to Pemaquid Pond to count with Jan and John.

2005 count at a glance
A total of 851 people participated in the 2005 loon count, tallying 1,569 adults and 426 chicks on 317 lakes across the state. Taking a random sample of lakes from seven different size classes, the estimated loon population for the southern half of the state (south of the 45th parallel) is 2,986 adults and 300 chicks.

We had a great half-hour canoe trek around the north end of the pond, during which we were lucky enough to see a pair of loons with a chick. The Faulstiches proved to be the ultimate coordinators, hosting a lovely gathering at their camp after the count for about 20 counters from their region. It was a real pleasure to visit with folks and hear their stories of how the morning had gone.

From all accounts, the weather couldn't have been better, not just on Pemaquid Pond but statewide. There were, of course, a few exceptions—a counter on Kezar Lake had to use a compass to find her way home in thick fog! —but overall, from York to Eagle Lake just south of

Fort Kent, the sun shone and the wind was still. Many veteran counters reported that conditions were by far the best for counting loons they had ever seen.



Maine Loon Count Index

- 74,890** Acres in the largest lake in the 2005 count (Moosehead Lake)
- 2,986** Adult loons estimated in the southern half of Maine in 2005
- 1,416** Adult loons estimated in the southern half of Maine in 1983
- 851** Counters in the 2005 count
- 317** Lakes counted in the 2005 count
- 38** Coordinators of the 2005 count
- 28** Acres in the smallest lake with chicks in the 2005 count (Bartlett Pond in Livermore)
- 1** Voices that it takes to speak up for protecting Maine's loons

The estimated adult population of 2,986 for the southern half of Maine is the highest since the count started in 1983 and confirms our hope that the loon population is not shrinking and may even, in fact, be growing. The estimate gives Maine Audubon good reason to continue outreach efforts to educate folks in Maine about this important and valuable wildlife resource right outside our camp doors.

The chick population of 300 is surprisingly high as well, given the wet spring conditions that flooded many first nesting attempts and pushed back hatching dates. The count is timed to happen shortly after the chicks usually hatch, so more counters than usual reported adults still sitting on eggs. Worries that the chick population would be affected by the damp spring appear to be unfounded, and that is good news.

Thanks to all the Maine Audubon members and friends who helped pull off another successful loon count. I am already looking forward to finding another lake to explore on July 15, 2006.

—Susan Gallo is a wildlife biologist and director of Maine Audubon's Maine Loon Project.

2005 Loon Count Results

Region 1: York County

	Adults	Chicks
Balch Pond	1	0
Bunganut Pond	4	1
Great East Lake	6	2
Kennebunk Pond	2	1
Mousam Lake	1	1
Ossipee Lake (Little)	4	0
Poverty Pond (Little)	2	0
Square Pond	8	1
West Pond	2	2
Wilson Lake	3	0

Region 2: Cumberland County

	Adults	Chicks
Brandy Pond	2	0
Coffee Pond	3	1
Crescent Lake+	5	0
Forest Lake	4	1
Highland Lake	1	0
Long Lake	19	4
Notched Pond	1	0
Panther Pond	10	0
Parker Pond	2	1
Raymond Pond	4	0
Sebago Lake+	4	0
Sebago Lake (Little)	19	4
Thomas Pond	2	0
Trickey Pond	2	1
Watchic Pond	4	3

Region 3: Oxford County

	Adults	Chicks
Back & Middle Ponds (5 Kezars)	2	2
Barker Pond	1	0
Bickford Pond	0	0
Bryant (Christopher) Pond	2	0
Clemons Pond	3	0
Cushman Pond	2	0
Granger Pond	2	1
Highland Lake	16	0
Keewaydin Lake+	2	0
Keoka Lake	4	0
Keyes Pond	4	0
Kezar Lake	13	3
Kimball Pond (Lower)+	7	2
Lovewell Pond+	2	0

McWain (Long) Pond	3	0
Moose Pond	8	0
North Pond	2	1
Papoose Pond	1	0
Peabody Pond+	6	0
Pennessewassee Lake	13	0
Sand (Walden) Pond+	6	0
Songo Pond	3	0
South Pond	4	0
Stearns Pond+	2	0

Region 4: Androscoggin County

	Adults	Chicks
Allen Pond	4	0
Auburn Lake+	18	2
Bartlett Pond	2	2
Bear Pond	2	0
Middle Range Pond	0	0
No Name Pond	4	0
Pleasant Lake	5	0
Pleasant Pond	2	1
Long Lake	0	0
Range Pond (Upper)	1	0
Taylor Pond	1	0
Thompson Lake+	14	3
Tripp Lake+	3	0

Region 5: Southern Kennebec County

	Adults	Chicks
Androscoggin Lake	24	0
Annabessacook Lake	18	0
Buker Pond	2	1
Cobbosseecontee Lake	51	8
Cochnewagon Lake	3	0
Echo Lake	16	2
Jimmy Pond	0	0
Little Cobbosseecontee Lake	0	0
Long Pond+	5	0
Maranacook Lake	36	1
Narrows Pond (Lower)	6	0
Narrows Pond (Upper)	2	2
Nehumkeag Pond	2	0
Pickeral Pond	1	0
Pocasset Lake	9	0
Purgatory Pond (Little)	1	0
Sand Pond	3	2
Torsey (Greely) Pond	7	3
Wilson Pond	10	0
Woodbury Pond	14	2

Region 6: Lincoln County

	Adults	Chicks
Biscay Pond	6	0
Boyd Pond	0	0
Clary Lake	4	0
Damariscotta Lake+	52	0
Duckpuddle Pond	0	0
Dyer Long Pond	2	1
Havener Pond	0	0
Kaler's Pond	2	1
McCurdy Pond+	1	0
Medomak Pond	3	0
Medomak Pond (Little)	1	0
Paradise Pond	4	0
Pemaquid Pond	17	2
Sherman Lake	0	0
Three Corner Pond	3	0
Travel Pond	0	0
Webber Pond	5	0

Region 7: Knox County

	Adults	Chicks
Alford Lake+	12	0
Chickawauke Pond	3	0
Crawford Pond	15	0
Crystal Pond	2	0
Fish Pond	4	0
Grassy Pond	4	0
Hobbs Pond	7	0
Hosmer Pond	2	0
Megunticook Lake+	12	0
Megunticook River	0	0
Mirror Lake	3	0
Round Pond	3	1
Sennebec Pond+	0	0
Seven Tree Pond	4	0
South Pond	3	0
Tolman's Pond	1	0
Washington Pond	5	0

Region 8: Northern Kennebec/Southern Somerset Counties

	Adults	Chicks
China Lake	38	5
Dam Pond	2	0
David Pond	0	0
East Pond+	8	0

Great Pond	47	4
Hales Pond	4	0
Ingham Pond	1	0
Kimball Pond	2	1
Long Pond	38	2
McGrath Pond	4	2
Messalonskee Lake	24	7
Moose Pond/		
Great Moose Lake	41	2
Morrill Pond	2	0
North & Little Ponds+	4	0
Parker Pond	27	6
Pattee Pond	3	1
Salmon Lake (Ellis Pond)	2	1
Sibley Pond	3	0
Three Mile Pond	4	1
Threecornered Pond	2	1
Togus Pond	11	0
Webber Pond	4	0
Wesserunnett (Hayden) Lake	10	2

Region 9: Waldo County

	Adults	Chicks
Branch Pond	3	0
Cargill Pond+	2	0
Chisholm Pond	0	0
Coleman Pond	5	0
Dutton Pond	0	0
Kingdom Bog	2	0
Lawry Pond	2	0
Mixer Pond	2	2
Mud Pond	0	0
Quntabacook Lake	4	0
Sandy Pond	2	1
Sheepscot Pond	4	0
Smiths Mill Pond	0	0
St. George Lake	17	5
Stevens Pond	2	1
Swan Lake+	3	2
Tilden Pond	5	0
Trues Pond	0	0
Unity Pond	17	2

Region 10: Hancock County

	Adults	Chicks
Abrams Pond	5	1
Alamosook Lake	10	2
Bay Pond (Upper West)	0	0
Beech Hill Pond	5	1

U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE/ILLUSTRATION BY ROBERT W. HINES



Stay tuned for these two new endeavors of the Maine Loon Project

Common Loons in the Classroom

BioDiversity Research Institute's video footage of a Maine loon nest through three breeding seasons will be made into a teaching DVD and CD to enhance the Maine Loon Project's K-8 loon curriculum. The digital component will facilitate classroom outreach around the state, especially in rural schools.

Loon Territory Monitoring

Loon counters will monitor a lake or a portion of a lake throughout the spring and summer, documenting if the loons are breeding, how their nests fare, and if their chicks survive to fledging (flying). Data will help assess how well loons are reproducing in Maine.

To participate in or for more information on either project, contact Susan Gallo at (207) 781-2330, ext. 216, or sgallo@maineaudubon.org.

Loon FAQs

Which states have the most common loons?

The three states in the continental U.S. with the most loons are Minnesota (more than 10,000 adults), Maine (approximately 4,100 adults), and Wisconsin (more than 3,000 adults).

How long do loons stay in their summer (breeding) range?

Loons return to northern forested lakes and rivers in the springtime, usually right at ice out (March or April), and stay well into the fall, some as late as November or even December if lakes remain open.

How far can loons fly in one day?

In one documented case, a loon traveled 572 miles over a three-day period. In another case, a loon traveled 388 and 419 miles on two consecutive days.

What is the farthest a loon has flown in one migration?

The distance between breeding and wintering grounds of loons monitored in Minnesota and Wisconsin range from 1,171 to 1,318 miles.

Do loons return to nest on the same lake where they hatched?

Biologists suspect that loons return to the same general area where they hatched and try to work their way into a nearby territory. Loons do not reach breeding maturity until about their seventh summer.



U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE PHOTO

What is the difference in appearance between a male and female loon?

Male and female loons are almost identical in appearance, though males are generally larger than females.

Why and for how long does a loon chick ride on its mother's back?

Biologists suspect that loon chicks ride on their parents' backs to keep warm and safe. During the week after hatching a chick may spend more than half its time on a parent's back. After a week there is a sharp decline in the amount of time spent there.

How long do loons live?

Loons are long-lived birds. The oldest known common loon lived 18 years, but lifespan may be as long as 25-30 years.

What do loons eat?

Common loons feed primarily on fish. Sometimes they eat other aquatic vertebrates and some invertebrates (including crayfish and aquatic insects), but usually only if fish are not available.

Source: U.S. Geological Survey/Upper Midwest Environmental Sciences Center,

Branch Lake+	9	0
Craig Pond	3	0
Debec Pond	1	0
Donnell Pond+	8	2
Eagle Lake	4	0
Echo Lake	5	0
First (Billings) Pond+	0	0
Flanders Pond	4	0
Georges Pond	4	0
Goose Pond+	4	1
Great Pond	2	0
Green Lake	23	1
Hadlock Pond (Lower)	0	0
Hadlock Pond (Upper)	2	1
Harriman Pond	2	0
Heart Pond	1	0
Hodgdon Pond	0	0
Hopkins Pond	4	0
Jordan Pond	2	0
Little Rocky Pond	1	0
Long Pond/Aurora	9	2
Long Pond/Bucksport	2	0
Long Pond/Mount Desert	5	0
Molasses Pond	4	0
Moulton Pond	2	2
Nicatous Lake+	3	0
Patten Pond (Lower)	9	0
Patten Pond (Upper)	4	2
Phillips Lake	10	1
Pierce Pond+	2	0
Rift Pond	2	0
Seal Cove Pond	2	2
Second Pond	0	0
Silver Lake	10	1
Somes Pond	3	1
Toddy Pond	16	2
Tunk Lake	6	0
West Lake	6	0

Region 11: Rangeley Area		
	Adults	Chicks
Beaver Mt. Lake	7	0
Dodge Pond	7	0
Gull Pond	0	0
Haley Pond	2	0

Kennebago Lake (Big)	14	2
Loon Lake	1	0
Mooselookmeguntic Lake+	36	1
Quimby Pond	2	0
Rangeley Lake+	24	4
Round Pond	4	0
Sandy River Pond (Middle)	2	2

Region 12: Farmington Area		
	Adults	Chicks
Anasagunticook Lake	3	0
Clearwater Lake	6	0
Ellis (Roxbury) Pond	2	1
Embden Pond+	2	0
Fahi Pond	4	3
Gammon Pond	1	0
Horseshoe Pond	0	0
Locke Pond	6	0
Norcross Pond	3	0
North Pond	2	0
Pease Pond	2	0
Porter Lake	4	1
Sand Pond	3	0
Sandy Pond	4	4
Varnum Pond	5	0
Webb Lake	9	0
Wilson Pond	6	0
Worthley Pond	2	0

Region 13: Washington County		
	Adults	Chicks
Barrows Lake	4	1
Beddington Lake	2	0
Bog Lake	8	1
Boyden Lake	3	0
Cathance Lake	12	2
Crawford Lake+	2	0
Fulton Lake	3	0
Gardner Lake	2	0
Indian Lake	2	1
Keenes Lake	2	1
Lambert Lake	2	0
Meddybemps Lake+	12	3
Mud Lake (Upper)	2	0
Nash's Lake	8	0
Pennamaquan Lake	4	1

Pleasant River Lake+	2	1
Pocomoonshine Lake+	10	0
Round Lake	3	0
Schoodic Lake	3	0

Region 14: Southern Penobscot County		
	Adults	Chicks
Bran's Mill Pond	2	1
Brewer Lake	17	2
Chemo Pond	12	0
Cold Stream Pond	18	2
Cold Stream Pond (Upper)+	3	0
Eddington (Davis) Pond	6	1
Etna Pond	3	0
Fields Pond	0	0
Garland Pond	2	1
Indian Pond (Big)	18	2
Indian Pond (Little)	1	0
Parks Pond	0	0
Pleasant Lake	8	0
Plymouth Pond	6	0
Puffers Pond/Echo Lake	2	0
Pushaw Lake+	17	4
Pushaw Pond (Little)	5	2
Ripley Pond	0	0
Round (Grey) Pond	2	0
Saponac Pond+	2	0
Sebasticook Lake	43	2
Wassookeag Lake	19	1

Region 15: Northern Maine		
	Adults	Chicks
Ambages Lake+	3	2
Bottle Lake+	3	0
Branch Lake (South)	27	1
Caribou Pond+	1	0
Center Pond	5	0
Cochrane Lake	2	0
Depot Lake+	1	0
Eagle Lake	19	0
Egg Pond	5	0
Elbow Lake	7	4
Endless Lake+	4	0
Faulkner Lake	2	0
Long Lake	22	2

Long Pond/Lincoln	8	0
Long Pond/T07 R09	7	0
Madawaska Lake	9	0
Mattaseunk Pond	5	0
Mattawamkeag Lake	19	1
Mooshead Lake+	58	2
Mud Lake	2	0
Nickerson Lake	2	0
Onawa Lake	18	1
Parlin Pond	4	1
Pleasant Lake	5	0
Plunkett Pond	2	1
Portage Lake	13	0
Prong Pond	4	0
Seboeis Lake	21	0
Timoney Lake	2	0
Wilson Pond (Lower)+	6	0
Wilson Pond (Upper)+	16	2

Region 16: Baxter State Park		
	Adults	Chicks
Abol Pond	2	0
Branch Pond (Lower So.)	1	0
Branch Pond (Upper So.)	0	0
Celia Pond	0	0
Daicey Pond	2	0
Draper Pond	0	0
Hay Lake	3	0
Jackson Pond	2	0
Kidney Pond	2	0
Lily Pad Pond	0	0
Lost Pond	1	0
Matagamog Lake+	20	0
Rocky Pond	0	0
Togue Pond (Lower)	2	0
Tongue Pond (Upper)+	5	0
Wassataquoik Lake+	2	0
Webster Lake+	3	0

+ = incomplete coverage (lakes were not completely covered by counters in the allotted time)

What kills Maine's loons?

In July of 1987, a dead adult loon found on the shore of Belgrade Lake was the first *Gavia immer* from Maine ever sent to the Cummings School of Veterinary Medicine at Tufts University.

The university conducted a necropsy, the animal equivalent of a human autopsy, and discovered the loon had died from lead poisoning, likely from ingesting a lead sinker. In the 18 years since, volunteers around the state, working with Maine Audubon and the Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife, have sent 285 more loon carcasses to Tufts, with surprising results.

What kills loons is often unknown because the bird's body may be badly decomposed or missing parts, as is the case with about 30 percent of Maine loons. However, among the known causes of death of Maine loons, lead poisoning is the leader, confirmed for 20 percent of the birds and probable for another four percent. Deaths from trauma—collision with large objects, likely motor boats—accounts for 19 percent of loon mortality. Another eight percent die from aspergillosis, a fungal infection of the air sac that is always present in the bird in low levels but grows out of control, and can kill the bird, under stressful conditions. Other causes of death of Maine loons include other infections, parasites, drowning, entanglement, and starvation.

Information provided by the necropsies helps Maine Audubon advocate for loon conservation. In large part because data showed that small lead sinkers were a leading cause of loon mortality, Maine Audubon garnered support from Maine legislators to ban lead fishing sinkers a half ounce or less. The data that shows that motor boats kill loons has helped Maine Audubon justify outreach efforts to increase boater awareness about the life cycle of loons and the need to watch for nesting and young loons.

Tufts will continue its study of loon mortality in the coming year, even though funding for the project is negligible. Necropsy results for all the birds sent to Tufts through the end of 2004 are now available; if you have helped send a loon carcass to the university and would like to know the cause of death, contact Susan Gallo, Maine Audubon wildlife biologist, at (207) 781-2330, ext. 216, or sgallo@maineaudubon.org.



Satellites Help Track Loon Migration

Common loons often travel several hundred miles to reach coastal waters during fall migration, but researchers know little about where individual loons go, what routes they take, or what they do when they reach their wintering grounds.

In order to collect such information, which can help form regional and national conservation strategies such as how and where to compensate when an off-shore oil spill kills wintering loons, the Upper Midwest Environmental Sciences Center of the U.S. Geological Survey collaborates with regional partners to study the movements of common loons through satellite telemetry.

Satellite telemetry allows biologists to track loon movements through distant migrations and during winter. A loon is captured and fitted with a transmitter that periodically sends a signal detected by a satellite-based receiver. The data is downloaded to a receiving station where it is then interpreted by wildlife biologists and other specialists.

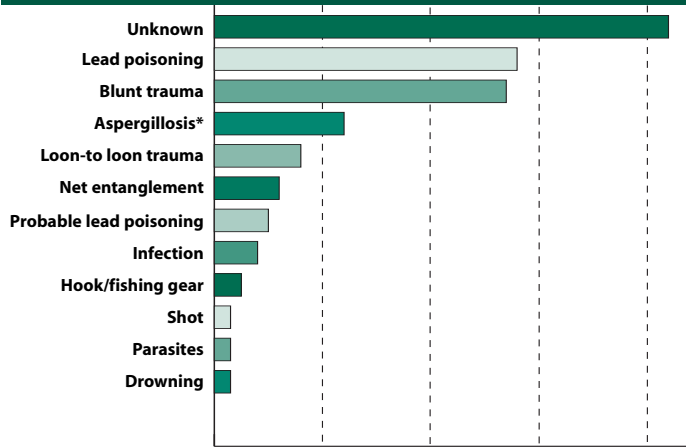
For an interactive video of common loon activity and migration in the Adirondacks of New York, visit <http://www.umesc.usgs.gov>.

Source: U.S. Geological Survey/Upper Midwest Environmental Sciences Center



Poisoning from a lead sinker (circled) killed this loon from Long Pond on Mount Desert Island. Lead poisoning is the leading known cause of death of Maine's loons.

Maine Common Loon Mortality 1987-2005



Other causes of death: Predation (1), Oil (1), Road Crash (1), Probable infection (1), Egg bound (2), Starvation (2) *Fungal infection of the air sac

Holiday Gifts for Wildlife Lovers

from the Maine Audubon Nature Store



Maine Audubon fleece hat (\$19.95) Sarrah looks so happy because her hat is keeping her warm and cozy. You can be, too! In blue or green.



Burt's Shea Butter Hand Repair Crème (\$11) The ultimate remedy for rough, cracked hands. Other Burt's Bees products also available.



Professor Noggin's Card Games (\$9.95) Educational trivia games that encourage learning and fun for different ages. Choose from Freshwater Life, Birds, or Wildlife.

Gilsland Farm 12 oz. Honey Bear (\$4.25) Made by the bees that live in Gilsland Farm Audubon Center's apple orchard.



Percussion Frogs (\$7.95) Stroke their back with the included wand and make sounds just like a frog. A hand-made wooden instrument.



Audubon Woodpecker (\$6.95) This plush bird calls just like a live woodpecker. More than two dozen other local birds in stock.

MAINE AUDUBON
Nature Store

Gilsland Farm Audubon Center
20 Gilsland Farm Road
Falmouth, ME 04105

Fields Pond Audubon Center
216 Fields Pond Road
Holden, ME 04429