

Loon News

Notes on the 2006 Maine Audubon Loon Count

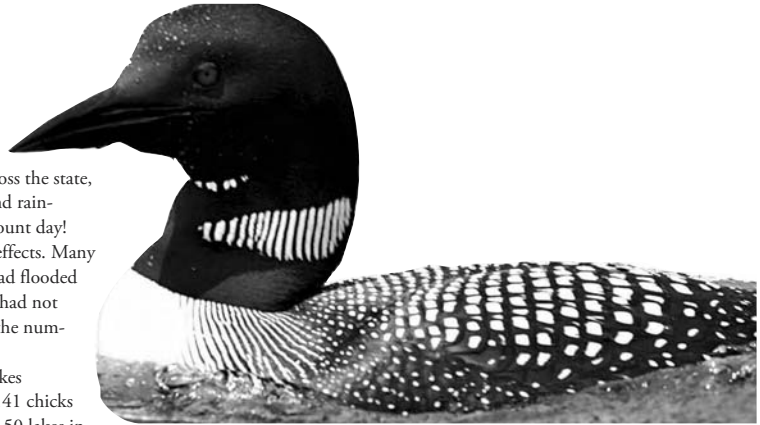
The 23rd annual Maine Audubon Loon Count fell on July 15 this year, and it was truly a perfect day for counting loons. In all the reports I received from more than 800 loon counters across the state, I couldn't find even a hint of fog, rain, chill, or wind. After the soggy and rain-soaked month of June, we were certainly due for an outstanding loon count day!

Unfortunately for the loons, all that rain in June had some negative effects. Many loon counters reported that exceptionally high water in early summer had flooded traditional nest sites, and it's clear from the count results that the loons had not nested on their usual schedule or in the numbers we hoped for.

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In all, our 825 counters on 319 lakes counted a total of 1,922 adults and 141 chicks across the state, including more than 50 lakes in northern Maine. Based on a sample of 75 lakes in the southern half of the state, where we have more thorough coverage of lakes by counters, our estimate for the loon population for all of southern Maine (roughly south of 45 degrees latitude) is 2,595 adults and 141 chicks.

A quick glance at the graph comparing population from year to year shows this is a drop of about 14 percent from the all-time high of just over 3,000 adults last year. Even more disturbing—but perhaps expected as we watched all that rain come down in June—is the low number of 141 chicks. This is the second lowest chick estimate on record. The record low was in 1998 after another rainy spring left us with an estimate of only 120 chicks in southern Maine.



So what does this mean? The good news is that the rain might have simply delayed nesting for Maine's loons. It's likely that the loon count, which is timed to catch chicks just off the nest in a typical season, happened this year when many birds were still incubating eggs. So more chicks may have hatched and survived after the count, and our estimate may be truly low.

But the bad news is that it seems like chicks that hatch later in the year, when summer is really in full swing, have to deal with a much higher level of boat traffic, more anglers on the water, and more people in general out using lakes and ponds. And given the dismal start to the summer, it's possible that recreational activities were more intense later on to make up for all that "lost" time.

Such questions can't be answered with the results of the loon count, but hopefully we will learn more in the coming years from our new loon productivity study (see page 12).

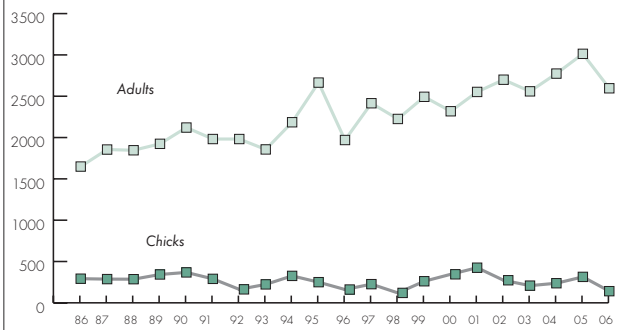
There were, as always, lots of other interesting reports about loons. Counter Nancy Hanger called to say a loon on McWain Pond in Waterford had laid an egg on her neighbor's partially submerged dock in June. Obviously this was a loon in desperate straits! In consultation with Audubon and a local rehabilitator, the egg was successfully moved to a floating platform and hatched in July.

Lots of counters also reported "large chicks" during the count. These were likely juveniles that hatched last year—even chicks hatched at the earliest possible opportunity (mid June) won't be close to the size of an adult by the time of the loon count. Usually these juveniles will stay on the ocean for at least a year, but for some reason a higher-than-usual number returned this summer to hang out on fresh water and try to confuse loon counters.

But loon counters are hard to fool. They're a sharp, dedicated, passionate bunch—and Maine's loons are better off because of them.

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

Estimated Loon Population in the Southern Half of Maine, 1986-2006



2006 Loon Count Results

Region 1: York County

	Adults	Chicks
Balch Pond	6	0
Bunganut Pond	5	2
Great East Lake	8	2
Kennebunk Pond	2	2
Lake Arrowhead	0	0
Mousam Lake	4	0
Ossipee Lake (Little)	4	1
Poverty Pond (Little)	2	0
Square Pond	11	0
West Pond	2	2
Wilson Lake	3	0

Region 2: Cumberland County

	Adults	Chicks
Coffee Pond	2	1
Crescent Lake*	4	1
Forest Lake	1	0
Highland Lake	2	0
Long Lake	18	1
Notched Pond	0	0
Panther Pond	5	1
Parker Pond*	1	0
Raymond Pond	4	0
Sebago Lake*	8	2

Sabbathday Pond	2	0
Thomas Pond	5	0
Trickey Pond	2	1
Watchic Pond	8	3

Region 3: Oxford County

	Adults	Chicks
Back & Middle Ponds (5 Kezars)	2	2
Barker Pond	2	1
Bickford Pond*	2	0
Bryant (Christopher) Pond	5	2
Clemons Pond	1	0
Cupsuptic Pond	6	1
Cushman Pond	2	0
Granger Pond	1	0
Hancock Pond	8	1
Highland Lake	9	0
Hutchinson Pond	2	1
Keewaydin Lake*	2	1
Keoka Lake	1	0
Kimball Pond (Lower)	2	0
Little Penneessewassee Pond (Hobbs Pond)	2	0
Lovewell Pond	3	0
McWain (Long) Pond	3	0

Moose Pond	7	4
North Pond*	2	1
Papoose Pond	1	0
Peabody Pond	3	0
Penneessewassee Lake	10	2
Pleasant Pond	2	0
Sand (Walden) Pond	4	0
Songo Pond	2	0
South Pond	2	0
Stanley Pond	2	1
Stearns Pond	1	0

Region 4: Androscoggin County

	Adults	Chicks
Allen Pond	2	1
Auburn Lake	10	1
Bartlett Pond	2	0
Bear Pond*	2	0
Marshall Pond	2	0
Middle Range Pond	0	0
No Name Pond	3	0
Pleasant Lake	10	0
Pleasant Pond	5	1
Range Pond (Upper)	10	0
Saturday Pond	2	0
Taylor Pond	2	0

Tripp Lake	2	1
Thompson Lake	12	0

Region 5: Southern Kennebec County

	Adults	Chicks
Androscoggin Lake	31	0
Annabessacook Lake*	15	0
Buker Pond	0	0
Cobbosseecontee Lake	56	3
Cochnewagon Lake	3	0
Echo Lake	23	0
Horseshoe Pond	0	0
Jimmy Pond	0	0
Little Cobbosseecontee Lake	0	0
Long Pond	0	0
Maranacook Lake	23	0
Narrows Pond (Lower)	2	0
Narrows Pond (Upper)*	2	1
Nehumkeag Pond	2	0
Pickeral Pond	3	0
Pleasant (Mud) Pond*	4	1
Pocasset Lake	5	1
Purgatory Pond (Little)*	0	0
Sand Pond	7	1
Torsey (Greely) Pond	18	2

* = Incomplete coverage (lakes were not completely covered by counters in the allotted time)

New Study Seeks to Solve Loon Mysteries

Every year the loon count generates questions that we can't answer. One of the biggest questions that comes up is what happens to the chicks we see on count day. Do they survive? Do they make it to adulthood? If they disappear, what's the cause?

To begin to get a handle on how successfully loons raise their chicks, Maine Audubon invited several veteran loon counters to test-run a study protocol designed to assess loon productivity throughout the season.

This summer 22 loon counters were assigned a lake or a section of a lake and asked to observe and document what happened to the loons they saw there. Did the birds act like they had a territory, with two birds routinely swimming together in the same general area, perhaps defending it from intruders? Did they try to nest, with one of the pair disappearing for long periods of time? Did they hatch any chicks, and if so, how many? And finally, did those chicks survive to at least six weeks of age, a time when most loons are able

to fly and generally feed and fend for themselves?

The results are disappointing, but not surprising.

Of the 35 loon pairs followed on 19 lakes across the state, 21 (60 percent) were unsuccessful, meaning their eggs either didn't hatch or their chicks went missing. Of the successful pairs, nine successfully raised one

chick and only five (14 percent) successfully raised two chicks. A total of 19 chicks fledged, which means productivity was 0.54 chicks fledged/territorial pair.

These results are within the expected range for Maine's loons as determined by researchers at BioDiversity Research Institute in Gorham. They are, however, lower than in our neighboring states, which have loon productivity rates much closer to 1.0.

Maine Audubon hopes to expand the loon productivity study in coming years and is pursuing funding to hire more staff for this time-intensive project. We look forward to improving and expanding the protocol, and sharing it with any and all interested parties.

What happens to the chicks we see on count day? Do they survive?

Do they make it to adulthood?

If they disappear, what's the cause?

You can help

If you'd like to monitor loons for Maine Audubon's new productivity study, e-mail sgallo@maineaudubon.org with your name and the lake and town where you'd like to watch loons. Different from the annual one-day count, the study requires watching loons periodically from early to mid June through the end of August, with thorough surveys every other week.

Thank You!

Maine Audubon thanks the following volunteers for monitoring loons this summer for the new productivity study.



- Elwood Beach, Raleigh, N.C.
- Rebecca Black, Ellsworth, Me.
- Alison Bossie, Houlton, Me.
- Mary Ellen Bossom, Scarborough, Me.
- Leo Crowe, Westwood, Ma.
- Mary Ford, Leesburg, Fl.
- Diane Freelove, Lincoln, Me.
- BJ Frosch, Hartland, Me.
- Suzanne Hayes, Lexington, Ma.
- David Lamon, Mt. Desert, Me.
- Karen Leclerc, Sterling, Ma.
- BJ McLellan, Delray Beach, Fl.
- Susan Mills, Jonesport, Me.
- Ann Marie and John Nadeau, North Chelmsford, Ma.
- Doris Pankratz, Manhattan, Ks.
- Leslie Rosser, Litchfield, Me.
- Emily Swan, Brunswick, Me.
- The Rev. and Mrs. Oscar Swensen, Lyman, Me.
- Bonnie Urquhart, Readfield, Me.
- Debra West, Orrington, Me.
- Bob Wheeler, Bremen, Me.

Region 6: Lincoln County

	Adults	Chicks
Wilson Pond	11	0
Woodbury Pond	5	1
Biscay Pond	1	0
Boyd Pond	1	0
Clary Lake*	4	0
Damariscotta Lake	47	2
Duckpuddle Pond	4	0
Dyer Long Pond	2	0
Havener Pond	0	0
Kaler's Pond	2	0
Little Pond	3	0
McCurdy Pond	1	0
Medomak Pond	1	0
Medomak Pond (Little)	2	0
Paradise Pond	2	0
Pemaquid Pond	11	0
Travel Pond	0	0
Webber Pond	5	0

Region 7: Knox County

	Adults	Chicks
Alford Lake	8	1
Chickawaukee Pond	2	0
Crawford Pond	8	0
Crystal Pond	1	0
Fish Pond	1	0
Hobbs Pond	4	0
Hosmer Pond	4	0
Lermond Pond	3	0
Megunticook Lake	19	2
Megunticook River	2	0
Mirror Lake	2	0
North Pond	2	1
Round Pond*	1	0
Sennebec Pond	2	0
Seven Tree Pond*	0	0
South Pond	6	0
Tolman's Pond	2	0
Washington Pond	8	0

Region 8: Northern Kennebec/Southern Somerset Counties

	Adults	Chicks
China Lake	41	2
Dam Pond	10	0
David Pond	5	0
East Pond	11	0
Flying Pond	4	0
Great Pond	60	5
Hamilton Pond	2	0
Ingham Pond	2	0
Kimball Pond	2	0
Long Pond	24	1
McGrath Pond	2	1
Messalonskee Lake	27	3
Moose Pond/ Great Moose Lake	43	3
Morrill Pond	3	0
North & Little Ponds	10	0
Parker Pond	24	2
Pattee Pond	4	0
Salmon Lake (Ellis Pond)	8	2
Sibley Pond	2	2
Three Mile Pond	6	3
Threecornered Pond	2	0

Region 9: Waldo County

	Adults	Chicks
Togus Pond	9	0
Tolman Pond	11	0
Webber Pond	3	1
Wesserunsett (Hayden) Lake	9	2
Basin Pond	2	1
Branch Pond	3	0
Cain Pond	1	1
Cargill Pond*	2	0
Chisholm Pond	0	0
Coleman Pond	5	0
Dutton Pond	0	0
Kingdom Bog	2	0
Lawry Pond	1	0
Ledge Pond	0	0
Mixer Pond	2	1
Mud Pond	0	0
Quantabacook Lake	9	0
Sandy Pond	1	0
Sheepscoot Pond*	7	0
Smiths Mill Pond*	0	0
St. George Lake	21	0
Stevens Pond	1	0
Swan Lake	9	2
Tilden Pond	1	0

Region 10: Hancock County

	Adults	Chicks
Abrams Pond	6	1
Alamoosook Lake	12	1
Bay Pond (Lower West)	0	0
Beech Hill Pond	11	0
Branch Lake	14	0
Craig Pond	2	0
Donnell Pond	6	0
Eagle Lake	2	0
Echo Lake	4	0
First (Billings) Pond	0	0
Flanders Pond	4	0
Fox Pond	0	0
Georges Pond	4	0
Graham Lake*	2	0
Great Pond/FK	2	0
Great Pond/GPP*	1	0
Green Lake	16	0
Hadlock Pond (Upper)	0	0
Harriman Pond	1	0
Heart Pond	0	0
Hodgdon Pond	0	0
Hopkins Pond	2	2
Jordan Pond	2	0
Little Rocky Pond	1	0
Long Pond/AR	6	0
Long Pond/SW	8	0
Molasses Pond	25	0
Moulton Pond	2	1
Patten Pond (Lower)	2	1
Patten Pond (Upper)	4	0
Phillips Lake	11	0
Pierce Pond	2	0
Rocky Pond	2	0
Salt Pond	0	0
Scammon Pond	4	2
Seal Cove Pond*	4	0
Second Pond	4	0

Region 11: Rangeley Area

	Adults	Chicks
Somes Pond	2	1
Spring River Lake*	5	1
Toddy Pond	18	3
Tunk Lake	12	0
Walker Pond	4	0
Webb Pond	5	0
West Lake	5	2
Beaver Mt. Lake	4	0
Dodge Pond	8	0
Haley Pond	2	0
Kennebago Lake (Big)	15	0
Mooslookmeguntic Lake*	25	0
Quimby Pond	2	2
Rangeley Lake*	23	2
Round Pond	2	0
Sandy River Pond (Lower)	2	0
Sandy River Pond (Middle)	1	0
Sandy River Pond (Upper)	0	0

Region 12: Farmington Area

	Adults	Chicks
Anasagunticook Lake	2	0
Clearwater Lake	5	0
Ellis (Roxbury) Pond	2	0
Embden Pond	6	0
Gammon Pond	1	0
Gilman Pond	2	0
Horseshoe Pond	1	0
Howard Pond	2	0
Locke Pond	4	0
Norcross Pond	2	0
North Pond	2	0
Pease Pond	2	0
Porter Lake	4	0
Sand Pond	2	0
Varnum Pond	9	0
Webb Lake	11	0
Wilson Pond	6	2
Worthley Pond	1	0

Region 13: Washington County

	Adults	Chicks
Bog Lake	5	0
Boydlen Lake	7	1
Cathance Lake	14	1
Crawford Lake	9	0
Fulton Lake	2	0
Gardner Lake	4	0
Great Works Lake	0	0
Indian Lake	1	0
Keenes Lake	4	0
Lambert Lake	2	0
Long Lake*	6	1
Meddybemps Lake*	16	0
Mud Lake (Lower)	2	0
Nash's Lake	8	0
Patrick Lake	2	0
Pennamaquan Lake*	1	0
Pleasant Lake	0	0
Pleasant River Lake	4	0
Pocomoonshine Lake*	18	0
Round Lake	3	0
Schoodic Lake	3	1

Region 14: Southern Penobscot County

	Adults	Chicks
Cold Stream Pond	20	1
Erna Pond	4	0
Hermon Pond	4	0
Indian Pond (Big)	17	3
Indian Pond (Little)	2	1
Parks Pond	0	0
Pleasant Lake*	6	1
Plymouth Pond	4	1
Puffers Pond/Echo Lake	2	0
Round (Grey) Pond	2	1
Sebasticook Lake	31	0
Wassookeag Lake	18	2

Region 15: Northern Maine

	Adults	Chicks
Bottle Lake*	3	0
Branch Lake (South)	22	2
Caribou, Egg, Long Pond	8	1
Center Pond/SN	8	0
Center Pond/T10	2	0
Cochrane Lake*	2	0
Depot Lake	2	2
Eagle Lake	34	0
Elbow Lake*	8	1
Endless Lake	0	0
Faulkner Lake	1	2
Long Lake*	5	1
Madawaska Lake	10	0
Mattakeunk Pond	9	3
Mattaseunk Lake	5	0
Mattawamkeag Lake*	3	0
Moosehead Lake*	83	4
Mud Lake*	3	0
Nickerson Lake	5	0
Onawa Lake	24	2
Parlin Pond	3	0
Pleasant Pond	0	0
Plunkett Pond	3	0
Portage Lake	22	0
Prong Pond	3	0
Timoney Lake	2	1
Wilson Pond (Lower)	13	1
Wilson Pond (Upper)	5	0

Region 16: Baxter State Park

	Adults	Chicks
Abol Pond	0	0
Branch Pond (Lower So.)	0	0
Celia Pond	0	0
Dacey Pond	1	0
Draper Pond	0	0
Elbow Pond	1	0
Grassy Pond	0	0
Jackson Pond	0	0
Kidney Pond	2	0
Lily Pad Pond	0	0
Lost Pond	1	0
Matagamone Lake*	19	0
Rocky Pond (Little)	0	0
Rocky Pond/T3	0	0
Togue Pond (Lower)	0	0
Togue Pond (Upper)	3	0
Tracy Pond	0	0
Wassataquoik Lake	2	0
Webster Lake	5	0

* = Incomplete coverage (lakes were not completely covered by counters in the allotted time)