

# Loon

## You can help reduce conflicts between people and loons.

### Residents & Visitors

Loons need clean, clear water so they can catch fish. Shoreline development can impact water quality by increasing run-off, erosion and contamination by household chemicals. Shoreline development may eliminate nesting habitat or reduce habitat quality by increasing disturbance and predation.

#### **A few simple things you can do to help loons:**



Reduce run-off and erosion from your waterfront property by encouraging natural vegetation along the shoreline.

- Use only phosphate-free detergent and fertilizer.
- Keep pets from running wild along lake shores and harassing wildlife.
- Make sure garbage is out of reach of loon predators like skunks and raccoons.
- Enjoy loons from a distance with binoculars or a spotting scope, especially if they are nesting near your camp.

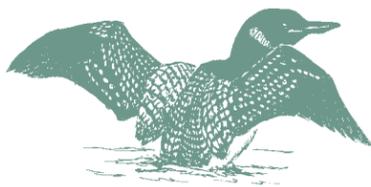


### Boaters

Loons can be difficult to see, and may surface unexpectedly when they're diving for fish. Collisions with speeding boats and personal watercraft are unfortunately one of the leading causes of death for loons in Maine.

Wakes from boats can flood a loon's shoreline nest, and they can easily overwhelm small chicks. This is a particular problem when personal watercraft circle in one area for long periods of time.

Canoers and kayakers who move easily in shallow water can get much too close to unsuspecting loons on their nests. They may unwittingly sneak up on loons and startle them off nests, leaving eggs unprotected while they paddle by.



#### **A few ways to reduce boating impacts:**

- Watch for loons and keep your distance, especially in shallow coves.
- Slow down if you suspect you are close to diving loons.
- Stay away from nesting loons. If you find one, move out of the area.
- Follow The "Loon Calendar" so you know what loons are doing. Boating activity during the Memorial Day and July 4th holidays can be particularly hard on loons.



Slow down when close to shore. Maine law states that boats should leave "no wake" within 200 feet of any shoreline.



Keep milfoil and other invasive exotic plants out of Maine's lakes by keeping your boat and trailer "weed free".

**Be aware of the many Maine laws that help protect wildlife and wildlife habitat!**



**Please see reverse for more detailed information.**

### Anglers

Healthy fish populations make lakes and ponds popular for both loons and anglers.

Anglers who stay for long periods in secluded coves can disturb nesting adults. The loons can be spooked off their nest, leaving their eggs susceptible to predators and the elements.

Fishing gear poses problems for loons. Every year, loons in Maine die after becoming tangled in monofilament line. Lead poisoning from lead sinkers and lead-headed jigs is the leading cause of death for adult loons in Maine.



The sale of lead sinkers one half ounce or less is now banned in the state.

#### **A few tips for fishing with loons:**

- Avoid fishing for prolonged periods in secluded coves where loons may be nesting or feeding, especially in early summer when the eggs and young chicks are most vulnerable.
- Use only lead-free fishing sinkers and jigs, and properly dispose of old lead tackle.
- Retrieve broken fishing line.
- Properly dispose of spent fishing line and pick up discarded line in the water or along shore.



**Common Loons are protected by both state and federal laws prohibiting harassment of wildlife. For more information about those laws or to report violations, contact the Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife at (207)287-8000.**

# Loon Calendar



## April

Common Loons return to Maine's lakes right after ice out, and spend about a month establishing their territories and bonding with their mate.



Watch for pairs of loons exhibiting courtship displays like dipping their bills in the water or swimming around each other in circles.

## May-June

Loons build their nests of dead vegetation and mud right on the shoreline, away from wind, waves, people, and predators. They often nest on small islands where there are fewer predators and people.



Watch for single birds in quiet, shallow coves and near islands, since parents must take turns sitting on the eggs.



## July-August

After about 27 days, the eggs hatch and the loon family moves to a nearby "nursery" area. The loon parents spend much of their time catching small fish for hungry chicks. Chicks ride on their parents' backs to stay warm and safe from predators.



Watch for pairs of loons with one or two small chicks in tow or on their backs. The chicks are quite small when they first hatch, so may be difficult to see.

## September-October

Most chicks can now feed themselves and fly. Their parents leave them to congregate in large groups, or "rafts". Groups of chicks will gather together later in the fall in "rafts" of their own.



Watch for large gatherings of loons on lakes and ponds. Adult loons may be molting into their dull gray and white winter plumage so may look very similar to the drab but full-grown juveniles.

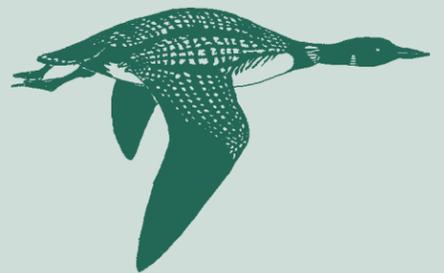


## November-March

Loons spend the winter resting and feeding along the coast. Juvenile loons will wait about seven years before they return to fresh water to breed.



Watch for the dull gray and white plumage of wintering adults and juveniles close to shore all along the coast of Maine.



**W**atching Common Loons and listening to their haunting calls is a popular activity for visitors to Maine's lakes and ponds. Loons have many fascinating behaviors that are easy to observe from afar. If you're lucky, you may see a loon dive for a fish and feed its chick. Or you may see a loon preen its feathers or peer in the water, looking for its next meal.

For the best view, watch loons with binoculars or through a spotting scope. Loons can be very sensitive, and may stop feeding their chicks or leave their nest and eggs if disturbed. Luckily, loons are very good at letting you know when you've come too close.

### Watch for these signs:

A loon is splashing across the water doing the "penguin dance." The loon appears to stand up in the water and move toward you in an aggressive manner, sometimes also making the distinctive "yodel" call.



A loon is vocalizing at you. Listen for the "tremolo", a quavering laugh commonly given when loons are annoyed or alarmed.



A loon is lying very flat on the shoreline with its head down. The loon is on a nest and if approached will slide into the water, leaving the eggs exposed to predators and the elements.



**If you see these signs,  
take the hint and move away!**



### Please obey Maine's laws that protect wildlife and wildlife habitat:

#### Shoreland Zoning:

Activities like logging, clearing, and construction are restricted within 250 feet of lakes and ponds 10 acres or larger and within 75 feet of streams by Maine's Shoreland Zoning Act. Your town may have additional rules, so check with them for details or call the Maine Department of Environmental Protection at (207)287-2111.

#### Boating:

- Watercraft operators cannot pursue or harass wildlife.
- All watercraft must be kept at or under headway speed within 200 feet of shore.
- The operation of personal watercraft is prohibited on some Maine lakes and ponds.
- All motorized watercraft on inland waters must display a "Lake and River Protection Sticker".
- All vehicles and boat trailers traveling on public roads must be "weed-free".

#### Angling:

The sale of lead sinkers a half-ounce or less is banned in the state of Maine.

**Check with the Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife for more information.**

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Maine Audubon (207)781-2330  
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(207)287-8000 www.mefishwildlife.com

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## Living in Loon Territory



**Some simple steps for  
living peacefully with  
our neighbors.**