



Dear Loon Counter:

Welcome to the 36th annual loon count! An enormous thank you to all of you who have helped over the years to make the loon count a success and a warm welcome to those who are signing up for the first time. Thank you for being part of this dedicated group of more than 1,000 volunteers who fan out across the state each year to help track the status of Maine's loon population.

This year like every year, the loon count will take place on the 3rd Saturday of July. We're looking forward to seeing you out on the water on **July 20th from 7:00 to 7:30 a.m.** We're also excited to announce that the loon count's online data site is now up and running and will allow you to register for the loon count and enter your data online! Hosted on the Lakes of Maine website, the portal will be an exciting addition to the count--attracting new recruits, making loon data more readily available, and putting loon count materials at your fingertips.

Here are a few details about how it will work:

- **New Loon Counters:** To sign up as a new loon counter this year, email conserve@maineaudubon.org to express your interest in the count. Provide as much detail as you can about the lake or pond you might be interested in and how far you are willing to travel if your first choice has already been selected by someone else. We will put you in touch with the coordinator of the count in your region, who will help get you the materials and get you started.
- **Former Counters:** For those who have been involved in the count before, please contact Maine Audubon or your regional coordinator for instructions and the link to register for the loon count online. In the past, regional coordinators have mailed out maps and count forms. This year we're asking loon counters to print their own materials if possible. Before the day of the count—or even while you are registering!—please print out the following loon count materials from the registration, [login](#) or [Loon Count Tools](#) sections of the online site and bring them with you on July 20th:
 - **The Loon Count Form** where you will record your loon observations on paper just like in past years. We don't expect (or even want) people to be using the loon data portal out on the water. Data will be entered into the portal after the count.
 - **A Map of Your Lake or Pond**
 - **A Map of Your Survey Area** (if applicable)—this only applies if you have signed up for a section of a larger lake that is divided into multiple survey areas.
 - This letter which includes the **Loon Count Instructions** for this year
(Just let us know if you need help accessing or printing these materials!)

- **Loon Count on Saturday, July 20th:**
 - From some form of watercraft or from shore, count all loons you see in your survey area (either whole lake or portion of a lake) from 7 to 7:30 a.m.
 - Fill out the table on the count data form as you count, noting the time of the observation, the size of the group (adults and chicks), if any parents are observed (either nesting, or suspected parents with or without chicks), how far away the loons are when you make your first sighting, the condition of the water, and the weather (see codes at the bottom of the table). Fill in one line of observation data for each pair, individual or group of loons that you see.
 - Mark the map with the letter (A, B, C, etc.) that corresponds with the observation line in the table. Be sure to mark the location where the loons were seen (not where you were located). *See sample lake map below.*
 - Complete all questions on both sides of the data form. Remember to add your name!

- **Portal Data Entry:** After you've counted loons, go to: [login](#) at this link and enter your email and password to login. If you've forgotten your password, you can click "Forgot Password" on the login page and your password will be emailed to you. The online data entry is set up to match the paper data form, so it should be familiar and you can enter your observations line by line just like on the paper data form. If you don't have a computer with internet at home, you can probably find one at your local library or contact us for help. Please report any problems you encounter and send comments to conserve@maineaudubon.org--*your feedback will help us make improvements for next year!*

Problems with the internet? No worries. If you have trouble entering the data or don't have access to the internet, just send in your paper forms to your regional coordinator or to Maine Audubon and we will enter your data into the portal.

- **Mail Paper Maps and Count Forms** to Maine Audubon by **August 1**. This is really important even if you entered your data online! Complete count data is usually available on-line at the Maine Loon Project home page in late fall.

Thank you again for participating in this year's loon count! The success of the count depends on your generous donation of time and energy.

Sample Lake Map

This map shows one technique for documenting loon observations. Note that each different observation is marked with an “A”, “B”, or “C” to indicate each adult, chick, or group of loons sighted during the count, corresponding with the observation letters on the count data form. The number of loons in each group is also noted as well as whether they were adults or chicks. The counter’s travel route is marked with a dashed line on this map; a counter observing from shore would mark their location with an “X”. Some counters will also mark the time of each observation and mark their start and end point.

