

## What to Look For

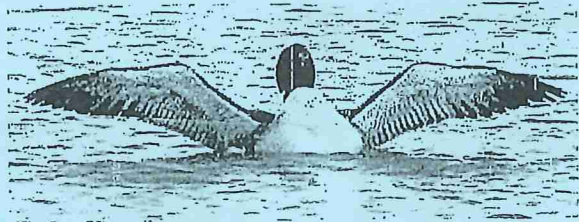
**Be aware of loons** – be aware that if you see a loon from late June to September, chances are that one or two chicks will be close by. **Keep your distance!**

**Listen to 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!**

## 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 inadvertently cause adult loons to leave their nests, potentially for long periods of time, causing chilling of the eggs and failure of the nest.



## 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.

## Factors Affecting Loons

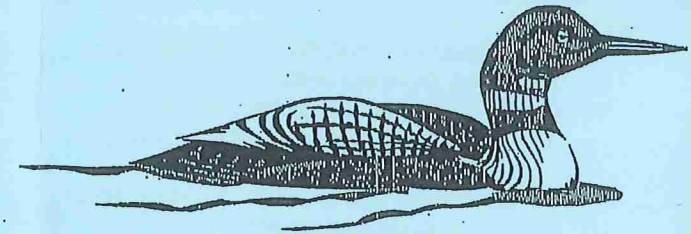
Loons are capable of adapting to a variety of conditions. However, particularly during the breeding season, thresholds can be crossed that will cause a nest to fail or result in the death of chick or adult loons.

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 to learn their behaviors and habits from a respectable distance will benefit both humans and wildlife.

Personal watercraft and motorboat operators can help significantly by staying away from the shoreline, and also keeping a sharp eye out for loons and other wildlife, while on the water; giving them a wide distance to feed and care for their young.

*This brochure has been adapted by the Citizen Advisory Committee for the Fleming Brook Watershed Management Project from brochures produced by the Michigan Loon Preservation Association – [www.michiganloons.org](http://www.michiganloons.org), the Montana Loon Society – [www.montanaloons.org](http://www.montanaloons.org), and Friends of the Rideau – [www.rideaufriends.com](http://www.rideaufriends.com).*

# BE LOON AWARE!



## Boaters and Loons

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

Loon chicks hatch in late 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.



# 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. 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:

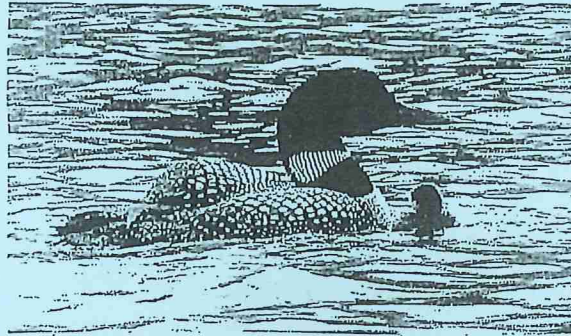
- Power boats can send waves crashing into shorelines, drowning nests;
- Fishing boats, particularly bass and pike anglers, frequent areas preferred for loon nest sites;
- Canoes can slip quietly into loon nesting areas and startle loons off their nests;
- Personal watercraft can speed in shallow water and run over chicks; and
- Boats pulling water skiers and tubers may speed near shorelines and run over chicks.

### Get the Lead Out

Loons, like many birds, ingest small pebbles (grit) in order to help digest their food. Loons often have as many as 20-30 pebbles in their gizzard at one time. Unfortunately, if this material contains lead, which can be in the form of small sinkers, jigs or shotgun shot, poisoning of the loon will occur.

Non-toxic alternatives such as steel and bismuth are now readily available. **So -- get the lead out!**

## Nesting Loons



Loons start to nest from the middle to the end of May. They generally lay 2 eggs which will hatch 27 to 29 days later (late June). Since loons only have one or two chicks per year, every chick counts. The survival of loons depends on these chicks staying healthy until they are strong enough to fly south (late October-November).

Disturbance by other wildlife or humans can interrupt incubation and cause a nest to fail or be abandoned.

### Boat traffic can cause loss of eggs

Loon parents will **leave the nest** if watercraft comes within 500 feet of the nest. This leaves the eggs without warmth or protection from predators.

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 very low.

## Loon Chicks

### Boats can easily kill chicks

**Young chicks are not waterproof!** They need to be able to climb on their parents' backs to stay warm and dry. When watercraft comes close, 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, particularly 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!** It is the habit of loon parents to move the chicks away from the nesting environment, out into deeper water along more open shorelines, to avoid their natural predators. Unfortunately, this puts them into direct conflict with watercraft -- particularly personal watercraft and boats pulling water skiers and tubers.

