



Enjoying & Protecting Maine's Loons





What We Will Cover:

- The Life History of Loons
- Understanding Key Behaviors
- Understanding Risks Loons Face
- What Can Be Done
- Q & A

The Life History of Common Loons



© Alex Rogers

LOON

Gavia immer

(Order: Galliformes) is the most efficient foot-propelled underwater swimmer. Forward thrust is provided by kicking its feet outward, then inward, and toward the tail. The tarsus is flattened, and a distal expansion of the tibia permits it to spread at the tarsus. The upper leg and its muscles fit snugly around the body.







Common Loons in Maine



©Sue Bonzey



Loon Territories







< One Week



© June LeDuc





Loon Behaviors

RELAXED LOONS



A relaxed loon (holding its head up while on the nest) is able to incubate and hatch its eggs successfully.

This loon is calm and able to carry out normal behaviors to care for itself and its family.



Enjoy watching relaxed loons!

Flapping their wings is a normal part of preening and bathing for loons. Loons also sometimes flap their wings to indicate unease.



Boaters who see this behavior not associated with preening or bathing should back away from the loon.

CONCERNED LOONS

Loons may show stress in subtle ways. Be alert for changes in head and neck posture that may tell you a loon is feeling threatened.



A nervous loon will often raise the feathers on its forehead to give this "squared-off" look.

This loon is aware of a potential threat and is stretching its neck to evaluate the situation.



This loon is watching a possible threat while trying to appear inconspicuous.



If you see a loon in these positions, please back away and allow the loon to resume its normal behavior.

STRESSED LOONS

When loons feel threatened while on the nest, they will put their heads down. This position indicates the loon may flush from the nest and leave the eggs to overheat, chill or be taken by a predator.



If you see a loon on a nest with its head down, please back away!



If a boat is too close, a loon may call and/or perform a distraction display called a "penguin dance" – rearing up in the water with its wings either spread out or clasped against its body and rapidly paddling its feet in the water.

If you see this display, please leave the area!

Any vocalization given when you are close to or approaching a loon can indicate stress. Please back away!

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Source: Loon Preservation Committee, <https://loon.org>

A Relaxed Loon

Relaxed neck

Preening or looking underwater

Wing flapping

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A Concerned Loon

Raised forehead

Neck stretched & looking around

Riding low in the water – neck outstretched

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A Stressed Loon

Crouched on a nest

Penguin dance

Warning calls

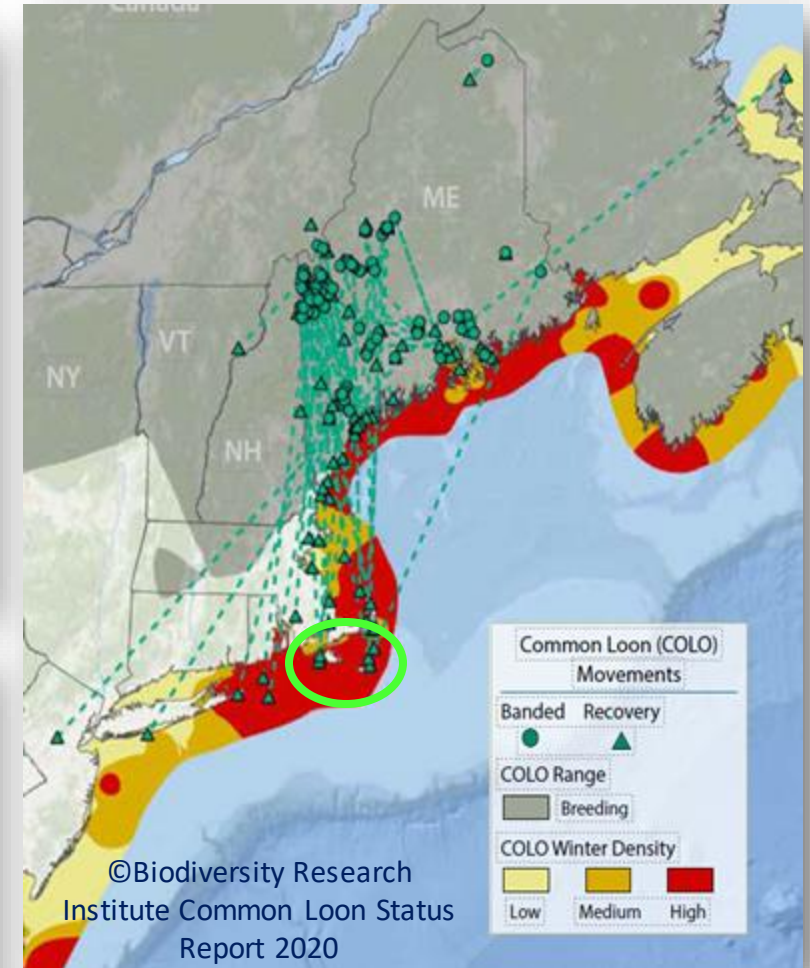
Threats Loons Face

- Winter Threats
- Summer Threats



Winter Threats

- Freeze up
- Costs of migration
- Oil spills



Summer Threats

- Natural Occuring Threats:
 - Flooding
 - Drought
 - Predation
 - Disease and Parasites
- Habitat Loss
- Lead Poisoning & Entanglement
- Boat Strike
- Boat Wake
- Water Quality Degradation
- Disturbance & Habitat Loss

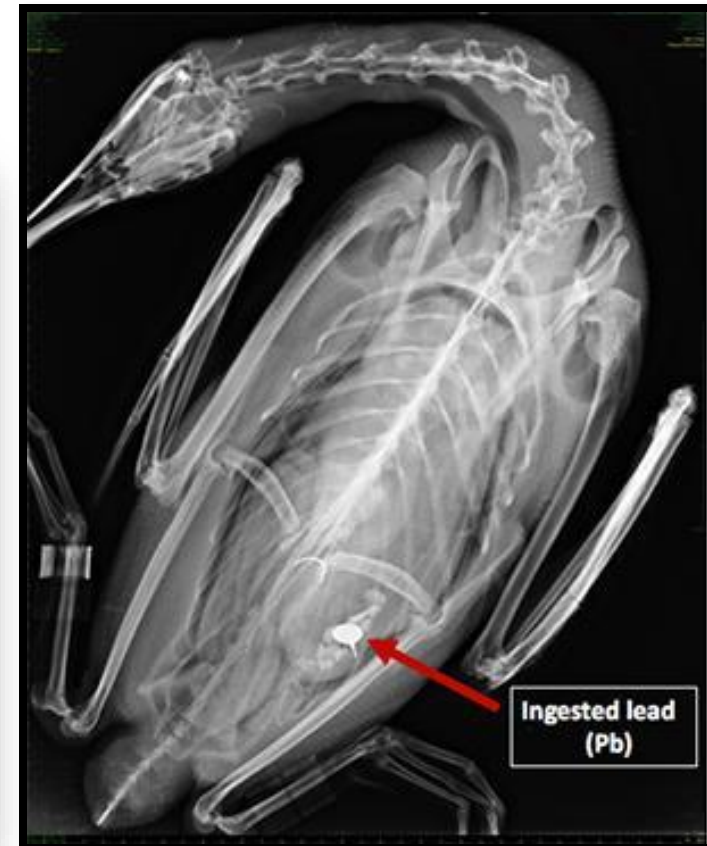


Predation/Flooding/Drought/Disease



Lead Poisoning and Entanglement

- Lead poisoning from tackle
 - The leading cause of adult loon death in Maine, until recently
 - 28% of deaths 1987-2012
- Entanglement
 - 5% of deaths



Fish Lead Free

- Tackle Exchange
- Collection Bin
- Tackle Buyback



Boat Collision

- Leading cause of death for chicks
- In recent years, boat strike surpassing lead poisoning as leading cause of death in adult loons



Boat Wake

- Can flood or wash eggs out of nests
- Can cause nest abandonment
- Can separate adults and chicks



Disturbance & Habitat Loss

- Can love loons TOO much
- Our attempts to watch, photograph, or help loons often cause disturbance
- Loud noises can flush adults from nest
- Pursuing loons or getting too close can:
 - Interrupt feeding
 - Separate parents & chicks
 - Cause nest or chick abandonment



What Can Be Done?

1. Maintain a safe distance:
 - 100 feet or more.
 - Avoid nesting areas (200 feet)
 - Learn to read signs of stress!
2. Observe “no wake zone”.
 - 200 ft. from shore & islands
 - Slow when loons are around
3. Fish Lead Free



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3. Fish Lead Free
4. **Become a Look Out for Loons Ambassador!**



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Thank You!



What to Do if You Find a Problem

- **Sick or Injured Loon**
 - The Warden Service at the Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife: 207.287.8000.
 - Avian Haven: 207.382.6761
 - Biodiversity Research Institute: 207.839.7600
- **Dead Loon**
 - Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife (DIFW) at 207-287-8000
 - Biodiversity Research Institute (BRI) at (207) 839-7600
- **Loon Egg:** Maine Audubon at conserve@maineaudubon.org.
- **Loon Harassment:** Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife: 207.287.8000.
- **Boat Wake Violations:** Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife: 207.287.8000.