



Montana Loon Society 2015 Newsletter

2014 Rogers Lake Loon Rescue

On Tuesday, November 18, 2014, trained emergency rescue personnel wearing dry suits rescued a juvenile common loon trapped in a small patch of open water on Rogers Lake.

Unexpected low temperatures earlier in November caused the lake to quickly freeze. Lake-shore homeowners realized a loon was swimming in the open water unable to take off. No chicks survived on the lake in 2014, so the young bird had probably stopped on the lake during migration.

Homeowners contacted Gael Bissell of MT Fish Wildlife and Parks. Bissell put together a rescue team, including Jon Obst with MT Fish Wildlife and Parks, Bob Lee of Flathead Search and Rescue, and Gary Moses, recently retired from the National Park Service with training in rescues.

The rescue team was able to walk out on the thicker-than-usual ice for that time of year to draw near to the loon. Using a safety sled and ropes, the team spread a mist net to capture the loon. After a couple dives, it dove into the net and became entangled. The bird was lifted out of the water and placed in a pet carrier.

The juvenile bird was examined by veterinarian, Dr. Dennis Dugger of Central Valley Animal Hospital in Kalispell. An x-ray showed no broken bones, but it had a damaged wrist on one wing, which may be the reason why the bird hadn't continued its migration. Dr. Dugger felt the loon's wrist would heal with time, so the bird was banded and released on Flathead Lake.

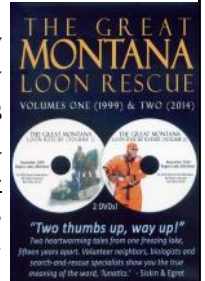
This 2014 rescue was far different from a 1999



The bird's bands include: left leg - silver USFS band above, blue with white dot below; right leg - yellow above yellow. If you spot a loon with these bands, please report when and where to Gael Bissell: gbissell@mt.gov.

loon rescue on Rogers Lake. For that rescue homeowners jumped up and down in a small aluminum boat to break a path through thin ice to the trapped loon. (The 1999 bird was probably one of the lake's pair and hadn't migrated due to a large swath of missing flight feathers.)

However, like the 1999 rescue, the 2014 rescue was also filmed. A boxed DVD set, *The Great Montana Loon Rescue, Volumes 1 (1999) and 2 (2014)*, produced by Wild and Free Montana, John Ashley Fine Art Photography in Kalispell is now available from the Montana Loon Society by emailing montana-loons@blackfoot.net. Each set is \$20 plus \$5 shipping. Proceeds benefit the Montana Loon Society. ♦



The Montana Loon Society supports the Common Loon Working Group recommendations that common loon rescues should be attempted in some cases. A rescue may be appropriate when a loon is injured or when it is unable to escape from a situation such as a wet highway or a freezing water body. All rescues should be attempted by a trained team.

To read the full recommendations please go to <http://fwp.mt.gov/fishAndWildlife/management/> and click on the picture of the loon. Then click on "Handling of Live Common Loons and Specimens."

PRESIDENT'S CORNER

By MLS President, Lynn Kelly

It's April already - how can that be? Yet, the fact that I am burning leaves, raking Douglas fir cones and watching the daffodils and tulips emerge testifies to the arrival of spring and loons. In fact, a loon was just sighted on Easter Sunday by Donna Love. Soon the floating loon signs will be popping up on the lakes like mushrooms in the lawn and another "loon season" will be off and running.

I want to emphasize how important it is for the members of the Montana Loon Society to be involved in the work of "loon season". I think the volunteering spirit of MLS was dampened a bit when loon rangers hit the ground some years ago. We may have placed our feet up on our preverbal desks and relaxed too much because the cavalry (loon rangers) were on the job, so, in some of our minds, volunteers weren't needed. Nothing could be further from the truth!

We are so blessed to have many agency personnel (plus rangers) who bust their tails every year on behalf of loons. Yet, this has traditionally been a joint venture of both agency folk and volunteers. So I would encourage members of MLS to check out the list of tasks that follows and if something strikes your fancy, check the newsletter for the loon coordinator nearest your location and call them. Let them know that you would like to help. If you know you would like to be more involved then consider attending the Loon Ranger Training day May 2 at Seeley Lake.

The most common tasks are putting out and gathering in the floating loon signs, helping with public education on boat ramps, participating in May and/or July loon surveys and looking for banded loons. We also need MLS folk to "man" loon tables at events such as the Family Forestry Forum in Columbia Falls and other occasions that involve the presence of our loon displays.

The most critical task to be done is placing floating loon signs on a loon territory as soon as nest initiation is suspected. This may need to be done by mid-April to mid-May before the loon rangers are even on the job! The loon literature is clear that earlier nest attempts are the most successful. It is possible that loons will be attempting to nest earlier this year so we need to be watching for those early nest initiations and be ready to post the signs. Additional help during this time is very helpful!

The second critical task is public education on



MLS President Lynn Kelly scoping for loons on Seeley Lake

ramps during Memorial Day and Fourth of July weekends. The loon rangers can only be in one place at a time so if they know that a MLS volunteer is covering the public education on another lake, that is a huge help.

The third critical task is getting the floating signs off the lakes as soon as a family unit is no longer using the closure. We have had big hiccups with this task and failure to remove signs can give loon management a black eye with anglers who are convinced that the biggest fish are behind the signs! We need to be prompt with sign removal and extra help during this period of time is a real relief.

The fourth task is helping with loon surveys. The May survey (May 16) is designed to document the presence of loons or nesting activity while the Loon Day Survey on July 18 is a "snap shot" of the total loon population including the number of surviving chicks. Both surveys are critical to loon management. All you do is let your area coordinator know that you would like to survey your favorite lake(s) in May and/or July, fill out the correct forms and get them back to the coordinator asap. Attending the loon training in May would greatly help in your ability to do these surveys correctly. This could be a very active fire year which would reduce the number of agency personnel available for the surveys. Volunteers could be the critical difference for our Loon Day survey in July.

The final chance to help can actually earn you some money! About half of our loon population is banded- thanks to the efforts of our amazing Common Loon Working Group and loon rangers. This is a fantastic statistic but unfortunately, our ability to find/track these banded birds is always limited. The documentation of the movements of banded birds is critical to our understanding of how loons use their landscapes. Attending the loon ranger training would be a huge help to you if you would like to help with band locations. Check out the information regarding the band contest in this newsletter.

We so appreciate that you are a member of MLS and that you are reading this newsletter. We would also love for you to join us this summer on your favorite loon lake(s) as a volunteer. Hope to see you soon at "the lake"!

2014 AREA LOON REPORTS

Area Loon Reports are composed each year by loon rangers hired as summer college interns, or by U.S. Forest Service or MT FWP employees. All report to the Common Loon Working Group (CLWG), a collection of individuals from various agencies, the Confederate Salish and Kootenai Tribes, and industry, who along with MLS, monitor Montana's loons, place signs and platforms during loon season mid-May to mid-July, and provide public education. Chicks counted on Loon Day in July are assumed to have survived and migrated in fall. The following summaries are greatly condensed versions of longer reports. To obtain full length versions contact Chris Hammond, 406-752-4582, chammond@mt.gov

Blackfoot/Clearwater (Ovando/Seeley Lake)

Loon Ranger Cory Reiniger



2014 Blackfoot/Clearwater Loon Ranger Cory Reiniger at Seeley Lake Viewing Blind at Seeley Lake Ranger Station.

The 2014 Blackfoot/Clearwater loon season covered 20 lakes. Nesting success was only 40%, which is lower than usual due to high spring runoff. Nesting pairs were found on 8 territories. The Clearwater had six nests, which produced 7 chicks (2 on Rainy, 1 on Summit, 1 on Clearwater, 2 on Placid, and 1 on Hidden. Hidden Lake hasn't had a nest in recorded history. It hatched 2 chicks, but only 1 survived.) Two nests in this area failed: Seeley Lake lost its nest due to high water and didn't renest. Lake Alva loons nested on the island, but lost the nest (cause unknown).

In the Blackfoot (Ovando) area two nests produced 2 chicks (1 on Shoup and 1 on Upsata, which is the third year in a row that Upsata had a chick, which is a great comeback after several years of no chicks.) Hard to find and reach, Little Doney may have had a nest as two loons were observed on the lake early in the season, but later no chicks were seen. **In all, 9 chicks in this combined area survived until July Loon Day.**

Eureka Area

Summarized by Hailey Graf (loon ranger)

Reported by Lynn Johnson

The Eureka area hatched 2 chicks on 1 lake (Carpenter). This is the first documented successful hatching in decades on this lake which is plagued by water level fluctuations and human/dog activity on the nesting island/peninsula near the boat launch. Contacts continue to be made on this lake to educate anglers, recreators, and land owners. Water fluctuations could be dealt with if loons would nest on the floating platform—if only loons could read! Both adults on this lake were banded on June 22nd. Single adults were reported at Sophie, Moran and Costich and 8 birds were reported on the reservoir. Monitoring of these lakes will continue as pairs of birds have been reported on these lakes in the past. **Total number of chicks for this area: 2.**

Blackfeet Indian Reservation

Loon Ranger Michael Bomberg

During May-July 2014 Glacier National Park's Citizen Science Program Coordinator, Jami Belt, supervised a student intern from the Blackfeet Community College to conduct surveys on Common Loons on Blackfeet Reservation lakes, to coordinate volunteers during an annual loon count, and to prepare a final summary report on the status of loons. The internship is sponsored by the Montana Loon Society and Biodiversity Research Institute, and facilitated by a memorandum of agreement between Blackfeet Community College and the Montana Loon Society. Lakes surveyed included Green, Four Horns, Twin, Mitten, Kipp, Lower St Mary, Lower Two Medicine and Mission where on 3 single loon was seen. Although not typically nesting lakes, the area is important for foraging and migration.



2014 Blackfeet Indian Reservation Loon Ranger Michael Bomberg looking for loons.

2014 Area Loon Reports Continued...

Flathead Basin #2, (DNRC Lakes in North Flathead and North Fork)

Submitted by Chris Forristal

A total of nine lakes were surveyed during the 2014 nesting season. Of these lakes, two had confirmed nesting attempts and two other lakes had loon pairs but no apparent nesting. Loons at Boyle Lake and Beaver Lake successfully nested and produced chicks that likely fledged, with one chick from Boyle and two chicks from Beaver. One of the chicks at Beaver Lake was also banded. The pair at Cyclone Lake, a fairly consistent producer of loon chicks over the years, was present during the breeding season but did not attempt to nest. Single loons were occasionally present at Murray Lake and Woods Lake, however these could be individuals foraging from Beaver or Spencer Lakes. **A total of 3 chicks in this area survived until July Loon Day.**

Flathead River Forks

Laura Holmquist, Wildlife Biologist, Flathead National Forest

Two chicks each hatched and survived on Halfmoon and Mud/Garnet Lakes up the North Fork of the Flathead River. The Teepee Lake pair had at least one nesting attempt that failed to produce any chicks. Many people contributed to helping monitor the Flathead River Forks area this year. We are thankful to you all with special thanks to Terrance McClelland and Allie Byrd. **Chick count: 4.**

Flathead Indian Reservation

Submitted by Whisper Camel-Means, CSKT Wildlife Management Program

The Confederated Salish and Kootenai Wildlife Management staff continues to monitor lakes on the Flathead Indian Reservation for Common loon presence and nesting attempts. We are also more thoroughly surveying the south end of Flathead Lake. In previous years we have done the surveys along the shore line, where accessible. We have changed over to survey by boat so that more locations are accessible. You may be aware that Flathead Lake shore line is not very accessible to public access. We have had loons sighted at Kicking Horse reservoir, Mission Reservoir, Jocko Lakes, and Flathead Lake. We have not seen nesting success at this time. We will continue to survey in 2015.

Glacier National Park

Submitted by Jami Belt

In 2014, 118 citizen scientists contributed 3,485 hours and completed 257 loon surveys. Forty-one of the 45 priority lakes were surveyed at least three times including all priority 1, 2 and 3 lakes. The season-long loon population estimate was 51 resident adults (18 pairs and 15 singles) and 12 chicks in nine broods on nine lakes. During loon days, 50 adults (17 pairs and 16 singles) and 11 chicks in eight broods were observed. Chick production was as high this year than it has been since the establishment of the citizen science project in 2006, with 12 chicks. The long-term trend indicates that the numbers of common loons in GNP is increasing, but it is unclear whether that is a result of increased chick production or better detection of chicks. The fecundity rate of GNP's loon population (0.479) barely meets the criteria of 0.48 chicks fledged per territorial pair needed to maintain a stable population and is lower than the fecundity rate of Montana's common loon population as a whole. Chick hatch dates and nests sites were pinpointed at over half 2014 nesting lakes, providing an invaluable resource for managers aiming to prevent nest disturbance. More frequent monitoring is needed to refine chick hatch dates and find both successful and unsuccessful nests. This information will allow us to better detect disturbance patterns and to track changes that may occur with life cycle timing due to Climate changes. The project will continue during the summer of 2015. **11 chicks survived in this area until July Loon Day.**



Loons in Glacier National Park enjoying a quiet lake. GNP Photo

Kalispell West

Submitted by Gael Bissell, MT FWP

Kalispell West had one of its best years in overall chick production with 82% nesting success resulting in 13 chicks surviving to July Loon Day. The Thompson Chain of Lakes hatched eight chicks from Little McGregor, Lower Thompson and Upper Thompson Lakes. Ashley Lake produced four chicks and Lone Lake one chick. Two chicks that successfully hatched on Lake Rogers were most likely lost to eagle predation within 7-10 days of hatching. Nesting was disrupted for unknown reasons on Island Lake; anglers most likely caused

2014 Area Loon Reports Continued...

Kalispell West...

predation or nest loss on Monroe Lake during Memorial weekend. No nesting attempts were detected on Horseshoe Lake TCL. The pair that had attempted nesting the last three years on Horseshoe Lake did not occupy the territory after May 24; we later observed and received reports of loon(s) showing up on nearby Crystal and Loon Lakes. Next season, management efforts should focus on monitoring the Horseshoe Lake pair on Horseshoe and other nearby unoccupied (by territorial loon pairs) lakes and on looking for citizens to help with loon monitoring. Additionally, floating signs on Monroe Lake should be considered as the Monroe does get frequent anglers floating down from Ashley Creek Bridge upstream. **Total: 13 chicks were counted on July Loon Day.**

Murphy Lake Area

*Summarized by Hailey Graf (loon ranger)
Reported by Lynn Johnson*

The Murphy Lake area hatched 6 chicks on 4 lakes (Bull, Dickey Lake south, Lick, and Murphy Lake). The nesting pairs at Frank, Marl and Martin Lakes made nesting attempts, but hatched no chicks. Significant observations include: private land is being developed adjacent to the nesting platform on Dickey North; Loon's Echo historic nesting island was taken over by Trumpeter Swans – who may have attempted to nest, but never pulled off cygnets (sightings have been reported to CFSK). Single loons were seen feeding on this lake. Bands (lack of) were confirmed on 8 birds within the ML area. Daytime banding was attempted at the summer meeting on Murphy Lake but was unsuccessful. **Total number of chicks for this area: 6**

Show your support for loons and the Montana Loon Society by purchasing the MLS sponsored Montana license plate at a county courthouse near you.



Libby/Troy Area

Submitted by Mandy Rockwell & David Deavours

The Troy area experienced what seems to be an average year for nesting attempts and chick survival. Nesting occurred at our four regular nesting lakes: Alvord, Kilbrennan, Rene, and Slee.

Alvord and Kilbrennan Lakes each hatched two chicks with both surviving to the July Loon Day on Alvord Lake. One chick was lost on Kilbrennan Lake sometime in the last half of June. Rene and Slee Lakes each hatched a single chick and both were survivors through mid-July. Adults were also noted at Vinal, Hoskins, and Skinner Lakes but no nesting was attempted. **Total chicks: 7.** - Mandy Rockwell

Loon observations were few and far between on the east-central portion of the Kootenai NF this year including Rainbow, Loon, Kessler, Howard, and Double N lakes. A single adult was spotted on the Double N lake mid-May, however no nesting occurred according to the private land owners. Spring snows precluded an early survey of Howard Lake, however by July a single adult was found by Forest personnel. Unfortunately two single adults were the highlights of the loon season for this portion of the Kootenai as Rainbow, Loon, and Kessler Lakes all were all left lonely for loons in 2014.— David Deavours

Swan Lake Ranger District Area

Wildlife Technician USFS: Jessica Curry

In the Swan Lake Ranger District area we were able to identify nesting pairs on four lakes, Loon (Ferndale), Loon (Kraft Creek), Crystal, and Pierce. Also we observed two additional non-breeding pairs on Lindberg and Van Lakes. The nest success in the Swan Lake Ranger District was 83%. The only known chick mortality was reported on Loon Lake (Ferndale). The public reported two chicks hatched, but just days later only one was observed. It was suspected that the chick was predated by a bald eagle. The pairs at Pierce and Crystal Lakes each had one observed chick hatch. It is unknown if predation was involved in these situations or if only one egg hatched. As part of our management strategy, we are going to try placing nesting platforms on Van and Lindberg Lakes where we know there are established territories. Van Lake is a popular fishing area which creates a lot of disturbance for nesting loons. If we can give them a platform and block off a section of the lake, the pair might have a better chance

2014 Area Loon Reports Continued...

at successfully hatching chicks. At Lindberg Lake the area where the breeding pair has historically nested has fluctuating water levels. This could be why they are not nesting or nesting successfully. A platform would provide a stable location for nesting. **Altogether this area had 5 chicks survive until July Loon Day.**

Tally Lake/Stillwater Area

Laura Holmquist, Wildlife Biologist, Flathead National Forest

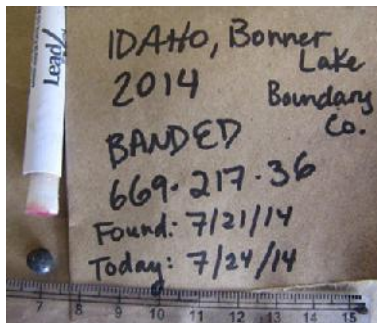
Eight pair of loons nested in the Tally Lake/Stillwater Area in 2014 hatching nine chicks of which only one did not survive. Chicks survived on Blanchard, Lost Coon, Lower Stillwater, Skyles, and Spencer (2) Lakes. Loons attempted to nest on Bootjack and Upper Stillwater Lakes but either abandoned or failed. Jennifer Nelson was the loon ranger for the summer doing a great job observing nesting success, getting band recoveries, as well as talking with the public at boat launches. **Tally Lake/Stillwater tally: 6 chicks.**

Total Montana Chicks in 2014

The **total number of chicks reported in this newsletter is 66.** However, some chicks were counted after the official July Loon Day Count, so the official 2014 count is 60 chicks, which is still the highest number of chicks recorded since 1999 when the CLWG began.

Montana Loon Found Dead in Idaho

In July 2014, a loon banded in Montana as a chick on Upper Thompson Lake in 2006 was found dead on Bonner Lake in Idaho. Chris Hammond of MT FWP confirmed that a lead weight was in its gizzard, but stated that it could not be determined with absolute certainty that the bird died of lead poisoning. Michelle Kneeland, a DVM with Biodiversity Research Institute in Maine performed the necropsy and felt she could say with 99.99% confidence that the loon died of lead poisoning. Whether or not this bird died of lead poisoning, please support "Get the Lead Out" and use non-lead sinkers and weights.



AWARDS AND RECOGNITION

2014 MLS Partner of the Year



2014 MLS Partner of the Year, Kristi Dubois, receiving Partner of the Year Award from MLS President, Lynn Kelly

Kristi Dubois, MT FWP Region 2 Wildlife Biologist, received MLS Partner of the Year for her many years of working with and overseeing the Blackfoot/Clearwater Loon Rangers (often using funds from her own budget for the Loon Ranger Program) and specifically for her work this past 2014 summer season undertaking the difficult task during the change from "wake" to "non-wake" status of Alva Lake in the Clearwater River Drainage near Seeley Lake. Due to great public information and outreach, a fabulous loon ranger, Cory Reiniger, (fully supported and kept well-informed by Kristi), and much needed signage, the change-over went fairly smoothly, and much easier than anyone thought. MLS President Lynn Kelly said, "Thank you, Kristi, for your years of helping Montana's loons."

2014 MLS Volunteer of the Year :

2014 MLS Volunteer of the Year, Steve Gniadek, receiving Volunteer of the Year Award from MLS President, Lynn Kelly



Steve Gniadek of Columbia Falls received the 2014 Volunteer of the Year for his work instigating, planning and organizing the new East Glacier/Blackfeet Indian Reservation Loon Ranger/Coordinator position. Steve was Glacier National Park's wildlife biologist for 20 years, and now as a layperson has continued his work with common loon management east of Glacier National Park and the Blackfeet Indian Reservation by developing this important position. MLS President Lynn Kelly said, "I am so thrilled about this loon ranger. This area has been a black hole for loons in Montana for some time. Steve's help was invaluable to understanding how our birds are doing in this important area."

LOONS (and Society) IN THE NEWS

2014 North American Loon Symposium

By Christie Ferruzzi, Montana Loon Society (MLS) Vice-President

With gracious thanks to the MLS, Lynn Kelly, MLS President, Jessica Curry, Loon Ranger and I attended the N.A. Loon Symposium in October, at the Sigurd Olson Environmental Institute, Northland College. It is located in Ashland, Wisconsin on the south shore of Lake Superior. The Biodiversity Research Institute (BRI) of Maine had a good show of presenters and long-time loon research pioneer, Dr. Judyth McIntyre summarized her early work. Premier loon researchers, biologists and managers provided scientific presentations on:

Threats and concerns affecting common loons that included mercury and lead toxicology, Polycyclic Aromatic Hydrocarbon (PAH) effects of the 2011BP Gulf Oil Spill, food web contaminants (PBDEs, PCFs, PCBs, DDT, chlordane) in New Hampshire, Great Lakes botulism and malaria parasites.

Current research and trends ranged from genetic analysis, migration patterns, territory settlement, vocal signals, yodel changes when males change territories (if dissimilar to previous residents, yodels change very little; if similar, yodels change more), health assessment of loons and a BRI pilot study of translocation, and the captive rearing and release of common loon chicks in Minnesota.

Information about loons and loon habitat such as the importance of post mortem examinations, rehabilitation of common loons; restoration of common loon populations across North America; use of trail cameras in monitoring nests; yellow-billed loon biology and oil/gas development in Alaska Arctic; red-throated loon Arctic breeding, migration and mid-Atlantic wintering. **Citizen Science Networking** group, with success in Michigan has goals to: 1. Improve public education, i.e., lead toxicity of fishing tackle; 2. Set up a centralized, loon information website and utilize social media; 3. Establish a North American Loon Working Group; 4. Achieve national continuity in loon data collection/ database.

For more in-depth information on the presentations, visit www.northland.edu.

BOARD MEMBER HIGHLIGHT



MLS Region 2 Board Member: Mark Ruby
After serving as a Loon Ranger while a student at University of Montana, Mark Ruby became a MLS member in 2005 and a Board Member in 2010. He has worked

for the U.S. Forest Service on the Flathead National Forest for 6 years. Today he serves as the Wildlife Biologist for Swan Lake Ranger District. He lives in Kalispell and along with volunteering for MLS, he volunteers for the MT Chapter of the Wildlife Society and for MT Fish, Wildlife & Parks. Mark grew up in Kalispell and has watched and enjoyed loons for the past 10 years. His favorite thing about loons is the speed at which they can fly (70 mph!). He said, "I joined the Society because the organization is vital to the monitoring and conservation of Montana's common loons." Thank you, Mark, for your many years of service.

MLS Educational Loon Trunks Available In Four Places Around the State

- ◆ Montana Natural History Center
120 Hickory Street, Missoula, MT 59801
(406) 327-0405, info@TheNatureCenter.org
- ◆ Tally Lake Ranger Station
650 Wolfpack Way, Kalispell, MT 59901
(406) 758-3544 ajacobs@fs.fed.us
- ◆ Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes
Natural Resource Department
301 Main St., Polson, MT 59860
(406) 883-2888, germainew@cskt.org
- ◆ Murphy Lake Ranger Station
12797 U.S. Hwy 93 S, Fortine, MT 59918
(406) 882-8345 lmjohnson@fs.fed.us



Check out a loon trunk near you. Great for classrooms or home-school!



Montana Common Loon Working Group (CLWG) Spring 2015 Update

By Amy Jacobs and Chris Forristal

The MT CLWG held their 2014 summer meeting at Murphy Lake Ranger Station near Fortine on July 23-24, and their winter meeting at the Montana Department of Natural Resources Land Office in Kalispell on January 13, 2015.

At the January meeting, needs for the upcoming summer were discussed and Biodiversity Research Institute's efforts in Montana were highlighted. Jess Curry, Christie Ferruzzi, and Allie Byrd shared interesting material from the North American Loon Symposium they attended in October. (For more information see page 7 of this newsletter.)

The CLWG would also like to remind MLS members that checking the Nongame Wildlife Box on your taxes will provide funding for non-hunted wildlife like loons.

Plum Creek Timber Company is once again providing reward money for the Loon Band Observation Contest. Every year since 2011, Plum Creek's \$500 donation substantially increased the band return data on common loons in northwest Montana. Band return rates have increased substantially from 62% to as high as 84%. For more information on the Contest see pages 9 and 10 of this newsletter.

This year's Loon Ranger Training will be Saturday, May 2, at the Seeley Lake Ranger Station of the Lolo National Forest. Anyone interested in loon management on your favorite lake is invited to come at 9:30 AM. RSVP to Chris Hammond (chammond@mt.gov, 406-751-4582). Loads of valuable information and tools for conserving Montana's loons is online at <http://fwp.mt.gov/fishAndWildlife/management/commonLoon>.

The summer CLWG meeting will be held Wednesday and Thursday, July 22 & 23, at Amy Jacobs' place west of Whitefish. For directions contact Amy (phone number and email provided at end of this report).

2015 Spring Loon Survey date is May 16 and the Summer Loon Survey date is July 18 (or as close to those Saturdays as possible.) To help survey lakes please contact Montana CLWG Co-Chairs:

Amy Jacobs, 406-758-3544, ajacobs@fs.fed.us
Chris Forristal, 406-751-2259, cforristal@mt.gov



2014 MLS Board Members listen to presentation by Gary Wolfe of Vital Ground.

2014 Montana Loon Society Annual Board Meeting

The 2014 Montana Loon Society Board of Directors meeting was held Sunday, Sept. 28 at the Bigfork Ranger Station. Seven of nine board members were present along with 2 guest speakers, Jami Belt of Glacier National Park and Gary Wolfe, Executive Director of Vital Ground. The Board voted to support another year of the Blackfeet Indian Reservation Loon Ranger, to support Vital Ground in purchasing land on Alvord Lake near Troy for a community forest, and to send two representatives to the October **2014 Loon Watch Symposium** at the Sigurd Olson Environmental Institute at Northland College in Ashland, WI.

2014 Montana Loon Society Annual Membership Meeting

The 2014 MLS Membership Meeting was held on Sunday, September 28 at the Bigfork Ranger Station. Twelve people were present. Election of Officers included Vice-president, Christie Ferruzzi, and Secretary Donna Love (both 2 year positions) and Board Members from Region 6 (Libby/Troy) and Region 3 (Kootenia/Tobacco/Stillwater). Paul Rumelhart was voted in as the new Board member for Region 6. Region 3 remained vacant at the time of the meeting, but Kristina Kindberg was voted in, in November for Region 3. Thank you, Paul and Kris, for your service.

The Non-Game Check-off found at the end of each year's tax form supports loons, too, so be sure to donate part of your tax return to the Non-Game Check-off.



Plum Creek



REWARD



FOR OBSERVATIONS OF MONTANA'S BANDED & UNBANDED LOONS!

The Montana Loon Society is offering cash prizes for the greatest number of 2015 observations of unique banded loons or confirmed unbanded breeding loons!

One \$200 award will go for the most observations of banded and unbanded breeding loons reported by May 31, another \$200 award will go for the most observations (cumulatively) reported by July 20, and one \$100 award will be decided by a random drawing from all individuals who submitted at least one observation. Federal and State government employees are not eligible for the cash reward if they observe loons as part of their job. Send band observations to Chris Hammond of Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks (chammond@mt.gov) before these dates. The most useful band reports are the ones that come in to Chris as soon as possible, so send them in as you see them, even if you are not 100% sure of your observation. Qualified observations will be determined and counted solely by Chris. See the reverse side for information about how to observe and report loon bands. Winners will be announced at the summer meeting of the Montana Common Loon Working Group on July 22th-July 23th.

This contest is generously funded by Plum Creek Timber Company.

Loons are very sensitive. Please enjoy them at a distance.

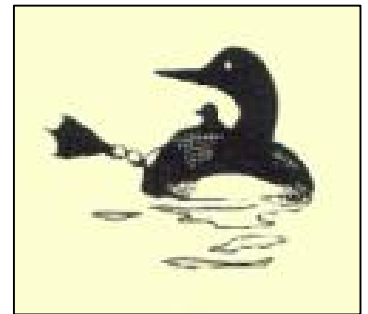
How to Read a Common Loon Band in Montana

To determine population characteristics of common loons and better understand their behavior, we need everyone to look for color band combinations beginning as soon as ice out this year on both breeding and foraging lakes. During the early part of the season, many pairs will tolerate visits by offspring or other loons. This is one of our best chances of seeing and documenting the young birds we banded in previous years return to Montana.

If you spot common loons this spring, summer, or fall, and have a spotting scope handy, take a few minutes to check them for the presence of color leg band combinations. You can usually see a band, if one is present, within 10 minutes, but it could take up to an hour. If you see a band and your scope is not adequate or your time is limited, report this to Chris Hammond immediately. He can possibly provide a high power quality scope or send someone out to that lake to get the band combinations.

When you observe loons, you may catch them raising a leg out of the water to stretch or scratch. This is most common when a loon is loafing or preening.

If the loon is banded, each leg will have a band; sometimes two on each. Some bands have stripes or dots. For the right and left leg, record the color of the bands along with whether any stripe or dot is present on the band, and if so the color of the stripe or dot. Be sure to figure out correctly which color band is closest to the body and which is closest to the foot (not always intuitive when the bird is facing you and moving around).



Tidbits to help with accurate band recording:

- ◆ Band colors: blue, red, white, orange, yellow, green, silver, pink
- ◆ Silver on right leg means banded as an adult.
- ◆ Silver on left leg means banded as juvenile.
- ◆ Blue, green, and red bands have a white base, so etched markings on those bands show as white. Orange, white, and yellow bands have a black base so etched markings on those bands show as black.

Bands are **always** recorded in order as: 1. Left leg closest to body, 2. Left leg closest to foot, 3. Right leg closest to body, 4. Right leg closest to foot. This is what the band data part of the loon observation form looks like:

Left Leg (closest to body) (closest to foot)
(LL) _____ / _____

Right Leg (closest to body) (closest to foot)
(RL) _____ / _____

Contact Chris Hammond **ASAP** with all new banded loon sightings, even if you couldn't read the bands -- chammond@mt.gov, 406-751-4582.

For details about observing loons and their bands, see Appendix C of the Montana Loon Plan - <http://fwp.mt.gov/fishAndWildlife/management/>

See Appendix D of the plan for background on banding loons in Montana.

Web Sites of Interest

- ◆ **Montana Loon Society**
www.montanaloons.org
- ◆ **Montana Loon Society on Facebook**
www.facebook.com (Search for “Montana Loon Society”).
- ◆ **ABC Species Profile by Lynn Kelly**
<http://www.montanaloons.org/ABC%20loon%20article.pdf>
- ◆ **MT FWP Common Loon Conservation Plan** <http://fwp.mt.gov/fishAndWildlife/management/commonLoon/>
- ◆ **MT Fish, Wildlife and Parks Common Loon Field Guide**
http://fieldguide.mt.gov/detail_ABNBA01030.aspx
- ◆ **Glacier Park Citizens Science Loon Count**
http://www.nps.gov/glac/naturescience/ccrlc-citizen-science_loons.htm
- ◆ **Loons and Lead Poisoning**
<http://www.tufts.edu/vet/loons/>
- ◆ **Flathead Watershed Source Book—Loons**
http://www.flatheadwatershed.org/docs/wpPDF/Popout_Jacobs.pdf
- ◆ **Montana Outdoors: Crazy About Loons**
<http://fwp.mt.gov/mtoutdoors/HTML/articles/2011/loons.htm>

Officers

President	Lynn Kelly	406.883.5797
Vice President	Christie Ferruzzi	406.882.4856
Secretary	Donna Love	406.677.3767
Treasurer	Don Skaar	406.442.3254

Board of Directors

Blackfoot/ Clearwater	George Leighton	406.251.3925
Swan River Valley	Mark Ruby	mdruby@fs.fed.us
Kootenai/ Tobacco/ Stillwater	Kristina Kindberg	406.889/5077
Thompson/West Kalispell	Tony Dawson	406.253.6111
Glacier Park	Steve Gniadek	406.892.7406
Libby/Troy	Paul Rumelhart	pwr@frontiernet.net

Mark Your 2015 Calendar

- ◆ May 2 – Loon Ranger Training at Seeley Lake Ranger Station, Seeley Lake, MT
- ◆ May 9— Forestry EXPO in Columbia Falls
- ◆ May 16— Spring Loon Day Count/Survey
- ◆ June 5-7—MT Audubon Society—Helena
- ◆ July 18– Summer Loon Day Count/Survey
- ◆ July 22-23– CLWG Summer Meeting near Whitefish.
- ◆ September —MLS Annual Board and Membership Meetings, Date and Place Pending

Help Montana’s Loons

Sign up for a membership today.

- ___ Single Loon (Individual)... \$15.00
- ___ Breeding Pair (Family)\$25.00
- ___ Loon Chick (Student).....\$10.00
- ___ Territorial Pair (Sustaining Member).....\$150.00
- ___ Raft of Loons (Organization)\$300.00
- ___ Loon Lake (Life Time Member)\$800.00

Name: _____
 Address: _____

 City: _____
 State: _____ Zip: _____

(Memberships are Tax-Deductible)

Mail this form and payment to:

**Montana Loon Society
 P.O. Box 1131
 Seeley Lake, MT 59868**

www.montanaloons.org

montanaloons@blackfoot.net



MONTANA LOON SOCIETY

P.O. Box 1131
Seeley Lake, MT 59868
406.677.3767
montanaloons@blackfoot.net
www.montanaloons.org

To:

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**TO READ THIS NEWSLETTER ONLINE go to
www.montanaloons.org and click on "Newsletters."**

The Montana Loon Society's Purpose is to:

- ◆ Monitor common loons in Montana
- ◆ Increase public knowledge about Montana's loons
- ◆ Protect and enhance critical loon habitat
- ◆ Identify management or research needs and obtain funds for same
- ◆ Facilitate cooperation between agencies, lakeshore owners and the general public to accomplish these goals

