



# REWARD



## **FOR OBSERVATIONS OF MONTANA'S BANDED & UNBANDED LOONS!**

*The Montana Loon Society is offering cash prizes for 2017 observations of unique banded loons or confirmed unbanded breeding loons!*

Two \$100 awards will be decided by a random drawing from all individuals who submitted at least one observation. To encourage you to get your observations in early, one drawing will occur in mid-June and the other in mid-July. Send band observations to Chris Hammond of Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks ([chammond@mt.gov](mailto:chammond@mt.gov) or 406-751-4582). 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 August 1<sup>st</sup> & 2<sup>nd</sup>. Federal and State government employees are not eligible for the cash reward if they observe loons as part of their job.

**This contest is generously funded by Montana Loon Society.**

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

## How to Read a Common Loon Leg 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.

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 that 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)    Right Leg (closest to body) (closest to foot)  
(LL) \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_    (RL) \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_

Contact Chris Hammond **ASAP** with all new banded loon sightings, even if you couldn't read the bands -- [chammond@mt.gov](mailto: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/commonLoon/>); see Appendix D of the plan for background on loon banding in Montana.