



Montana Loon Society

2013 Newsletter

302 Common Loons Dead on Lake Michigan - Deaths Linked to Invasive Species Zebra and Quagga Mussels

During two weeks in October 2012, 302 dead common loons were found along a 7-mile stretch of shoreline on northern Lake Michigan along with 563 other water birds including grebes, ducks, cormorants and others. The birds may have died elsewhere on the lake, but prevailing winds pushed most to this shore.

To keep raptors and other animals from feeding on the dead birds and possibly getting sick, teams of volunteers combed the beach removing the dead animals. USGS studies conducted on the birds in December indicated that all but a few died from type-E botulism.

The die off, which follows similar, but smaller die-offs in '06, '07 and '10, isn't fully understood, but is suspected to be caused by the food chain link between loons and the non-native invasive species, zebra and quagga mussels.

These invasive mussels, first found in the Great Lakes in 1988, feed on plankton, which improves water clarity allowing sunlight to penetrate deeper, which causes algae mats to flourish. When the algae mats die and decay, they deplete oxygen in the water and type-E botulism bacteria develops. Gobies, an introduced fish that live at the bottom of lakes, pick up the toxin produced by the bacteria. Loons and other waterfowl then eat the gobies.

Once in the birds, the toxin affects the nervous system and muscles and soon the animals are unable to fly. When the birds can no longer keep their heads above water, they drown.

First year juvenal birds overall don't have the ability to catch the infected gobies, so most of the dead birds were mature adults capable of breeding. Many of the birds are suspected of being Canadian, Minnesota, and Wisconsin loons in the early parts

of their fall migration to the Atlantic Ocean or the Gulf of Mexico that stopped on Lake Michigan to feed and rest.

Though the reason for the rise the number of deaths in 2012 is unclear, it is suspected that low lake levels caused by a mild 2011-12 winter and a hot 2012 summer contributed to lake algae growth, which increased the levels of the botulism.

Montana Loon Society President, Lynn Kelly said, "The connection between water bird deaths and the zebra/quagga mussels is disquieting to loon managers in Montana. Intensive efforts to inspect all boats entering the lakes and rivers of Montana have thwarted the introduction of these alien species for the moment but constant vigilance is needed. It is important the people understand the grave consequences of an alien introduction and be understanding and supportive of the state's effort to keep these mussels out of our state."

See photos, watch a video and learn more in the January 7, 2013 article by Don Gardner in the Oakland County, Michigan newspaper online at: www.theoaklandpress.com ♦



Show your support for loons and the Montana Loon Society by purchasing the MLS

specialty Montana license plate. Get one for your vehicle at a county courthouse near you.

TO READ THIS NEWSLETTER ONLINE go to www.montanaloons.org. Click on "Newsletters."

PRESIDENT'S CORNER

By MLS President, Lynn Kelly

With the temperature in the low 40's and a brisk north wind shaking tree branches along the newly whitened Mission Mountains, I am having a hard time convincing myself that some loons actually landed on their ice-free territorial lakes during the first week of April. It feels more like football and hunting weather than "loon season." Watching 3 hours of softball on Tax Day in this hypothermic weather reminded me a bit of the days long ago when I would set out in April, in similar weather, to record the yodels of male loons who had just landed on their territories. The good news **back then** was that 80% of the males returned to their territories during those "pre-banding" days of research and...the Polson JV softball team won both their games **today**. Now if I could only warm up!!

This year the loon season will be as busy as ever. A resident loon pair returns to their lake territory as soon as there is enough open water to allow landings and take-offs. The birds usually know their partners so their courtship is really a process of hanging out together as they fish, swim, preen and relax after a taxing trip inland from the Pacific coast. After about 10 days, they begin to investigate possible nest sites and you will see them haul themselves out of the water and sit there, as if assessing the décor and furnishings of their new "pad". You might also see copulation (look it up if you don't know...) during these moments. If you see this "pre-nesting" activity, please contact your area coordinator who will then alert the right people that nesting signs are needed. A nest is generally established shortly after nest searching and research has shown that the earlier in May a nest is initiated, the better the chances of hatching and rearing at least one chick. **But, these early nest attempts must be detected and then protected with the floating signs.** From day 1 MLS volunteers have always been a key component to loon management. Once the very successful loon ranger program got off the ground, there may have been a perception that MLS volunteers weren't needed as much as before. As we all know, budget cuts always loom as a threat to the loon ranger program, and loon rangers are being called upon to do other types of work, sometimes even during the active



MLS President, Lynn Kelly in December of 2012 watching for snowy owls near Polson.

loon season. So, volunteers from MLS are needed, now more than ever, to be present and active on the loon lakes we all love. The loon rangers have been selected and will be trained on April 27 at the Kalispell FWP office. If you would like to be more active with various aspects of loon management on your favorite lake, please consider yourself invited to this training. If you can't attend the training, contact your area coordinator and make arrangements to meet the ranger once they are in your area. This person has several lakes to monitor and if you are available to regularly watch "your" lake, especially on a weekend, then the ranger will be able to move more quickly to other lakes within their area of responsibility.

We encourage you to consider becoming more involved in the Montana Loon Society, not only as a lake volunteer, but also perhaps as a committee member or officer. New people and new talents are very important to the future success of MLS. Many receiving this newsletter have committed essential funds to MLS that supports many aspects of education and loon management. However, we welcome your participation and presence in all of our activities, ranging from loon monitoring and banding to developing educational banners and taking minutes at our annual meeting. So, come one and all. We would love to see and work with you at some loon even happening during this next "loon year."

Finally, be good to yourselves this year. Be sure you put your "day or week in the woods" on your calendar so the important isn't swallowed up by the urgent. This is supposed to be a wonderful year for "northern lights" and there are few things that can top the experience of watching Aurora Borealis with loon calls echoing off the conifers and ascending up into the streaming red, flickering green and flashing white bursts of light from the celestial campfire. So, get out there and let it happen. ♦

2012 AREA LOON REPORTS

Area Loon Reports are composed each year by various people around the state. Some are loon rangers hired as summer college interns, while others are U.S. Forest Service or MT FWP technicians. 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 and provide public education during loon season, mid-May to mid-July each year. 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 Michael Strickland

13 lakes are watched for loons in the Clearwater Drainage and 12 in the Blackfoot. 6 nesting pairs in the Clearwater had 4 successful nests. 7 chicks hatched, with 4 chicks surviving until July Loon Day. Seeley Lake hatched 1 chick, Summit Lake 2, and Rainy Lake 2 with 1 surviving until July Loon Day. (It is thought that an eagle got the other chick.) Alva hatched 2 chicks, which was a first in several years, but they did not survive a strong hail storm at the end of June. Placid Lake was unoccupied for periods of time during incubation and no chicks hatched. Clearwater Lake failed, probably from high winds and wave action from a storm. (A single egg was found outside the nest.) In the Blackfoot, 3 chicks survived until July Loon Day, so with the 4 surviving chicks in the Clearwater, this area produced **7 chicks in 2012**.

Bob Marshall Wilderness Complex

If you get into the BMWC, reports of loons and nesting activity are greatly appreciated. (Loon calls can be reported, too.) To report loon sightings in the Bob, contact the nearest Forest Service Ranger Station.



2012 Clearwater Loon Ranger, Mike Strickland at Rainy Lake.

Eureka Area

Submitted by MLS Vice-President, Christie Ferruzzi

4 lakes plus Lake Koocanusa reservoir are monitored for loon in the Eureka area. Carpenter Lake had one documented nest that was flooded in June, so **no chicks were produced in the Eureka area**. For the July Summer Loon Count, no loons were observed on Carpenter Lake, but 8 loons were counted on Lake Koocanusa (from Libby Dam north to the bridge) and 1 sub-adult was observed on Sophie Lake. The total number counted for the Eureka Area was 9 loons for the Summer Loon Count.

Flathead River Forks

*Loon Monitor: Terence McClelland, Biological Technician, Hungry Horse Ranger Station
Submitted by Angela Deazer, Wildlife Biologist*

Ten lakes were monitored with 8 current nesting lakes in this area by agency personnel and volunteers, with 14 resident adult loons observed, 9 nesting attempts, and **5 hatched chicks** that all survived through the last observation time in late Sept/early Oct. Following documented successful nesting on Halfmoon Lake last year (for the first time in at least ten years) land owner involvement and interest was inspiring. Landowners participated in working group meetings, lake management plan drafting, loon observations, and nest sign placement. The Tepee Lake platform was maintained cooperatively with land owners and FWP.

Flathead River Forks continued...

A student intern, Leann Chaves, assisted with loon monitoring on some of our lakes and reported seeing chicks on Lion Lake. Since this has not occurred in at least twenty years, if ever, we were skeptical, but she was proven right by the survival of at least one chick.



*Halfmoon Lake Nest Sign and Loon
(Signs constructed by Chris Hammond,
MT FWP)*

Glacier National Park

Submitted by Jami Belt

The Common Loon Citizen Science Program trained 32 new citizen scientists in 2012, with 24 returning for a total of 56 citizen scientists that conducted 211 surveys on 48 lakes. Completion of at least 3 surveys occurred on 28 of 29 priority 1, 2, and 3 lakes. (These lakes are historical nesting sites or sites occupied by a pair during the last 4 years.) In all, the citizen scientists contributed 2,552 hours to the loon survey effort in the park. During Loon Days (the time surrounding the MLS July Loon Day) there were 33 observers contributing 599 hours to survey 43 of the 45 lakes. They counted 40 adult loons (15 of which were pairs), 10 singles, and **7 chicks**, (5 from 4 broods on lakes in the North Fork area and 2 from 1 brood in the Many Glacier area). This compares to 35 adults, (11 pairs) and 3 chicks in 2011.

Season long, 34 resident adults and the 7 chicks were observed. The adults comprised 14 pairs and 6 singles with the 7 chicks being in 5 broods. The North Fork had 3 successful nests and the Lake McDonald area had 1, as did the Many Glacier area. Unsuccessful nesting areas included 1 in the Many Glacier area, 3 in the North Fork, and 1 in the Lake McDonald area. High waters due to

flooding may have contributed to nest failure, as could have human disturbance. A chick was reported seen on Bowman just before and during Loon Days, however subsequent surveys failed to confirm its presence. This could be due to misidentification, predation, or other natural causes. (This chick is not included in the final count.) If you would like to be a part of Glacier National Park Citizen Scientist Common Loon Program contact Jami Belt, Glacier National Park Citizen Science at (406) 888-7986. Jami.Belt@nps.gov

Kalispell West

Loon Ranger, Nicole Bellerose

Submitted by Gael Bissell

The Kalispell West Loon Ranger monitored fifteen common loon breeding lakes between May 12, 2012- July 14, 2012. Of these 15 lakes, 10 pairs nested, 1 nest failed, 14 chicks hatched of which **11 survived until July Loon Day**. We had early nesting season evidence of a territorial pair on Horseshoe Lake (Thompson Chain of Lakes); however, before the nest was confirmed, the pair left the lake. This was the second year of a territorial pair showing up on the lake during the spring. Predation on chicks by bald eagles seemed to be the likely reason for chick loss in this management area in most cases.

Murphy Lake

Submitted by MLS Vice President:

Christie Ferruzzi

In 2012, 44 loons were observed on 14 of the 28 lakes that were monitored for loons in the Murphy Lake area. Of the 11 nesting pairs, 10 pairs actually nested, but only 5 pairs produced 7 chicks. Chicks were lost on Frank, Murphy and Loon Lakes. Bald Eagle predation is the likely cause of loon chicks on these lakes. On the Summer Loon Count in July, 3 chicks were seen (Bull Lake loons were still on the nest) and there was 1 sub-adult and 39 adults for a total of 43 loons counted. The chick on Bull Lake hatched late, just after the July Loon Count, so the July total changed to 44 loons including the **4 chicks**.

2012 Area Loon Reports Continued...

North Flathead and North Fork of Flathead

Submitted by Chris Forristal

A total of nine lakes were surveyed during the 2012 nesting season. Of these lakes, two had confirmed nesting attempts and three others had loon activity but no apparent nesting. Beaver Lake had nesting loons for the second year in a row and floating signs were installed in an attempt to decrease disturbance by boaters. One of the two unbanded adult loons on Beaver Lake was also successfully banded. The Beaver Lake pair hatched a single chick, but that chick did not survive to the July Loon Day due to unknown reasons. Loons at Boyle Lake successfully nested and produced a single chick that likely fledged. At Cyclone Lake (up the North Fork), observations suggested that loons may have nested but it could not be confirmed due to an incomplete survey of the lake.

Swan Lake Area

Submitted by Mark Ruby

During the 2012 season 46 surveys were completed on 18 lakes. Lakes with loon nesting activity were surveyed on a weekly basis between May 1st and July 21st. Loon day surveys identified 6 pairs on 6 territorial lakes. Single adult loons were also observed on 7 other lakes throughout the 2012 season.

Three confirmed loon nesting attempts occurred. All 3 attempts were successful. Nesting occurred on Pierce Lake, Loon Lake (Kraft Creek) and Loon Lake (Ferndale). The 2012 nest on Loon Lake (Ferndale) was the first successful nesting attempt documented in the last 10 years. The reason for the recent nesting success is unknown, however heavy spring rains throughout May and June may have resulted in a reduction in shoreline and boating activity, diminishing the amount of human activity on the lake during the nesting. On Pierce Lake, 2 chicks hatched and 1 survived. The cause for this chick mortality is unknown. On both Loon Lake (Kraft Creek) and Loon Lake (Ferndale) 1 chick hatched and 1 survived, so in summary, 4 chicks hatched and 3 survived in the

in 2012. This compares with 3 chicks hatching and 3 surviving in 2011. Throughout the season, 215 people were engaged at boat ramps and campgrounds about loon management, biology, and potential effects to waterfowl from lead fishing tackle.

Tally Lake/Stillwater Area

Wildlife Intern, Nicole Montgomery

Submitted by Laura Holmquist

In the 2012 nesting season, there was an 88.8% nesting success rate for the lakes in the Tally Lake Ranger District (Kalispell North). The overall **July Loon Day chick count was 9** and chick survivorship was 90% for all chicks known to be hatched. (These totals do not include Beaver Lake.) Blanchard, Bootjack, Dog, Lost Coon, Lower Stillwater, Skyles, Spencer, and Tally Lakes are the known areas to hatch chicks. Blanchard, Bootjack, Dog, Lost Coon, Skyles, Spencer, and Beaver Lakes each hatched one chick. Lower Stillwater and Tally Lakes each hatched two. All survived to the July Loon Day except for the chicks on Beaver Lake and Skyles Lake. ♦

2012 MLS Annual Board Meeting

The 2012 Annual Meeting of the Montana Loon Board of Directors was held on Sunday, September 23 in Polson. Eight of ten board members were present. The Board completed a 10-year review of the Montana Loon Society By-laws by ratifying previously suggested changes.

2012 MLS Annual Membership Meeting

The 2012 Annual Membership Meeting was held on Sunday, September 23 in Polson. Ten members were present. During the business meeting, last year's meeting minutes and treasurer's report were approved. The Loon Reports recorded that in **2012, 46 chicks survived until July Loon Day**, with 7 of these in Glacier National Park. Nationally, 48% of a chick to nest ratio is considered a healthy loon population. In 2012 Montana had 71 nests which makes the 2012 chick/nest ratio about 64%. Election of Officers included Board Members, Steve Gniadek, Chuck Schwartz and George Leighton.

2012 MLS Partner of the Year



2012 MLS Partner of the Year, Jay Kolbe helps band Seeley Lake loon chick in 2012

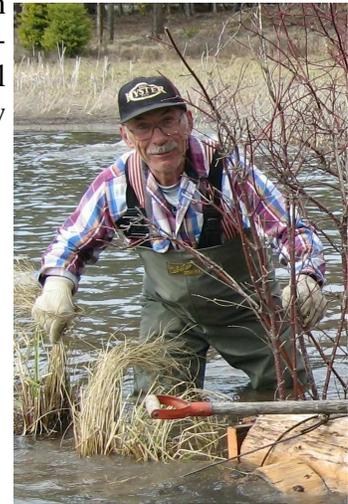
Jay Kolbe, MT FWP Wildlife Biologist in FWP Region 2 received the 2012 MLS Partner of the Year Award for monitoring and caring for

loons in the Clearwater/Blackfoot area. He has continually helped and assisted with loon management in a quiet, unassuming manner for many years. In the summer of 2012, on the July 4th weekend, he went out of his way to help with a "report" of a hurt loon, as well as assisted Chris Hammond with the night banding of the loon, so the Common Loon Working Group could, in part, determine if there was an injury. The adults and chick turned out to be fine, but this all happened during his time off when he had family visiting. He has also taken it upon himself to assist with the placement of the "no-wake" buoys on Seeley Lake, which provide a safe haven for recreationalists traveling across the lake to the canoe trail landing, and for a quiet place on the lake for wildlife, including loons.

2012 MLS Volunteer of the Year

Larry Fenster, a lakeshore owner at Ashley Lake for over 30 years, has been a dedicated volunteer for nearly that long working diligently for the benefit of the loons in any capacity asked of him. He has set and removed signs annually as well as stored and repaired them as needed. He has helped build, repair, foliate and move every nesting platform on the lake. He has been on several banding outings, identified banded birds, nesting sites, participated in many of the loon count days and constantly spreads the word to the unaware as to the importance of giving the loons their space. Larry has long had the reputation among the locals and the visitors as the man to ask about any of the flora and fauna in the Ashley Lake basin and its no wonder because once you've met him

you will immediately recognize his friendly and unassuming style, his knowledge and passion for all things natural, an abundance of information and, you will have found a new friend.



2012 MLS Volunteer of the Year recipient Larry Fenster helps with artificial nest platforms in the Ashley Lake Area

MLS Educational Loon Trunks Available to Teachers 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!

Clearwater Drainage Chain of Lakes FWP Management Plan Under Review

Montana Fish Wildlife and Parks is currently reviewing boater use on the Clearwater Chain of Lakes in the Seeley Lake area. These proposed changes are being considered to provide a wide range of public use and water/boater experiences.

1. Proposal: Make Marshall Lake a non-motorized lake with electric motors only, which would be a new rule.
2. Proposal: Allow electric motors on Harpers Lake, which currently doesn't allow any propeller use.
3. Proposal: Create a no-wake rule on Alva Lake which is completely surrounded by Forest Service land. There are two Forest Service campgrounds on the lake, one with a Forest Service boat launch. However, there are no private docks or land on this lake. The proposed change would allow only no-wake motorized fishing on Alva.

These issues were on the agenda of the November 8, 2012 FWP Commission meeting. At the meeting, the Commissions approved a motion to propose this for public comment. It will go out for public comment around May 9 of 2013. The public comment period press release announcement of 30 days will be sent to the Missoulian and the Seeley-Swan Pathfinder. A public hearing will also be held in Seeley Lake.

When the 30 day public comment period starts, interested parties can comment on the proposals. The press release will state where to send public comments and the deadline. Comments don't count until the 30 day period starts, however people need to be aware that this will be happening in less than a month!. During the public comment period, comments can be submitted in writing or made at the public hearing, they count the same. *The agenda item from the November 2012 Commissioner's meeting is online at:* <http://fwp.mt.gov/doingBusiness/insideFwp/commission/meetings/agenda.html?si&coversheet&itemId=27493229> ♦

New Research Reveals Male Loons Sometimes Fight to the Death

The journal American Scientist (May-June 2011) summarized the results of an 18 year study of male loons. Entitled "Marking Loons, Making Progress" researchers reported that males loons sometimes fight to the death. Highlights from the article include:

- ♦ In the years following chick production, the rate of intrusion by non-mated males increases 60%. (A productive nest is a sought after nest.)
- ♦ Unmated males 3-4 years old and birds older than 15 almost always acquire a territory by settling a vacant lake or part of a lake.
- ♦ 5-6 year old males battle for territories and nearly all the males found dead after a battle were older territorial owners.
- ♦ Female loons show no relationship between age and territory acquisition.
- ♦ Males choose the nest site. If they have chicks they usually use the same site the next year. If "chickless", they mostly move to a new site.
- ♦ Male territorial call may change as the bird ages. Large body mass, not body size, have lower frequency yodel, which can change even in a year.
- ♦ Territorial males respond more quickly and aggressively to yodels of lower frequency.
- ♦ Males alter their yodel after taking over a territory possibly to proclaim that they are the new territorial owner and to not be mistaken for the old owner.

To learn more or obtain the full article go to: <http://www.americanscientist.org/issues/id.90/past.aspx> ♦

Request for Discarded Loon License Plate

The Monte Dolack Gallery in Missoula, MT is looking for a discarded MLS Loon License Plate to display in the gallery along with other plates that bear Monte's images. We'd be sad if you decided to no longer use the MLS Loon License Plate, but maybe you've just purchased a new car or have other reasons for not needing your MLS loon plate anymore. If you have one that you no longer need and you don't mind sharing it, please send the plate to the Montana Loon Society at P.O. Box 1131, Seeley Lake, MT 59868. ♦



**Montana Common Loon
Working Group (CLWG),
Spring 2013 Update**

The MT CLWG held their 2012 summer meeting at Seeley Lake Ranger Station on July 18-19 and their winter meeting at Grouse Mountain Lodge in Whitefish on February 25, 2013.

Chris Hammond stepped down as co-chair of the working group at the February meeting to spend more time on the state's loon data base. His work over the past years is greatly appreciated. Chris Forristal, a Wildlife Biologist for DNRC Northwest Land Office was elected the new co-chair.

At the February meeting, needs for the upcoming summer were also discussed. One need identified the necessity of ramping up opportunities to educate the public on the harmful affects of lead fishing tackle and non-native aquatic species on loons and other water birds.

The CLWG would also like to spread the word 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. (For more information on the Contest see the next two pages, pages 9 and 10, of this newsletter.)

The American Bullfrog is a prohibited exotic species in Montana, which means they are illegal to possess in the state and transport live. They are not native to Montana and they prey on native wildlife. (However, they are legal to be captured and consumed.)

The mass die-off of common loons and other fish eating birds in the Great Lakes was discussed at length, (see article on page 1 of this newsletter) and the need to continue to take seriously and sup-

port non-native species work. How to avoid the spread of invasive species, such as washing waders when moved from lake to lake, was reviewed and will be thoroughly covered during summer loon ranger training.

Volunteers from local diving groups are still needed to help recover sunken loon nesting signs.

CLWG Area Coordinators are continuing to try to complete one lake-specific plan each year. To view Montana's Loon Plan go to Appendix F at <http://fwp.mt.gov/fishAndWildlife/management/commonLoon>

This years' Loon Ranger Training will be Saturday, April 27 at the MT FWP office in Kalispell. Anyone interested in loon management on your favorite lake is invited to come at 9 AM. Special emphasis will be given to the steps that need to be taken to avoid the spread of invasive species while doing loon work.

The summer CLWG meeting will be held Wednesday and Thursday, July 24-25 at FWP's administrative cabin at Bull River near Libby.

2013 Spring Loon Survey date is May 18 and the Summer Loon Survey date is July 20 (or as close to those dates as possible for the individual lake.) To help survey lakes please contact Amy Jacobs or Chris Forristal. (See contact info below.)

Montana CLWG Co-Chairs:

Amy Jacobs, 406-758-3544, ajacobs@fs.fed.us

New Co-chair: Chris Forristal, 406.751.2259

cforristal@mt.gov ♦

TO FOLLOW THE MONTANA LOON SOCIETY ON FACEBOOK GO TO: www.facebook.com then search "Montana Loon Society." Get announcements and see up-to-date photos. You can also post your own loon stories and photos!



Plum Creek



REWARD



FOR OBSERVATIONS OF MONTANA'S BANDED & UNBANDED LOONS!

The Montana Loon Society is offering cash prizes for the greatest number of 2013 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 22, 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 24th-July 25th.

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.

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, 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.

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	cferruzzi@fs.fed.us
Secretary	Donna Love	406.677.3767
Treasurer	Don Skaar	406.210.4701

Board of Directors

Blackfoot/ Clearwater	George Leighton	406.251.3925
Swan River Valley	Mark Ruby	mdruby@fs.fed.us
Kootenai/ Tobacco/ Stillwater	Chuck Schwartz	406.882.4915
Thompson/ West Kalispell	Tony Dawson	406.253.6111
Glacier Park	Steve Gniadek	406.892.7406
Libby/Troy	Vacant	

Mark Your 2013 Calendar

- ◆ April 27 – Loon Ranger Training at MT FWP in Kalispell
- ◆ May 11— Forestry EXPO in Columbia Falls
- ◆ May 18—Spring Loon Day Count/Survey
- ◆ May 25-26 —Loon and Fish Festival, Seeley Lake
- ◆ July 20 – Summer Loon Day Count/Survey
- ◆ July 24-25 – CLWG Summer Meeting at FWP’s administrative cabin at Bull River near Libby
- ◆ September —MLS Annual Board and Membership Meetings, Big Fork, Date 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



MONTANA LOON SOCIETY

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

To:

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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

