



Montana Loon Society 2018 Newsletter

Lead Poisoning and Montana's Loons

Lead is cheap with a long tradition of use in fishing tackle, but its toxic effects have been recognized for years. Many western societies have eliminated or greatly reduced it in paints, gasoline, and solders, as well as in shot for waterfowl hunting. Despite this, lead products continue to be used for angling, releasing tons of lead into the environment each year.

Although lead is toxic to all wildlife, birds often hold lead objects in the gizzard rather than passing them through their digestive systems, so they are particularly at risk. Lead poisoning is a leading cause of mortality in adult common loons. One recent New Hampshire study found that between 1989 and 2012 nearly half (48.6%) of adult loon mortalities were from lead; 52.6% of those deaths were from jigs and 38.8% were from sinkers. Peak time of deaths occurred during July and August, which suggests the most deaths result during active fishing months. Those deaths reduced the NH loon population growth by 43%! In other words, without mortality from lead tackle, New Hampshire would have had an estimated 911 adult loons instead of the 638 adult loons counted in the state in 2012. Further, data collected between 1987 and 2000 in another New England study revealed that 222 of 522 common loons died from lead poisoning. Most of the lead objects found in these dead birds were less than 2.5 cm long and less than 25 grams.

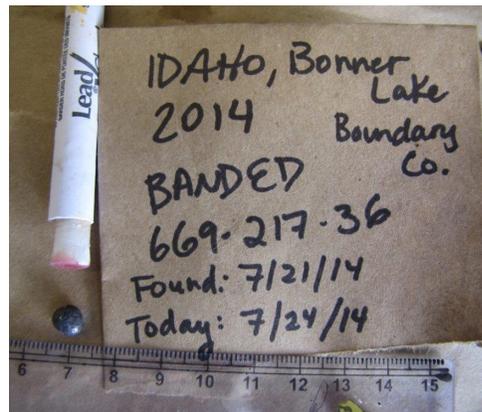
Loons are a long-lived species (20-30 years) which do not breed until they are 5-7 years old. They generally only lay two eggs each year. As a result, they need many opportunities to breed over the course of their long lives to produce enough surviving chicks to contribute to the population. So, survival of adult loons is a KEY factor in assuring the continued viability of a state's loon population.

Loons can ingest lead tackle in a variety of ways. They can ingest a fish that has swallowed lead jigs and have been documented stealing fish on a line, (so reel in if loons are in close proximity to your hopeful hook). Loons also swallow gravel to help digestion and may pick up lead sinkers by mis-

take. Stones between 4.75 and 8.00 mm account for most of the grit in a loon's stomach. The largest stone found in one study was 23.1 mm. This suggests it is unlikely that a loon will swallow a stone larger than 25 mm in any dimension for replacement stones for their stomachs. The biggest take-away message is that it takes only ¼ of a lead sinker to kill a loon (or an eagle, a swan, etc.).

Once ingested, the lead sinker/tackle goes into the loon's gizzard. The acid and grinding action of the gizzard quickly erodes the lead, so weed guards or painted coating on the tackle will not protect the loon. As the lead breaks down it passes into the bloodstream and poisons the loon. Early signs of lead poisoning include abnormal behavior. The loon may fly or dive poorly. It becomes uncoordinated and can't easily catch prey. This progresses to weakness, tremors, gasping, muscle paralysis and the inability to fly, which makes them easy targets for predators. A loon in late stage poisoning may hide among aquatic vegetation, stay behind while other loons migrate, or pull themselves up on shore. It becomes emaciated and often dies within two to four weeks after swallowing the lead.

Lead poisoning is usually diagnosed with the help of x-rays which reveal the lead cargo the loon was carrying. Analyzing blood, liver or kidney tissue will confirm that the cause of death was lead poisoning. Only a few loons have been successfully treated and released. Usually, loons do not display symptoms until lead is already at toxic levels in their bloodstream, so the only option is to humanely (*See Lead Poisoning and Montana's Loons, Page 6*)



1 cm (10mm) lead pellet found in a dead Montana Loon, June 21, 2014, on Bonner Lake in Boundary County, Idaho.

PRESIDENT'S CORNER

By MLS President, Lynn Kelly

Greetings Loon Lovers!

Spring has finally committed itself to staying in the area. Swallows are fighting over nest boxes, bluebirds are nesting, turkeys are gobbling, towhees are churring and more than 20 goslings are grazing with their parents and babysitters on my lawn. With temperatures in the 60's and beyond, our loons have also arrived and are in the process of finding that perfect nest site. Two goose-size brownish-green eggs will be laid upon a large matt of vegetation and detritus and then both adults commit themselves to about 29 days of incubation.

Those eggs signal high-speed action in the loon management world. This is when over-worked biologists and anxious volunteers seek to find the incubating pairs so they can set the bright yellow buoy signs that remind anglers and the recreating public that a loon nest is nearby and needs to be avoided.

You see, back in the early 1990's we discovered MT loons were leaving their nests due of human disturbance 60 percent of the time. Fifty-one percent of the human disturbance came from (mainly fishing) boats that came too close to the nest. Loons that experience stress from boating disturbance leave the nest as a boat approaches to 140 yards at the beginning of incubation to about 70 yards during that 4th week of nesting. As the loon is forced off the nest, egg predators such as ravens are often keyed onto that site, waiting for the bird to leave. They then drop down and eat the eggs. If the eggs are not lost to predators, they will cool down as the loon is swimming in the area vocalizing the alarm call tremolo as it waits for the boat(s) to leave. By the time the loon can re-enter the nest, the chick within the egg has died of hypothermia (after 1 hour). Under these stressful nesting conditions, the loons may hatch out the first chick and abandon the second egg which had been laid 12-24 hours after the first. Floating loon signs set at about 100 yards from the nest along with a loon ranger at the boat ramps to meet the recreating public to explain why the signs were there **significantly increased** the number of two-chick broods. This indicates that the birds were comfortable enough to stay and hatch out the second egg.

While fishing and other motorized boats and personal watercraft are more likely to be involved in the loss of a nest, the silent crafts such as canoes and kayaks can slip silently into the backwaters and shallow areas and come unexpectedly upon a nest-



MLS President Lynn Kelly explains to children at the Pablo Bird and Bear Festival the need to use non-lead fishing tackle.

ing loon, so they can be just as deadly. Loons incubate eggs with their feet so when surprised, the loon launches itself off the nest causing the eggs to be tossed into the water on the other side of the nest. This is where you as a volunteer would be a huge help. Your eyes help us find the birds and nest, your phone call tells us where to go and how fast. It would also be very cool if you could join us as we set these signs. These are a couple of places where volunteers are invaluable.

Two recent events are examples of why your observant presence on a lake is important. We received word from Loon Lake north of Spokane, WA that a loon had been struck and killed by a fast moving watercraft. While no real intervention could be done, if an event like this is filmed with our ever-present cell phones, and if a boat registration number with a description of the people in the boat can be reported, then a game warden can be called and the party involved can be educated about avoiding waterfowl while boating. Fines are rarely given for these actions, but a game warden at your door usually causes boaters to be more observant.

The second event was a call this past week about a loon that had come ashore because it was badly entangled in fishing line. The bird freed its wings, but the filament was causing its head to be forced to one side. Plan A might be to try to safely catch the bird with a large fishing net and control its beak as you cut off the filament. If this isn't possible, contact Chris Hammond at 406.751.4582 or Laura Strong at 406.758.3501 or area board member listed on the last page of this newsletter.

Other opportunities to help include talking to local sporting goods stores about supplying non-lead sinkers, enjoying a day looking for loon bands or being a spokes-person for loons at the Family Forestry Expo and other community celebrations. Educational materials and training would be provided for whatever level of involvement you would like to take part in.

Happy Spring to all! And be careful of our quickly rising rivers. Make a date soon to visit a loon pair and their lake. Thank you for all you choose to do on behalf of these amazing birds.

2017 AREA LOON REPORTS

"Area Loon Reports" are written by Common Loon Working Group (CLWG) area coordinators and wildlife biologists (and/or loon rangers) in the U.S. Forest Service, Glacier National Park, MFWP, Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes (CSKT), and Blackfeet Tribe. Many individuals representing these agencies and other groups, including MLS, monitor Montana's loons. Chicks counted on Loon Day in July are assumed to have survived to migrate in the fall. The following summaries are greatly condensed versions of longer reports. To obtain full length versions contact Chris Hammond, chammond@mt.gov 406-752-4582



Chief Mountain sits above Babb, MT on the Blackfeet Indian Reservation.

Blackfeet Indian Reservation

Terry Peterson, Crown of the Continent Research Learning Center

Eight priority lakes were surveyed by 10 members of the Blackfeet MCC. They did an excellent job, hiking 35 miles to survey these lakes. Two pair of loons on two lakes (Flattop and Dog Gun) were observed as well as one pair with two chicks on Mittens Lake. The Blackfeet MCC will continue next year to monitor loons on the Reservation. Funding for this project was graciously provided by the Glacier National Park Conservancy. **Two chicks were counted in this area.**

Bob Marshall Wilderness Complex

BMWC loons and nesting activity info is greatly appreciated. (Loon calls count, too.) To report sightings, contact the nearest Forest Service Ranger Station. **Nesting info is especially needed for Big Salmon Lake, so please contact the Hungry Horse Ranger Station if you have relevant information, including past observations.**

Blackfoot/Clearwater (Ovando/Seeley Lake)

Loon Ranger Keely Benson

2017 was less hectic for me with only 13 lakes in one region to watch compared to 2016 when I had 37 lakes in 2 regions. Due to this I was able to visit each nesting lake at least 3 times each weekend, spending most of the time on the nesting lakes that saw the most use. The Clearwater had 4 nests that produced 6 chicks. Placid and Rainy lakes had two chicks each. Seeley and Clearwater lakes had one chick each. Summit Lake was the disappointment as it has regularly produced chicks, and Alva Lake remained "off-line" for chicks, which has been the case for several years.

In the Blackfoot, 3 lakes often have nesting pairs. Upsata Lake was the only one that produced chicks, hatching 2 that survived, which was a great achievement. For the past several years, the Upsata pair have nested, but the chicks haven't survived. **This combined area had 8 chicks that survived until July Loon Day.**

Eureka, Fortine & Murphy Lake Areas

Susan Chin

Nine breeding lakes were observed between the Eureka, Fortine and Murphy Lake areas with 6 chicks counted on July Loon Day, but due to access not all lakes could be surveyed at that time. After gaining access, 10 chicks were counted. Specifically, Black Lake had a platform installed a couple years ago. The pair didn't use it for the first years, but this season they did and hatched a chick! Frank Lake had a lot of intruders that interrupted incubation, with a bald eagle nest nearby. Dickey Lake is always a management challenge. We buoyed off the entire south end and most people abided. A large chick was observed when the buoys were removed, but it did not survive. Not sure why. Geese took over the platform at Carpenter Lake. When the geese left, the loons took it back, but it was not successful. **6 chicks were counted on July Loon Day.**

ON FACEBOOK

www.facebook.com

**then search "Montana Loon Society."
Get announcements, see up-to-date photos, post loon stories and photos.**

2017 Area Loon Reports Continued...

Flathead Basin #2 (DNRC lakes in North Flathead and North Fork)

Submitted by Chris Forristal

A total of nine lakes are surveyed in this area for loons. Beaver Lake and Little Beaver Lake produced two chicks each, and Boyle Lake had one chick on July Loon Day. During that same survey, three adult loons were seen foraging closely together on Murray Lake, but no chicks. A pair of loons had been reported on Cyclone, but only one adult loon was seen on July Loon Day, with no chicks. No loons were present on Upper Whitefish Lake, although a single adult had been observed on the lake earlier in the summer. **A total of 5 chicks were counted in this area on July Loon Day.**

Flathead River-Forks

Rachel Manley, USFS Wildlife Technician

Ten lakes were monitored in this area. Seven are nesting lakes, though Lion Lake receives a lot of recreational use throughout the breeding season and has produced a chick only once in the last several years. The 2017 breeding season produced nine known chicks hatched from six nests, with six chicks still surviving on July Loon Day. Cedar Creek Reservoir produced 2 chicks, Spoon Lake had 1 chick, Mud/Garnet had 2 chicks and Teepee Lake had 1. Half Moon and Staton nested, but no chicks. Lion, Bailey, Lake Five, and Handkerchief did not nest. **This area had six chicks that survived until July Loon Day.**



Wildlife Technician Rachel Manley helps replace artificial nesting platform on Teepee Lake. The old platform had begun to sink.

Flathead Indian Reservation

Whisper Camel-Means, CSKT Wildlife Manager

15 lakes in this area are surveyed for loons, but no known nests. An independent observer reported a nest on Mission Reservoir. When checked, no eggs, but nest material seen floating. The Flathead Reservation is an important staging area for migrating loons with loons regularly seen in spring and fall.

Glacier National Park

Terry Peterson, Citizen Science Program Coordinator for Glacier National Park

On May 13 Spring Loon Day, 15 citizen scientists observed 30 loons (8 singles, 11 pairs) on 29 lakes. Twenty one lakes were inaccessible. On our Summer Loon Day, 25 citizen scientists surveyed 46 lakes and counted 5 pairs, 29 singles and 3 broods with 6 chicks for a total of 45 loons. Subsequently, we lost two chicks to unknown causes and end the summer with 4 chicks. For a sustaining population, our production should be 4-7 loons annually so this year we are at the bottom of the scale but with all the high water this is still great. **Four chicks were produced in this area in 2017.**

Kalispell West

Jacob King, MT FWP Intern

Kalispell West has ten lakes that are surveyed for loons. In 2017, the area had a 46% nest success rate, and a July Loon Day chick count of 8. Chick survivorship was 80% for all known to be hatched. Rodgers and Lone lakes had 2 chicks each, Monroe, Ashley, Little McGregor and Leon each had one. A strong spring windstorm disrupted some nesting and two birds died this season: one adult on Ashley Lake, and one on Upper Thompson Middle. Not sure why. **Total chick count for this area, 8.**

Libby Ranger District

Mandy Rockwell, USFS Wildlife Biologist

Loon surveys were limited on the Libby Ranger District this year due to a change in personnel. Rainbow, Howard, and Loon lakes were checked in late July and no loons were observed. The caretakers for Double N Lake and Kessler Lake both reported loon activity. Double N Lake appeared to have two pairs this year, one pair hatched two chicks and both were believed to have been killed by eagles. Kessler Lake had a pair which produced one chick, which also did not survive. Reason Unknown. **0 chicks.**

2017 Area Loon Reports Continued...

Swan Geographic Area

By Alissa Anderson/ Mark Ruby

Seventeen lakes are surveyed in this area for loons with four known nests. Two chicks hatched on Loon Lake (Ferndale). Both chicks survived through July Loon Day. Chicks may have hatched at Pierce and Loon Lake (Kraft Cr) and were then predated. Van Lake had no eggshells, so that nest failed before hatching.

While this area had a low nest success rate this summer, last year it had a record high of 6 chicks surviving until July Loon Day. The cause for this difference is unknown. Both Pierce and Loon Lake (Kraft Cr) have little or no public use. Van Lake has a campground with consistent fishing use, but most are respectful of the floating signs.

Six other lakes received known loon use including: Swan, Meadow, Lindbergh, Shay, Cygnet, and Crystal. In the whole area four unbanded adults were confirmed and 6 banded loons. **2 chicks survived in this area until July Loon Day.**



Loon Lake (Ferndale) adult loon with chicks. Adult has bands. Photo Mike Wallace

Tally Lake/Stillwater Area

Heather Welch, USFS Wildlife Technician
And Laura Strong, Coordinator

Twenty lakes were surveyed in this area for the May and July counts with focused observations on 13 reproducing lakes. Pairs successfully hatched 13 chicks from 7 lakes. Dog Lake appeared to nest, but failed. Intruding loons caused much disturbance and time off the nest. Hanson-Doyle Lake failed as well. The reason for the nest failure is unknown. It is suspected that one of the birds from this pair was from the abandoned Tally Lake territory. A platform was launched in spring on Lower Stillwater and the pair attempted to nest on it, but was not successful. Much disturbance from boaters, float planes and a bald ea-

gle nest could have contributed to the failure. On Blanchard a dead loon washed up on shore. The unbanded bird was not from the territorial pair. Chris Hammond will necropsy the bird. Finally, next spring, Spencer Lake might have some disturbance issues. The MT Hwy Department will start expanding the road that runs parallel with the lake and will add a pedestrian/bikeway to connect the Whitefish Legacy trails. MT DNRC is requesting some timing restrictions and recommends maintaining as much vegetation as possible. The original NEPA was completed before Spencer Lake became a nesting territory. The trail could become a future management issue. **13 chicks in this area survived until July Loon Day.**

Total 2017 Montana Loon Chicks

Although 50 chicks are reported in this newsletter, Montana had an official loon chick count of 48 chicks counted during the July Loon Day Count, which includes the 4 chicks in Glacier National Park. (The extra chicks might have been counted after July Loon Day.) Across the state, forty nest attempts successfully raised 50 chicks. Another 29 known nest attempts failed. This resulted in a fledged young per territory of about .60 (National models indicate that a .48 fledged young per territory is needed for a sustainable population.) ♦

Want to be a Loon Volunteer?

Contact the area coordinator in your location of interest. (Contact info on page 11)

OR:

If you don't have a specific lake you love, contact the Common Loon Working Group Co-chairs:

Laura Strong: (406) 758-3501

laurastrong@fs.fed.us

Chris Hammond: (406) 751-4582

chammond@mt.gov

**NEW! Now you can pay your dues
or donate to the Montana Loon Society
Using PayPal.**

**Go online to www.montanaloons.org
and click on Membership!**

(Lead Poisoning and Montana's Loons: Page 1 continued)

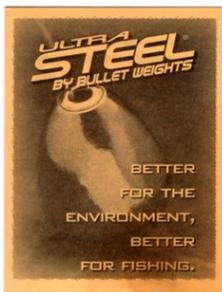
euthanize the bird.

Eliminating lead fishing tackle under 25 mm would go a long way towards protecting loon populations in Montana and around the nation. Many Eastern states, such as New Hampshire, now have laws prohibiting the use and sale of certain lead sinkers and jigs that have a total weight of one ounce, which is 28 grams.

Some outdoor stores have made a special effort to increase the variety and supply of non-lead tackle. An array of inexpensive alternatives such as steel, brass, tin, ceramic, glass, granite, and bismuth exist, and offer angler benefits. Some alternatives are harder and less likely to get hung up on rocks. Some are denser providing a smaller profile. Some have a lower melting point, which allows for finer detail. Some make more noise and act as a fish attractant. Be sure to ask your local store to carry lead-free tackle, then experiment to find what works best for your type of fishing.

In addition, go through your tackle box and dispose of old lead tackle properly. Never throw old tackle into the water or on shore. Consider lead sinkers and jigs as toxic material and dispose of them at household hazardous waste collection sites. Educate others about the dangers of lead fishing tackle and ask them to use non-lead alternatives. Attend or host a presentation or a lead tackle exchange event.

To insure that future generations hear the call of the loon we need to safeguard their environment. Even if you don't fish, share this information with family and friends who do. Just tell them to "Get the lead out!" ♦



The Montana Loon Society provides sample steel sinker packets at their Lead Free for Montana's Loons event displays. Sample packets are purchased online at www.bulletweights.com.

More information about lead poisoning and loons can be found at:

- Dr. Mark Pokras, Cummings School of Veterinary Medicine, Tufts University
- Loon Preservation Committee, Moultonborough: www.loon.org
- Minnesota Department of Recourses: <https://www.dnr.state.mn.us/eco/nongame/projects/leadout.html>

BOARD MEMBER HIGHLIGHT

MLS Region 5 Board Member

Steve Gniadek

My first encounter with Common Loons was on a canoe trip in the Boundary Waters Canoe Area in northern Minnesota in 1965. Their vocalizations or silent appearance on the lakes of the BWCA contributed to an enduring impression of wildlife in wild country. I later experienced loons on Michigan's Upper Peninsula lakes while a teaching assistant at the U of Michigan's Forestry and Wildlife Summer Camp in 1969, and again in Yellowstone NP as a seasonal naturalist and biological technician from 1974-1977.



MLS Region 5 Board Member Steve Gniadek.

These and other encounters with loons along coastal wintering areas contributed to a greater understanding and appreciation, but I did not "work" with loons until beginning my career in Glacier NP in 1987. Several years before, Ranger Jerry DeSanto had begun checking a few lakes in the park, contributing to P.D. Skaar's efforts to monitor Montana loons. Because involvement by park employees was limited, and monitoring of park lakes was inconsistent, my supervisor asked if it would be better to discontinue loon surveys in Glacier. I chose to continue and improve the surveys, because Common Loons were one of only a few species of park wildlife with even minimal population trend information. I thought with a little more effort, the park could develop a more reliable picture of loon distribution, occupancy, and reproduction, and in the process contribute to state-wide population monitoring efforts.

Before the creation of a formal citizen science program, along with the help of my seasonal biological technicians, I engaged a group of interested park employees and a core group of volunteers to sample park lakes for loons. This has evolved into a successful citizen science program, and provided the park with a wealth of information about loons and other wildlife, while contributing to a greater understanding of the state loon population. Along the way, out of obvious necessity, I became a board member of MLS, representing Glacier NP. When the Montana Common Loon Working Group was formed, I became a member of that group, among numerous other wildlife working groups. In retirement, I have continued my involvement in MLS, in the hope that my accumulated experience with loons may offer some benefit to MLS and to loon conservation.

Among my most memorable experiences are the

solo trips paddling a canoe up Logging Lake, surrounded by primeval forest and craggy peaks, and sharing the wild solitude with loons. I may never have that experience again, but I take immense comfort in knowing that loons continue living in wild places as they have for millennia. ♦



2017 AWARDS

**2017 Partner of the Year:
Lorin Hicks**

The 2017 Partner of the Year award was presented to Wildlife Biologist Dr. Lorin Hicks of Kalispell. Dr. Hicks recently retired from Weyerhaeuser Company after working for them since their purchase of Plum Creek Timber Company’s mill in Columbia Falls, MT. Prior to his retirement, Lorin served as Plum Creek’s Director of Fish and Wildlife Resources and was responsible for wildlife management on over 7.9 million acres in Washington, Idaho, Montana, Arkansas, Louisiana, and 16 other states, though he made Montana his home. He has dealt with huge wildlife issues from grizzly bears to bats, from spotted owls to bull trout, and everything in between. Through it all he still had time to help with Montana’s 200 strong common loon population. In the early years, Plum Creek provided a grant to develop the loon trunks. Following that, both Plum Creek and Weyerhaeuser supported the CLWG Loon Ranger program and the loon band contest. All of this happened because Dr. Hicks cared about Montana’s loons. MLS President Lynn Kelly said, “We can’t thank him enough for all he has done for the society and for Montana’s loons, and we hope he stays in touch.”♦

**2017 MLS Volunteer of the Year:
Barry Gordon**



2017 MLS Volunteer of the Year Barry Gordon placing loon buoys on Upsata Lake.

The 2017 Volunteer of the Year Award was presented to Barry Gordon, caretaker at Upsata Lake Lodge in Ovando, which is now a US Fish & Wildlife Private Lands Office for USFW Region 6 Mountain-Prairie. We thank Barry for assembling the new loon buoys for the Clearwater/Blackfoot area. We also thank him for his care for Upsata Lake’s loons that haven’t hatched chicks for several years, but with Barry’s help is now back “on-line” for chicks. An important loon nesting lake, Upsata Lake is on the northwest border of the 119 acres Upsata Lake Waterfowl Production area located 5.5 miles northeast of Ovando in the heart of the knob and kettle topography of the Blackfoot River watershed. After losing Salmon Lake’s loons in the Clearwater Drainage system to the west, Upsata is now the most southern loon lake in Montana and as such, is an important linkage lake to loons to the south. It is also one of only three lakes left with nesting loons on the main Blackfoot River drainage and is important for loon colonization for other area lakes. MLS President Lynn Kelly said, “Barry’s help with Upsata Lake’s loons, and for assembling the new buoys for the Clearwater/Blackfoot area are very much appreciated. It’s great to have new people stepping up the plate for the cause of loons.” ♦

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
- ♦ Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes
Natural Resource Department
301 Main St., Polson, MT 59860
(406) 883-2888, germainew@cskt.org
- ♦ Rexford Ranger District
949 US Highway 93 N.
Eureka, MT 59917 406-296-7104
lmjohnson@fs.fed.us
- ♦ Tally Lake Ranger Station
650 Wolf Pack Way, Kalispell, MT 59901
(406) 758-3544 ajacobs@fs.fed.us



Check out a loon trunk near you. Great for classrooms or homeschool!



Montana Common Loon Working Group Spring 2018 Update

By Laura Strong and
Chris Hammond, CLWG Co-Chairs

We're excited to welcome our breeding loons back to their territories this spring and with them welcome back many returning interns and wildlife technicians who know their lakes so well. We're also excited to meet the new faces who will be doing loon work as part of their duties. The main focus this year will be the May and July surveys which provide information for population estimates and allow us to tailor our conservation strategies accordingly. Our second priority will be band observations so we can continue to learn from the investment we've made over the years to see how our adults and juveniles are defending and dispersing. Finally, we'll continue to place nesting area buoys, as needed, to inform boaters of nesting areas. We're excited to announce the ability to continue the Band Contest this year sponsored by Weyerhaeuser. See the band contest flier in this newsletter for your chance to earn fabulous cash prizes!

DATES TO REMEMBER:

Spring Loon Survey date: May 12

Summer Loon Survey date: July 14

...Or as close to those Saturdays as possible.

Summer CLWG Meeting: July 31- August 1
(Location to Be Determined)

If anyone would like to be a loon volunteer contact the area coordinator of your location of interest or contact Laura or Chris if you don't have a specific lake you love.

- ◆ Laura Strong (406) 758-3501
laurastrong@fs.fed.us
- ◆ Chris Hammond (406) 751-4582
chammond@mt.gov



Chris Hammond, Wildlife Biologist and CLWG Co-Chair helps replace a floating nest on Teepee Lake in the North Fork Valley in Northwest Montana in 2017.



At their September 2017 Annual Meeting, MLS Board Members and CLWG Co-chairs listen to member Mike Wallace discuss loons on Loon Lake, Ferndale, MT.

2017 Montana Loon Society Annual Board Meeting

The 2017 Montana Loon Society Board of Directors meeting was held in the morning of Sunday, September 24 at the Bigfork Ranger Station. Eight of ten board members and three members were present. Along with the regular Secretary and Treasurer's Report, the Board completed a 17-Year General Fund Review. They also discussed new ways to engage the society's membership and increase support for the Society. ♦

2017 Montana Loon Society Annual Membership Meeting

The 2017 MLS Membership Meeting was held in the afternoon of Sunday, September 24 at the Bigfork Ranger Station. Eleven members and four guests along with the two CLWG Co-Chairs attended. CLWG Co-Chairs Chris Hammond and Laura Strong discussed the 2017 loon season and their 2018 funding request. Election of Officers included President Lynn Kelly, and Treasurer Don Skaar, (both 2 year positions). No Election of Board Members was needed this year as all Board members serve a three year term and 2017 was the odd year out. ♦

REMEMBER: 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.



REWARD



FOR OBSERVATIONS OF MONTANA'S BANDED & UNBANDED LOONS!

The Montana Loon Society is offering cash prizes for 2018 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 early observations, 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 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 July 31 - August 1. *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 Weyerhaeuser
and the Montana Loon Society.**

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

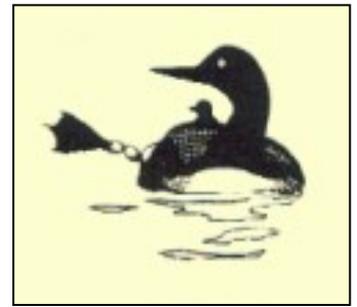
How to Read a Common Loon Band in Montana

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>
- ◆ **CBS News Clip:** <http://www.cbsnews.com/videos/saving-loons-from-a-shrinking-range/>

Officers

President	Lynn Kelly	406.883.5797
Vice President	Christie Ferruzzi	406.882.4856
Secretary	Donna Love	montanaloonsociety@charter.net
Treasurer	Don Skaar	406.442.3254

Board of Directors

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Thompson/ West Kalispell	Tony Dawson	406.253.6111
Glacier Park	Steve Gniadek	406.892.7406
Libby/Troy	Paul Rumelhart	rumelhart.paul@icloud.com

Mark Your 2018 Calendar

- ◆ May 12—Spring Loon Day Count/Survey
- ◆ May 12—Forestry EXPO in Columbia Falls
- ◆ May 17—Pablo Bird & Bear Festival
- ◆ June 8-10—MT Audubon Society-Kalispell
- ◆ July 14—Summer Loon Day Count/Survey
- ◆ July 31-August 1—CLWG Summer Meeting, Location to be determined
- ◆ September 23—MLS Annual Board and Membership Meetings, location pending

Help Montana's Loons

Sign up for a membership today.

Name: _____

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

Address: _____

City: _____

State: _____ Zip: _____

Email (optional): _____

(Membership is Tax-Deductible)

Now you can

Donate ONLINE USING PayPal

On our web site

www.montanaloons.org

or

mail this form and membership or donation to:

Montana Loon Society

P.O. Box 2386

Missoula, MT 59806

montanaloonsociety@charter.net



MONTANA LOON SOCIETY

P.O. 2386
Missoula, MT 59806

406.926.2131
montanaloonsociety@charter.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

