



Montana Loon Society 2023 Newsletter

MT COMMON LOON WORKING GROUP Past, Present, & Future

By CLWG Co-Chairs
Jessica Swanson and Jami Belt

Common loons are an icon species in Montana with their lonesome eerie wail to their amazing territorial battles. The first conservation plan for this species was developed in the 1990's. The Common Loon Working Group (CLWG) developed within that decade and continues to this day. An excerpt from the 2010 Montana Loon Conservation Plan states, "Since its inception in 1998, the CLWG has established communication, collaboration, and cooperation among public agencies, private entities, non-profit organizations, universities, conservation organizations, homeowners associations, and individuals interested in the conservation of the common loon in MT. Over the years, partnerships were formed. Through its technical and research guidance, the CLWG established the Loon Ranger Program and assisted with the MT Common Loon Ecology Project. The program has apparently mitigated, to some degree, the negative effects of shoreline development and disturbance observed in other areas of the United States while the MT Common Loon Ecology Project provided explanations for previously unanswered questions. Through extensive coordination efforts, the CLWG has ensured the persistence of the common loon population in MT."

The CLWG has been integral to the coordination goal stated within the 2010 conservation plan to maintain and improve communication, coordination, and collaboration with all entities involved in conserving common loons in MT. As the current co-chairs we wanted to look at where this group started, discuss some of the objectives we have successfully achieved and take a look at the future of the group as we continue to work towards our goals and objectives.

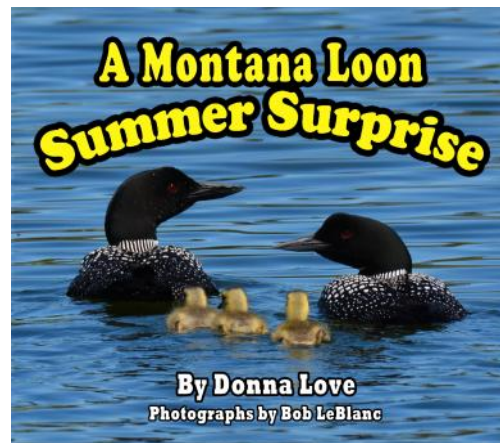
In 2000, the CLWG implemented, in coordination with the Montana Loon Society (MLS) and state universities, the highly successful Loon Ranger Program. The first Loon Rangers were col-

lege students organized by the CLWG using limited agency budgets, various grants, and MLS donations. A Loon Ranger located nests, identified problems, collected important territorial pair and chick data, placed protective floating signs around at-risk nests, (and sometimes artificial floating nest platforms), and provided loon education at lakes with nesting loons. The success of the floating sign program has been tied to the information and education provided by those Loon Rangers.

In 2005, Glacier National Park initiated a citizen science loon project modified from the loon ranger program with a coordinator to train and direct volunteers to survey loon lakes and develop educational materials.

Loon conservation and public outreach and education remains a vital part of the conservation strategy of loons in MT. This work has been integral to implementing successful conservation work that has brought the MT loon population from about (Continued on Page 2...)

ANNOUNCING: New Loon Book Available in May



A Canada goose laid three eggs on a tiny island.

**A loon pair chased her away.
What happened to the eggs?**

Available in paperback on Amazon in May.

\$12.00 plus shipping.

50% of proceeds from the sale of this book supports the Montana Loon Society!

(CLWG Continued from Page 1)

60 known pairs in the early 1990's (which did not include loons in Glacier National Park, nor some remote lakes) to 74 known breeding pairs with a population that has continued to grow since 2011. Since, many agencies continue the important conservation, education, and outreach started by MLS and the original loon rangers. Today's loon rangers are mostly Forest Service techs or MTFWP interns that wear many hats to accommodate the growing demands of land management agencies and other species in need of conservation. The gracious financial support and volunteers from MLS have been integral part of this interagency effort.

Currently, the CLWG is expanding its monitoring goal, which states, "Implement effective monitoring programs and strategies for all concerns facing common loons through collaboration and coordination with all members of the Montana Common Loon Working Group." This goal guides the successful tracking of Montana's loon population. We continue to work with the Biodiversity Research Institute (BRI) and MLS to assist in maintaining a marked population of at least 50% of the breeding adults on core lakes. Our current co-chair Jami Belt has taken on the responsibility of leading the banding effort.

We have also embraced new technology in our data collection utilizing an app called Survey123, so we can move away from pen and paper data collection to harness the power of the devices we use every day. This leap increased surveys. Anyone with a smart device and the app can upload information. Area coordinators can see the information, along with photos, and spatial locations in real time from the online platform. Much thanks are due to MFWP's geospatial group who helped to develop the survey and continues to troubleshoot, maintain, and store our data.

While we currently do not have a website, our email is montanaloonworkinggroup@gmail.com. Contact us if you have a question. The CLWG has achieved many great successes for Montana's common loon population since its inception in 1998. We hope to continue that legacy of dedication to conservation, education, and innovation.

TO BECOME A LOON VOLUNTEER

Contact

montanaloonworkinggroup@gmail.com

Or

montanaloonsociety@charter.net

PRESIDENT'S CORNER

By MLS President, Lynn Kelly

Spring seems to have had a difficult birth this year but the sun keeps lingering in the sky a little longer each day forcing ice off the Montana lakes. As I write this, loons are claiming their nesting territories and another loon year begins.

It amazes me that the MT common loon population is currently "stable" statistically. This means the population is not dropping but is chugging along as a relatively level line that may be slightly increasing from year to year. That was not the case when Don Skaar started the MT Loon Study in 1982 to determine basic biological information about these birds. One immediate concern was the birds didn't seem to be reproducing as successfully as expected. I joined the well developed, albeit small, loon team in 1985. My research determined that human recreational activities (especially spring fishing) caused significant disturbances to nesting loons. Floating warning signs set about 100 yards from nests gave the birds the space and protection they needed to continue incubation. Public education at boat ramps explained why the signs were there. The Montana Loon Study morphed into the Montana Loon Society as more organization was needed to systematically count and monitor loons. Fast forward into the 1990's and I distinctly remember praying for HELP to handle all the data from monitoring, research and banding. Soon afterwards MLS board members worked with Gail Bissell at Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks (FWP) and Amy Jacobs at Flathead National Forest to create the Common Loon Working Group. Composed of biologists and data technology gurus, these folks moved loon management literally into the twenty-first century. Looking back, I can see that if loon monitoring had not started when it did, MT would have lost its struggling loon population without us even realizing they were in trouble. It took over 40 years, scores of people and lots of money to stabilize MT's loon population. THANK YOU to all who made this happen seems inadequate but will have to do.

However, "stable now" doesn't mean "stable forever." MT loons face two challenges; the present and the future! For many reasons, MT is now the #2 most desired state for thousands of people
(Continued on Page 6)



2022 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 loon reports contact the Common Loon Working Group at montana-loonworkinggroup@gmail.com

Blackfeet Indian Reservation

Jami Belt, Biologist Citizen Science

Surrounded by open prairie or aspen stands, Blackfeet loon lakes are not like the typical Montana lakes inhabited by loons. However, the eastern extent of breeding loon populations in the Crown of the Continent ecosystem lies in the Blackfeet Nation. In collaboration with Glacier National Park and the Crown of the Continent Center, the Piikuni Lands Crew surveyed twelve lakes on Blackfeet land as part of their term of service with Montana Conservation Corps. **Two chicks were counted and successfully fledged in 2022.**

Blackfoot/Clearwater (Ovando/Seeley Lake)

Julia Godsey, MT WFP Technician

Eleven loon pairs inhabited this area's lakes, including pairs on Clearwater, Hidden, Alva, Placid, Marshall, Rainy, Seeley, Summit, Shoup, Doney, and Upsata. In the Blackfoot area, two chicks thrived on Shoup Lake.

In the Seeley Lake area, unprecedented rainfall flooded out numerous nests. However, the rain did not deter all breeding pairs. The pairs at Seeley and Placid used high waters to their advantage in nesting further within the inlets located at the north end of both lakes. Their ability to avoid human disturbances by using backwaters allowed breeding success with each pair having two chicks! At Hidden Lake, the pair had one chick that they constantly defended against predatory attempts by numerous bald eagles, and even a turkey vulture! The rain helped deter recreational use at the beginning of the season, but soon the lakes began to flood with people. Most hu-

man encounters were positive, as most have a deep admiration and respect for loons. It was inspiring to have such fantastic public interest in this sensitive species. But, not all retained the same ideals. Buoys and signage aid in deterring unwanted watercraft from entering nesting areas, but they are not always followed. Rainy and Clearwater had the most challenges. Since non-motorized watercraft are "quiet," kayakers, canoers, paddle boarders, and others, do not realize the effect they can have on wildlife. This is understandable; however, their presence could still diminish a loon's effort to breed. Future management efforts and education should also focus on non-motorized impacts on nesting loons. Signage specific to kayaks, canoes, and paddle boards could help educate and enforce loon nesting buoys at high-use non-motorized lakes. This area had **7 chicks** counted on July Loon Day.



Placing new loon buoys on Rainy

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.

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

Vicki Forristal, DNRC Wildlife Biologist

Nine lakes were monitored for loons in this area. Pairs were detected on seven lakes and nesting attempts were observed on three lakes. Beaver Lake had loon chicks during the July survey and one loon chick was observed on Little Beaver after the July survey date. The nest on Boyle Lake was unsuccessful. **A season total of 3 chicks were counted during or just after July Loon Day.**

Flathead River-Forks

Libby Lutz, USFS Wildlife Technician

Eight lakes on the Hungry Horse, Glacier View and Spotted Bear districts of the Flathead

(2022 Area Loon Reports Continued)

National Forest were monitored with loon pairs. For the first time in ages, we had a nest on Lake Five! We deployed buoys on the lake in an effort to keep recreationists away from the nest and to mitigate the effect of boaters wake from washing out the nest. With significant rainfall and snowmelt, the water levels rose far above normal, causing the nest to ultimately fail. We are hopeful that in coming years the loons will attempt to nest on Lake Five again and with support from the community they will be successful.

Our breeding pair on Teepee Lake in the North Fork utilized the artificial nesting platform (placed on the lake in 2017) and successfully hatched two chicks! Only one chick survived to the July loon day on July 16th but as of September 14th, the chick was still on the lake and preparing for migration.

On Halfmoon, it was fantastic to meet members of the public and discuss the importance of loon banding. On more public lakes such as Stanton, Lake Five, Lion and Spoon, public education continued concerning non-lead fishing tackle and the role loons play in the ecosystem as well as get members of the public excited about seeing loons and what they can do to help loon conservation.

On July 15, 10 breeding pairs were counted with 6 nesting attempts. Four pairs hatched 6 known chicks, all of which survived, resulting in an average of 1.5 chicks per pair and a chick survival rate of 100%. **Six chicks in this area.**

Flathead Indian Reservation

Kari Kingery, CSKT Wildlife Manager

The Flathead Indian Reservation and Flathead Lake are important staging areas for migrating loons that are regularly seen in spring and fall. Fifteen water bodies, including irrigation reservoirs, mountain lakes and Lower Flathead Lake, are surveyed for loons annually during early and mid-summer. Both adult (and occasionally Stage 4+ juveniles in their first migration) are observed on the Reservation, but no territories or nests have been located. Variations in reservoir water levels due to irrigation poses a challenge to nesting loons. Past nesting attempts have failed due to this water level fluctuation, and floating platforms have not been successful in mitigating drastic irrigation water level changes.

Glacier National Park

Kelsey Cronin—GNP Citizen Science

Of the forty-five lakes considered to be suitable loon habitat in Glacier National Park, 12 lakes had

resident pairs and 8 additional lakes had single resident birds. We documented two pairs that attempted nesting and were observed incubating, but lost their nests in early summer floodwaters. Additionally, Hidden Meadow produced two chicks. These counts might be overly conservative, as late-melting snowpack and flooded roads prevented us from surveying many of the region's lakes as early or as frequently as we wanted. In our final count on July Loon Day, Glacier National Park had **five chicks** belonging to three broods.

Kalispell West

Jessy Coltrane, MT FWP and Tony Dawson, MLS

Twenty lakes were surveyed by FWP employees, interns, and volunteers in the Kalispell West area. Island, McGregor, Little Bitterroot, Horseshoe, and Crystal lakes had loon pairs, but no documented nesting. Single loons were sighted on Lynch, Upper Thompson West, Upper Thompson East, Middle Thompson, and Loon lakes. Fishtrap, Dahl, and Leon had no loons observed. One property owner on the Upper Thompson Lakes reported seeing over seven loons at one time foraging, diving and preening early in the season. Most likely a good stopping ground before moving on to other lakes for breeding.

Six lakes had one chick each on July Loon Day, including Little McGregor, Monroe, Lone, Rogers, Ashley, and Upper Thompson Middle Lakes. The chick and adults at Upper Thompson Lake traveled between the middle and east lobes for feeding, highlighting the importance of these interconnected protected landscapes for sensitive species. Further, two chicks were observed at Lower Thompson Lake (after July Loon Day), **so 8 chicks** were documented in this area.

Ksanka Ranger District (Eureka, Fortine & Murphy Lake Areas)

Kelsey Preslar, USFS Wildlife Technician

Thirty lakes were monitored across the Ksanka Ranger District with ten monitored on a weekly to bi-weekly basis to observe potential nesting. Buoys were deployed on Bull, Carpenter (Tetrault), and Dickey. Angler/boater outreach was held on heavily trafficked lakes including Carpenter (Tetrault), Dickey, Murphy, and Frank. On private and DNRC lakes, outreach and coordination was made with local landowners and state officials in order to grant lake access or assist with monitoring effort.

Along with monitoring, 45 local 1st graders participated in an "All about Loons" June field trip

(2022 Area Loon Reports Continued)

where the educational trunk was used to give a presentation about loons, dress a student in a loon costume, create a loon necklaces, and read loon folklore stories. An interactive nature hike ended at a lake where students viewed a nesting loon through spotting scopes.

Also, in July, the local library held a loon day as part of their “Oceans of Possibilities” Summer Reading Program, ages 4–12. The loon education trunk was again used to show how local loons are connected to the oceans via migration. A loon story was read, and then students painted a loon onto photos of local lakes that have nesting loons.

On July 15, 10 breeding pairs were counted with 6 nesting attempts. Four pairs hatched 6 known chicks, all of which survived, resulting in an average of 1.5 chicks per pair and a chick survival rate of 100%. **Six chicks in this area.**



Crystal Lake loon that raised Canada geese goslings in 2021, raised two loon chicks in 2022.
Photo: Bob Le-Blanc

Libby Ranger District

Ed Morgan, USFS Wildlife Biologist

Rainbow Lake was monitored with no loon observations. On Loon Lake there was a single adult observed. **No chicks reported for this area.**

Swan Geographic Area

Luke Simmer, FS Wildlife Technician

Fourteen lakes were surveyed in this area with 6 territorial nesting pairs on Holland, Van, Loon (Ferndale), Loon (Kraft), Pierce, and Peck. This is the first time in over 18 years that Peck Lake had a documented nesting attempt, and successfully raised two chicks. In July, we assisted with banding efforts at Loon (Kraft), and Peck Lake, and one of the chicks on Peck Lake is now banded. We also banded the chick on Loon (Kraft). Floating nest signs were placed on three lakes including Loon (Ferndale), Van, and Holland. Loon Lake, despite high angling and recreational boater use had 1 chick survive. Spring, restoration maintenance and repair on our only artificial nest platform on Pierce Lake

included placing new floats on the bottom and adding additional nesting vegetation. The platform was used and 2 eggs were observed on the nest however the nest failed for unknown reasons. Included in our many loon duties, we also had many contacts at boat ramps, campgrounds and on trails to educate anglers, campers, and hikers concerning nesting behavior and best recreational practices.

Three chicks counted in this area.

Tally Lake/Stillwater Area

Jessica Swanson, CLWG Area Coordinator

In 2022, 15 lakes were monitored in the Tally Lake/Stillwater area. Ten lakes had breeding territories which hatched seven chicks. All seven of these chicks survived until the July survey day. Pairs at Blanchard, Bootjack, Lost Loon, Spencer, and Upper Stillwater reared one chick while the pair at Finger Lake reared two chicks. Pairs at Dog, Hanson-Doyle, Skyles, and Lower Stillwater attempted to nest though all these nests failed. Increased boating activity, as well as high water levels caused by heavy rain in June, could offer an explanation for these failures. **In total, 7 chicks in survived until the July Loon Day.**

Three Rivers Ranger District/Troy

Sean Hill, USFS Biologist

Three lakes had been monitored for the 2022 field season. For the July survey a breeding pair and one chick were observed on Alvord Lake. Two chicks had originally hatched on Alvord. Skinner Lake had one pair, and Kilbrennen Lake documented a single adult for the July survey day. Two chicks were documented to have hatched on Kilbrennen lake, but were not observed during the July survey.

TOTAL 2022 MONTANA Loon Chicks

48 chicks are reported in this newsletter that were counted during the 2022 July Loon Day Count, (and two after the official count), plus 5 chicks in Glacier National Park. Here’s an interesting look back at the number of chicks reported in the newsletter.

2021—52 chicks 2019—50 chicks
2020—75 chicks 2018—55 chicks

Thanks to our loon rangers and volunteers our loon numbers continue to hold steady.

(President's Report Continued from page 2)

to relocate to. This means increasing rates of lake-front development and recreational activities on loon lakes which will negatively impact nesting and chick development. Toxins, including lead, mercury and microplastics are a real and present danger. Lead poisoning from ingested fishing lures and sinkers account for well over 50 percent of loon deaths in North America. The big bogeyman of the future is climate change. Recently the Minnesota Star Tribune warned its readers that common loons were "among 55 species likely to disappear (by moving north into Canada) from Minnesota by 2080" if climate change continues at its current rate. If Minnesota's 12,000 loons are at risk in 50 years, what about Montana's 200 plus loons? Obviously our work is not done despite a presently "stable" population.

So how do we proceed? We keep on doing what we have always done. We get out there and find loons! Working together as we have always done, we will continue to keep loons in the watersheds and landscapes of Montana. But we need your help! If you are interested in helping Montana loons beat the odds of their changing environments, let us know so we can put you to work. See you at loon lakes!

LOON CALL

John Kline Madsen, DDS

1924-2023

Dr. Madsen was born in Minnesota. He studied at U of Minnesota and earned his Doctor of Dental Surgery in 1947. After service in the Air Force during the Korean War, John and his wife, Martha, settled in Helena. In 1973, they purchased property on Placid Lake, MT and spent many summers on the lake, later living there. John is preceded in death by his wife, Martha (2007), and a daughter (2022). He is survived by 3 children and 8 grandchildren. His memorial was held April 17 in Missoula. In lieu of flowers, John asked that donations be made to the Blackfoot Community Conservation Area: blackfootchallenge.org. MLS President Lynn Kelly said, "John hosted many loon talks and MLS meetings at his lake home in the 1980s and 90s. An ardent loon supporter, he posted floating signs on Placid for many years. He also literally risked his life every spring to open the lake's flood gate, to release spring run-off, stabilizing the water level for loons and humans. Thank you, John, for all your help. The loons (and we) will miss you."

Board Member Highlight
MLS Treasurer: Don Skaar



Don Skaar, MLS Treasurer at his home in Helena.

In 1982, Don Skaar started, and WAS the Montana Loon Study, traveling thousands of miles around NW MT to establish the breeding range of loons. Don's data and that of his late father, P.D. Skaar, author of *Bird Distribution in Montana*, provides us with the first accurate MT loon information ever.

Around 1985, Don gave the first loon talks in the state to Audubon chapters, showing that the common loon needed to be listed as a "sensitive species." In 1986, the Forest Service listed the common loon a sensitive species. Around that same time, Don also started our annual "Loon Day," organizing volunteers across the state and reported the findings in the Society's early newsletters.

In 1992, the Loon Management Plan began to transition into a Loon Conservation Strategy and the Montana Loon Study started becoming the Loon Conservation Strategy Loon Society, then the Montana Loon Study of which Don served as president. The latter transformed into the Montana Loon Society and Don served as the first president. He has continued to serve the interest of loons as treasurer and still is. In 2020, he was honored with the Montana Loon Society Founder's Award.

While he was doing all the loon work, Don was employed as the fisheries biologist – first as a contractor rehabilitating trout streams, and then for MFWP in Libby and now in Helena. Quite literally without Don there would be no Montana Loon Society.



To help Montana's loons, purchase the Montana Loon Society License Plate for your Montana Vehicles or Trailers.

2022 MLS Partner of the Year
Laura Strong



Laura Strong, Retiring CLWG Co-chair holding loon chicks. Photo: Jami Belt

MLS Partner of the Year was awarded to Laura Strong, retiring Common Loon Working Group Co-chair. Laura became the co-chair in 2016. During her six-plus years as co-chair, she was a wildlife biologist on the Tally Lake Ranger District, Flathead NF. When she first started working with loons, she was a wildlife tech, so she knows all aspects of loon management from on-the-ground loon ranger duties to advanced management needs.

“Laura is passionate about the wildlife of north-west Montana and has a curiosity to find creative solutions to any management challenge that may arise. At meetings she has the ability to celebrate everyone’s accomplishments, but also keep everyone on task. She was especially adept at keeping the CLWG organized to follow through on upcoming projects and issues,” said Jami Belt, Glacier NP biologist.

“Laura is a passionate caring human. She is always willing to help when help is needed and cares deeply for the people around her. She knows, and remembers EVERYONE and makes you feel great when you see her,” said Jessica Swanson, FS Biologist, and new Co-chair, who has worked with Laura over the years.

Laura left the position as CLWG Co-Chair in March of 2022. She is now a consultation biologist for the US Fish and Wildlife Service. MLS President Lynn Kelly said, “We will miss Laura at CLWG and MLS meetings, and especially in the field. She was an awesome partner to the society and Montana’s loons.”

2022 MLS Volunteer of the Year
Bob LeBlanc



Bob LeBlanc at his home near Crystal Lake in the Eureka area. Photo: Tim Love

MLS Volunteer of the Year goes to Bob LeBlanc, photographer, loon enthusiast, and property steward in the Eureka area. Bob has lived in Montana’s northwest corner all his life. Since 1983 he has been the property manager and golf course superintendent for Crystal Lakes Resort. With permission and help from area biologists, Tim Thier, Ethan Lula, and Tim Manley, Bob and his crew placed three artificial loon nest platforms on three lakes that he manages. Loons have used the nests to hatch and raise chicks. In 2021, the loon pair on Crystal Lake chased a Canada goose from a nest platform and incubated the eggs. Three goslings hatched. Two survived until fall migration. While Kootenai NF Wildlife Technician and Kelsey Preslar, kept a watchful eye, Bob’s skill as a photographer helped him document this remarkable event. (To learn more about the Crystal Lake loons, go to <https://montanaloons.org> and on “Our Story” scroll down to 2022.) Further, Bob is donating the use of his photographs to develop a picture book about this remarkable story and is donating his part of the proceeds to MLS. MLS President Lynn Kelly said, “We appreciate our many loon volunteers, but

some go above and beyond. Bob is one of those.”



2021 Crystal Lake loon pair that hatched three Canada geese goslings and raised two to fledging. Photo: Bob LeBlanc

some go above and beyond. Bob is one of those.”

MLS Educational Loon Trunks Available In Four Places Around the State

- ◆ MT FWP Region 2 Office
3201 Spurgin Road, Missoula, MT 59804
(406) 542-5551, torrey.ritter@mt.gov
- ◆ Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes
Natural Resource Department
301 Main St., Polson, MT 59860
(406) 883-2888, germainew@cstk.org
- ◆ Rexford Ranger District
949 US Highway 93 N.
Eureka, MT 59917 406-296-7104
lmjohnson@usda.gov

Tally Lake Ranger Station
650 Wolf Pack Way, Kalispell, MT 59901
mark.ruby@usda.gov (406) 758-3544



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



Montana Common Loon Working Group Spring 2023 Update

From Jessica Swanson, CLWG Co-Chair

Hope you all having a great spring and thank you in advance for your support with our summer loon season. We appreciate getting everyone's loon surveys!

Loon Survey Training is tentatively set for May 4. We need to hear from folks if there is interest in having this training again. It would be similar to last year, and could include tech training at Blanchard Lake in the Kalispell area, and data management at an indoor office location in the greater Kalispell area.

Spring (May) Loon Survey: May 13

Summer (July) Loon Survey: July 15

(Please be on the lookout for bands, too.)

Annual CLWG Summer Meeting: July 18-19

Star Meadows Cabin, Tally Lake RD

Loon Banding sessions: Only one loon banding is currently planned for Montana this year during the week of June 20-25. Area Coordinators will be contacted in May to identify active territories, as well as potential chicks for banding. If you would like to join us, let us know and send contact information to:

- ◆ montanaloonworkinggroup@gmail.com
- ◆ Jami Belt (406) 888-7986
glac_citizen_science@nps.gov
- ◆ Jessica Swanson: Jessica.Swanson@usda.gov

Or contact the area coordinator in your area:

<https://montanaloons.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/CLWG-Area-Coordinator-List-with-Map-1.pdf>

Survey forms can be found and printed at:

<https://montanaloons.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Montana-Loon-Survey-Form-1.pdf>

REMEMBER:

The Non-Game Check-off

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.

2022 MLS ANNUAL MEETINGS



President Lynn Kelly and Board Member Tony Dawson present retired Board Member, Steve Gniadek, with a thank you gift from the MLS Board.

2022 Montana Loon Society Annual Board Meeting

The 2022 Montana Loon Society Board of Directors meeting was held in the morning of October 2 at Lone Pine State Park in Kalispell. Along with three guests, 6 of 8 board members were present. After review of the Treasurer's Report and past Meeting Minutes, the Board presented retired Board Member, Steve Gniadek with a beautiful framed Poleschook/Gum loon photograph with a plaque that read "In recognition of over 30 years of service to the Montana Loon Society Board of Directors. Thank you, Steve Gniadek."

2022 Montana Loon Society Annual Membership Meeting

2022 MLS Membership Meeting was held in the afternoon of October 2. Six of 8 board members were present. The new CLWG Co-chair, Jessica Swanson, discussed the 2022 Loon Season and the CLWG 2023 funding request. Election of Officers included Vice President Christie Ferruzzi, and Secretary Donna Love (both 2 year positions), and Board members Mark Ruby (Kalispell East) and Tony Dawson (Kalispell West (both 3 year positions.) Board member positions for both Region 5 (Glacier National Park and North Fork of the Flathead Valley) and Region 6 (Libby area) are vacant until replacements can be found.

If you would like to attend either of these annual meetings contact the Montana Loon Society at <https://montanaloons.org/> or email montanaloonsociety@charter.net for more details.



REWARD



FOR OBSERVATIONS OF MONTANA'S BANDED & UNBANDED LOONS!

The Montana Loon Society is offering cash prizes for 2023 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 by July Loon Day. To qualify, submit a Montana Loon Survey 123 form, or send band observations to the Common Loon Working email:

montanaloonworkinggroup@gmail.com

(To learn more, go to: <https://montanaloons.org> and click on *Report a Loon Sighting*)

The most useful band reports are the ones that come in 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 the CLWG. See the reverse side for information about how to observe and report loon bands. Winners will be announced at the Montana Common Loon Working Group Summer meeting in July.

(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 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 the CLWG immediately. We 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. Blue, green and red colored bands may also have an white stripe or dot and orange, white, and yellow bands may have a black stripe or dot.
- ◆ Silver on right leg means banded as an adult.
- ◆ Silver on left leg means banded as juvenile.

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.

Please include the following info for all observations of bands or loons that you could clearly see the legs and can confirm that they are not banded. Please send photos if possible.

Lake name: _____ **Date(s) observed:** _____

Location on lake (Ideally coordinates or map with a pin): _____

Your name and contact information: _____

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

Contact the montanaloonworkinggroup@gmail.com or submit our Survey123 form (contact your Local Loon area coordinator for info on how to download the mobile app) ASAP with all new banded loon sightings, even if you couldn't read the bands.

For details about observing loons and their bands, see Appendix C of the Montana Loon Plan - <https://fwp.mt.gov/conservation/wildlife-management/common-loon>

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

(To learn more go to: <https://montanaloons.org> and click on *Report a Loon Sighting*)

Web Sites of Interest

- ♦ **Montana Loon Society**
[What is Montana Loons Society? - Montana Loons](#)
 - ♦ **Montana Loon Society on Facebook**(20+)
[Montana Loon Society | Facebook](#)
 - ♦ **ABC Species Profile by Lynn Kelly**
<http://www.montanaloons.org/ABC%20loon%20article.pdf>
- MT FWP Common Loon Conservation Plan**
<https://fwp.mt.gov/conservation/wildlife-management/common-loon>
- ♦ **MT Fish, Wildlife and Parks Common Loon Field Guide**[Common Loon - Montana Field Guide \(mt.gov\)](#)
 - ♦ **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
 - ♦ **CBS News Clip:** <http://www.cbsnews.com/videos/saving-loons-from-a-shrinking-range/>

Officers

President	Lynn Kelly	loon-mont@gmail.com
Vice President	Christie Ferruzzi	406.882.4856
Secretary	Donna Love	montanaloonsociety@charter.net
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	Vacant	
Libby/Troy	Vacant	

Mark Your 2022 Calendar

- ♦ May 13 —Spring Loon Day Count/Survey
- ♦ July 15 —Summer Loon Day Count/Survey
- ♦ July 18-19—CLWG Summer Meeting, Star Meadows Cabin, Tally Lake Ranger District.
- ♦ Early October—MLS Annual Board and Membership Meetings, date and location 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)	\$150.00
Raft of Loons (Organization)	\$300.00
Loon Lake (Life Member)	\$800.00

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____

State: _____ Zip: _____

Email (optional, but nice to have): _____

(Membership is Tax-Deductible)

**Now you can
DONATE ONLINE using PayPal
From our web site**

<https://montanaloons.org/>

or

clip and mail this form and membership or donation to:

**Montana Loon Society
P.O. Box 2386
Missoula, MT 59806**



MONTANA LOON SOCIETY

P.O. Box 2386
Missoula, MT 59806

406.926.2131
montanaloonsociety@charter.net
<https://montanaloons.org/>

To:

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TO READ THIS NEWSLETTER ONLINE go to
<https://montanaloons.org/>

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.

