



LOON PRESERVATION COMMITTEE

NEWSLETTER

SUMMER 2019



Kittie Wilson Photo



The Loon Preservation Committee
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Moultonborough, NH 03254
603-476-LOON (5666); www.loon.org

The Loon Preservation Committee (LPC) is a non-profit, self-directed and self-funded organization affiliated with New Hampshire Audubon. Autonomous in membership and fundraising, LPC works to preserve loons and their habitats in New Hampshire through monitoring, research, management, and education.

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DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

Making Waves for Loons

Waves and loons are not two words that ordinarily go together in a happy sentence, given that boat wakes can be a significant cause of nest failures for loons (those no wake signs are there for a reason). But the Loon Preservation Committee has invested considerable time and energy in creating ripples in the scientific community to benefit loons and other wildlife. One such effort that is turning out to be an effective wave-maker is our paper with the dry title of "Population-level effects of lead fishing tackle on loons," published in the *Journal of Wildlife Management* in January of last year.

This paper documented that lead tackle was a real and substantial cause of mortality for New Hampshire loons; but it went farther and disputed the common notion (among some) that the deaths of these loons were unfortunate but isolated incidents that did not seriously affect New Hampshire's loon population. LPC's unequalled datasets on loon populations, productivity, and mortality allowed us to show that, had the loons that died of ingested lead tackle survived and produced young at an average rate, New Hampshire's loon population could be up to 43% larger than it is today. That would mean loons on a lot of New Hampshire lakes that remain silent and empty even now, after 45 years of concerted effort to recover our loon population. This paper has just been awarded a special distinction as one of the 20 most-read papers published in that distinguished journal in the past two years. It also formed the major component of another paper, "Lead poisoning from ingestion of fishing gear: A review," published this past April in the widely-read *AMBIO: A Journal of the Human Environment*, with two LPC authors among a suite of renowned researchers. These two papers will significantly widen the pool of readers made aware of this serious problem for loons, as well as other wildlife.

Spreading awareness of this issue among the public, the scientific community, and wildlife managers and other decision-makers is important because we have already recovered two loons that died from ingested lead fishing tackle this year. Despite New Hampshire's legislation (based on LPC's data) restricting the sale and use of this dangerous tackle, it continues to be a real issue for our loons. And we are working on that aspect of the problem, too (see article on LPC's Lead Tackle Buyback Program, page 5).

All of these efforts, from on-the-ground grassroots work like Lead Tackle Buyback to the rarified air of published academic papers, have one purpose: to end this avoidable cause of mortality that has been the scourge of our loon population for too long and, in so doing, create the conditions to allow a full and lasting return of loons and other wildlife to our lakes. We will continue to work all the angles and make all the waves we need to make that happen.

Creating a Comfort Zone: Warning Signs for Nesting Loons

How many mid-summer kayakers, anglers, and pleasure-boaters have spotted from across the lake a small white rectangle bobbing in front of their favorite blueberry picking island only to discover on closer approach that the rectangle is a floating warning sign, transforming the island into a Loon Nesting Sanctuary with a bold-print take home message: **Please Stay Away**. Sometimes there's even a vigilant loon watcher nearby ready to enforce the warning with a stern injunction from the end of their dock. Around the state, these nest signs and their guardians reserve a necessary buffer for loons at their most vulnerable — perched on the nest.

As chicks hatch, orange **“Caution: Loon Chicks”** warning signs are floated in some brooding areas to alert boaters. The floating nest and chick signs are front and center in the management needed to ensure that a growing human population and a gradually recovering loon population can share the lakes, and they are a familiar sight: last year signs were

deployed by LPC staff and volunteers at over half of all loon nest sites in New Hampshire. But the use of these warning signs is both an art and a science. Their effectiveness depends on how well lake users — bound for their favorite island or exploring a new cove — understand the purpose of the sign as they encounter it and change course, steering clear of the nest or chicks.

As the season for building and placing these signs and enlisting the cooperation of lake users gets underway, here are a few guidelines for their successful use:

1. Sign placement depends on the site and the loons. We want to minimize the closed area, take advantage of natural features or



LPC Staff Biologist, Caroline Hughes, constructs floating “Loon Nesting Sanctuary” signs to deploy at nest sites throughout the state.

constrictions (like a narrow spot between an island and shore), and find a distance from the nest that is ideally just beyond the distance at which the nesting loon shows alarm — usually by lowering its neck and head over the edge of the nest. The sign distance should allow boaters to approach and read the sign without disturbing the nesting loon. Multiple signs can create the effect of a barrier without the need for further roping. Ropes are used if boats are likely to come too close to the nest despite the signs due to the configuration of the shoreline or high boat traffic; otherwise, ropes are only used if signs are unheeded.

2. Signs are effective because lake users know that they indicate an active loon nest. In general, we are careful to place signs at a nest site only while the nest is active. We remove the nest signs as soon as the nesting is complete and the loons and their chicks have moved onto the water, usually within a day or two of hatch-

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Signs and ropelines create a necessary buffer for loons at their most vulnerable time — perched on the nest.

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 ing. This protocol minimizes the time that the cove or shoreline is restricted and is part of LPC's long-standing cooperative arrangement with NH Fish and Game and NH Marine Patrol. Loon chick warning signs are placed during the brooding period and are usually left until the chicks are no longer being brooded or the end of the busiest boating season (Labor Day), whichever comes first.

3. Signs must be safe and secure. Signs are never placed where they will be a navigation hazard. We use cinderblock anchors with a stainless steel 3/16" wire-rope anchor line or equivalent nylon rope. The anchor line is at least 1.5-2 times as long as the water depth. We put small squares of high-visibility reflective tape on the sign placards for night-time boaters. We use spar buoy-style signs that won't capsize at extremely windy sites, and the usual wooden signs are made to not be too top-heavy to prevent capsizing. Signs are monitored and tipped back upright or moved to a more sheltered location if they capsize.

4. Signs are not always needed. Will a sign draw attention to the nest and do more harm than good? In some cases, incorporating local knowledge of the lake and boat traffic, we leave

the nest site unadvertised and do not float a sign. But at many sites, the protection the sign provides is a net gain even if they draw added human attention.

5. Nesting and brooding area signs work best where the community of lake residents and lake users have established a strong culture of stewardship and conservation. The vigilant loon watcher on the end of her dock or the LPC field biologist kayaking the lake and politely checking with fellow paddlers as they approach a sign to make sure they are aware of its purpose, is an essential ingredient in the success of a sign. Word spreads around a lake about loon happenings — a nest, or hatch — and about the nest-site management. Where this local awareness exists, signs are especially effective. (For example, one study of loon signs on lakes and



Photo Courtesy of Mark Wilson

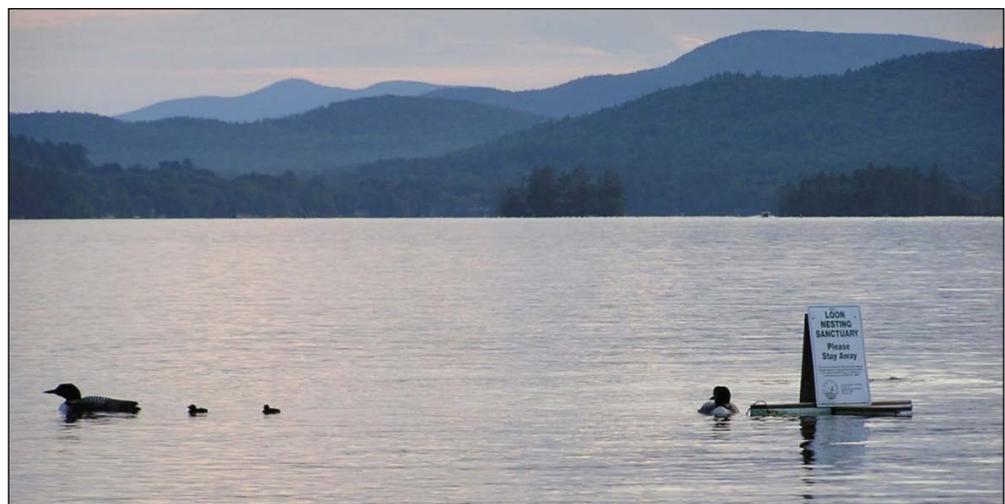
LPC staff float a "Caution: Loon Chicks" sign to protect chicks from watercraft and other human disturbance.

ponds in Vermont, where outreach and sign use have gone hand in hand, found that nesting success increased by 25% at signed sites and by almost 50% at signed sites on the busiest lakes.)

6. A set of signs, rope-lines, and anchors takes a few hours to assemble or build, initially, and then another 30-60 minutes to place at a nest site and also to retrieve after nesting is done. A vigorous network of volunteers and LPC staff

manage floating signs at over a hundred sites on over 70 lakes, so there are frequently chances to help build the signs and get them deployed. Thanks to all who attended the two workdays this spring at The Loon Center and to the many volunteers on the lakes who are involved in the annual task of floating and retrieving LPC signs.

~John H. Cooley



"Loon Nesting Sanctuary" signs are replaced with "Caution: Loon Chicks" signs usually within a day or two of chicks hatching.

A Spike in Band Recoveries

Since late April we've seen an unusual string of five banded loon mortalities, one after another. The chances of this happening are low but not impossible. LPC monitors a few hundred banded loons, and at an annual mortality rate of 5-10% we'd expect about 15-30 mortalities each year in that group. We know that we usually collect almost a third of the expected mortalities in the whole population and that would translate to 5-10 banded loon recoveries per year, putting the recent handful in the right (or plausible) ballpark. But collecting this series of mortalities as known individuals adds a depth of information, and poignancy, to the data.

Each banded loon has a story to tell. We know a small piece of it, a mix of anecdotes and actual data: their annual survival and

territory holding, the traits or quirks we've observed while the loon was nesting or brooding, the pouring rain on the initial capture night a decade ago, or the sheer longevity of one of the "old-timers" on this list. Necropsy results are still pending for several of these recent cases, but we do know that — with unfortunate predictability — they include the first two lead fishing tackle mortalities of the year. It's also not surprising to collect the victim of a fatal territorial dispute in the spring, as loons arrive on the lakes and begin to establish and defend their territories. Four of the five banded loons in this recent wave were male and, on average, at least 14 years old. (Loons can begin breeding by age three but are, on average, at least age six at first breeding when the

majority are banded.) According to studies of loons in the Midwest, this is the age when survival rates begin to decline, especially in male loons, as they are evicted from their original territories or killed by a rival. In fact, one of the male loons collected in May showed injuries consistent with a loon fight. In that case, and the others that are still due to be necropsied, we will have to wait and see whether underlying factors like sickness or injury made the loon vulnerable, or whether a territorial altercation was both the proximate and the ultimate cause of the mortality. Stay tuned for those results in future newsletters.

To illustrate the pieces of these loons' lives that we already know, see Figure 1 on page 6 of this newsletter.

~John H. Cooley

Successful 2018 "Lead Tackle Buyback" Pilot Program Leads to 2019 Expansion

Last summer, the Loon Preservation Committee partnered with New Hampshire Fish and Game, AJ's Bait and Tackle in Meredith, and The Tackle Shack in Newbury to conduct a pilot version of a lead tackle buyback program. The program, which ran from June through Labor Day 2018, was intended to protect loons by encouraging anglers to turn in their illegal lead fishing tackle (sinkers and jigs weighing one ounce or less). LPC's loon mortality data has revealed that lead poisoning resulting from the ingestion of sinkers and jigs within this size range is the number one cause of documented adult loon mortality within New Hampshire, accounting for 44% of

known loon deaths since 1989.

The lead tackle buyback pilot program offered anglers the opportunity to safely dispose of their illegal lead fishing tackle and provided a financial incentive to do so. Buyback participants were able to exchange one ounce or more of lead fishing tackle at the two participating shops for a \$10 voucher, which they could then use to purchase loon-safe, non-lead tackle or other fishing supplies. Our partners at New Hampshire Fish and Game designed and printed uniquely numbered vouchers, which allowed us to track all transactions. Analysis of the data collected from these transactions revealed that the program was an incred-

ible success. Between the two participating shops, 124 vouchers were issued. In addition to the exchanges, several people turned in their lead tackle without claiming a voucher! In total, we collected 4,786 individual pieces of lead fishing tackle weighing a cumulative total of 29 pounds. Every piece of tackle collected had the potential to kill a loon.

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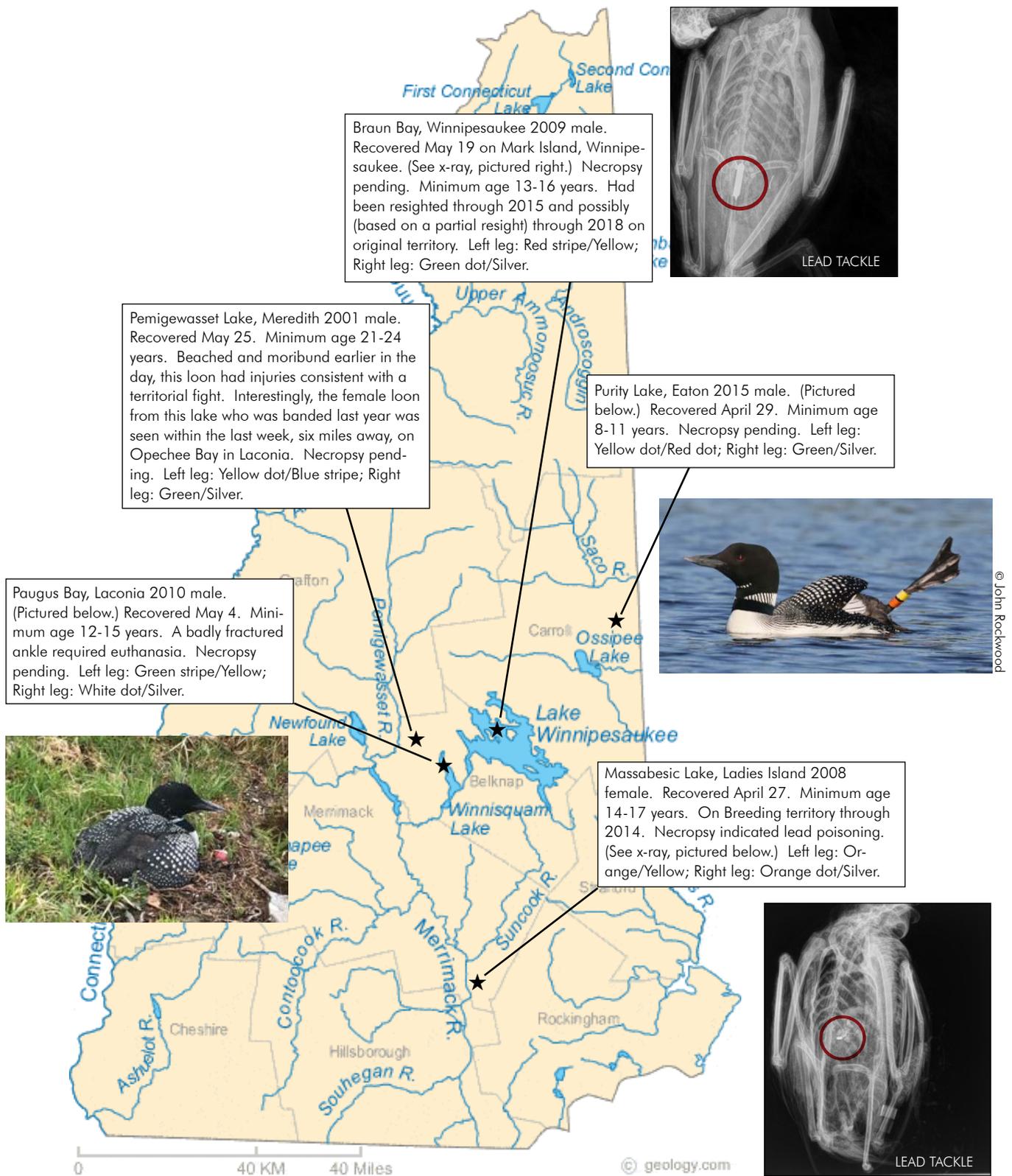


Figure 1: Distribution and profiles of spring 2019 banded loon mortalities in New Hampshire. The minimum loon age is reported as a three-year range because loons can begin breeding by age three but are on average at least age six at first breeding. Therefore, a loon banded as a breeding adult has a minimum known age of 3-6 years old when first banded. The majority of loons are banded as breeding adults.

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As part of the exchange process, we asked lead tackle buyback participants to complete a short questionnaire. The results of this questionnaire indicated that the lead tackle buyback program gained participation from both casual and avid anglers.

The success of the lead tackle buyback program in 2018 has prompted LPC to greatly expand the scale of the program in 2019. This summer, we have improved the accessibility of the program by increasing the number of participating retail locations at which anglers can exchange one ounce or more of illegal lead fishing tackle for a \$10 voucher. Participating retailers were chosen to maximize spatial coverage of the state, with particular focus given to areas near lakes with high fishing pressure and a high number of documented loon deaths from lead poisoning from ingested lead sinkers and jigs.

Although the sale and freshwater use of lead sinkers and jigs weighing one ounce or less was officially banned in June 2016, LPC has continued to collect loons that have died from ingesting lead tackle within that size range since the ban went into effect. This



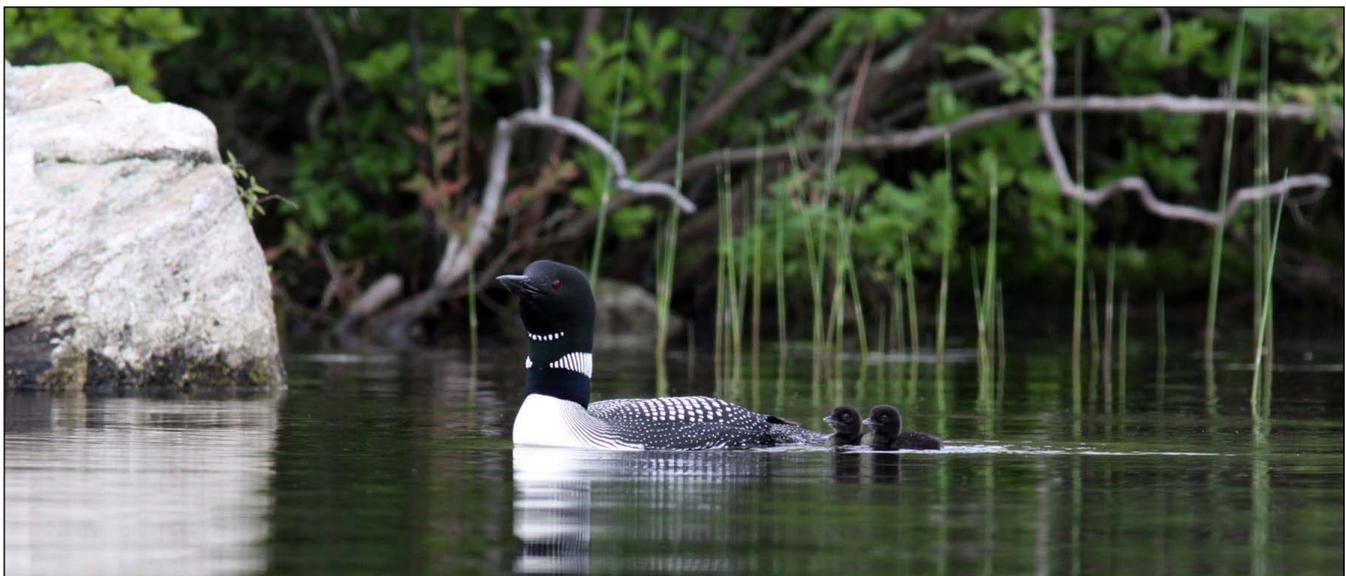
LPC Staff Biologist, Caroline Hughes, inventories lead fishing tackle collected during the 2018 Lead Tackle Buyback Pilot Program.

indicates that illegal lead fishing tackle remains in active use. In 2018 alone, eight adult loons died of lead poisoning resulting from the ingestion of illegal lead fishing tackle. Through the lead tackle buyback we hope to provide an incentive for anglers to come into compliance with the lead tackle ban in New Hampshire and prevent future deaths of loons and other wildlife. Please help us help New Hampshire's wildlife by turning in your lead tackle

and encouraging others to do the same. For a list of participating retailers, please visit <http://www.loonsafe.org>.

~Caroline Hughes

LPC is deeply indebted to the Alex C. Walker Foundation, Marjorie Buckley, Howell Conservation Fund, Marcia Steckler, and Nancy Wolf for their support of the Lead Tackle Buyback initiative.



© John Rockwood

LPC Continues to Focus on Weather and Climate Change

LPC's monitoring and research in 2019 will continue to investigate how loon behavior, nesting success, and health is impacted by weather events and long-term average weather conditions — or climate. This data collection is LPC's first step in anticipating, adapting, and responding to what is arguably the greatest long-term threat facing loons in New Hampshire. For example, this summer, LPC's Caroline Hughes will be collecting a second season of data from nest rafts equipped with temperature sensors and different types of covers. This will help determine how vulnerable nesting loons are to heat stress and what cover designs might help keep them cool. Additionally, LPC continues to sample healthy loons captured for banding, rescued loons, and loon mortalities for climate-dependent pathogens and parasites, as well as for indicators of potential environmental stressors like algal blooms, which are expected to become more common as the climate warms and changes in the future. Finally, the



Photo Courtesy of D. Joset

An incubating loon will pant to regulate its body temperature. Extreme heat can force a loon to abandon its nest to seek relief in cool water.

continued collection of accurate data on loon productivity, nest initiation and completion dates, nest failure causes, hatching outcomes, and chick survivorship — accomplished at each lake and territory through the careful observations of volunteers and trained staff — now has increased importance as an integral part of LPC's analyses of climate influ-

ences on phenology (timing of biological events) and nesting success. Through each aspect of these climate investigations, LPC's historical dataset and New Hampshire's 175-mile north-to-south span give us urgently needed insights into how loons are influenced by breeding season weather and climate and what that means for the future.

~John H. Cooley

"You may think that I am a visionary looking into a nebulous future, but I believe sincerely that if you neglect your opportunities now, within a couple of decades they will be gone."**"**

-Sigurd F. Olson, American Author and Environmentalist

See a Loon in Trouble?
 Please call 603-476-5666
www.loon.org




For help after hours please call
 NH Fish & Game
 603-271-3361

The dramatic increases in LPC's monitoring, research, management, and education to recover loons have been funded by donations to LPC's Loon Recovery Plan. For more information about the Loon Recovery Plan, or to make a donation, please contact Harry Vogel, Senior Biologist/Executive Director at 603-476-5666 or hvogel@loon.org.

2019 LPC SUMMER FIELD STAFF

LAKES REGION



HENRY STEVENS

Henry is back for a second season after graduating from Tufts University. His senior thesis developed land conservation priorities for important shorebird habitat at hundreds of coastal sites in South and North America.

SEACOAST



OWEN BRENNICK

Owen graduated from the University of New Hampshire in May in Wildlife and Conservation Biology and returns for a second season with LPC. His winter duties included help with banding and releasing a rescued loon at Odiorne Point.

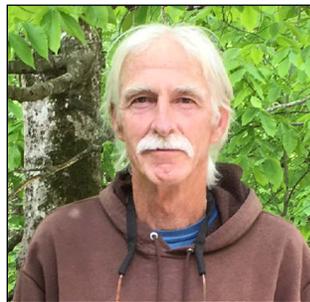
MONADNOCK



ELAINA BADDERS

Elaina just completed her first year at the University of New Hampshire in Wildlife and Conservation Biology. She spent the last three summers working for the Student Conservation Association which included work with sea turtles and plovers.

SUNAPEE



BRIAN LONG

Brian holds a degree in the Conservation of Natural Resources from the University of California, Berkeley. He has extensive wildlife monitoring and surveying experience from mammals to raptors, primarily in his home state of New Mexico.

NORTH COUNTRY



SAM MOORE

Sam holds a master's degree in Environmental Studies from the University of Oregon. Among his field experience is monitoring and managing Piping Plovers in Ipswich, MA, at one of the largest nesting beaches in New England.

WINNIPESAUKEE



BRIDGET RE

Bridget is a recent graduate of the University of Maine where she earned a B.S. in Wildlife Fisheries and Conservation Biology. She acquired valuable research and field skills during a semester at The School for Field Studies in Peru.

SUMMER INTERN



LYNDA MOORE

Lynda is a student at the University of New Hampshire in Wildlife and Conservation Biology. Prior research at the Shoals Marine Laboratory on Appledore Island, Maine, included collecting data, capturing, and banding terns.

SUMMER INTERN



ISABEL BRINTNALL

Isabel holds a master's degree with an emphasis on lake recreation and loons from Antioch New England. She returns for a sixth season covering lakes near Concord, as well as a few of her favorite loon lakes in the Sunapee region.

LPC's SQUAM LAKE region is monitored by Tiffany Grade, LPC's full-time Squam Lakes Project Biologist.

Welcome Tufts Veterinary Intern – Olivia Pea!

Olivia Pea is a rising third year veterinary student at the Cummings School of Veterinary Medicine at Tufts University. She holds a B.S. in Biology, and has additional training in animal husbandry and health from interning at the Staten Island Zoo and as a veterinary technician assistant. A budding interest in pathology grew from her participation in necropsies (animal autopsies) as well as in clinical pathology performed in an animal hospital setting. This summer Olivia will be focusing on developing a comprehensive loon anatomy atlas to assist with loon necropsies, as well as conducting a write-up on a rare case of loon intussusception (intestinal blockage affecting the bowels).

LPC is grateful to continue the tradition of having a Tufts' intern at The Loon Center during the height of summer and loon breeding season!



LPC veterinary intern, Olivia Pea, gets acquainted with the wetlab at The Loon Center where she will be doing many and varied projects this summer to increase our understanding of loons and their challenges.

LPC is pleased to have a brand new Magellan Lead Care II analyzer for testing blood samples of healthy-captured and rescued loons, thanks to the generosity of an anonymous donor who shares a passionate concern for loons and the problem of lead poisoning in wildlife!



LPC contributed comments and data this year to the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) re-licensing process to establish water level targets to protect loons affected by the Brookfield Renewables Errol Dam on Lake Umbagog (pictured left). FERC re-licensing only happens once every 40-50 years. LPC biologists also work closely on other impounded waterbodies with dam owners, NH Department of Environmental Services Dam Bureau, and NH Fish & Game.

Thank you to our donors: April 1, 2018 - March 31, 2019 (\$100 and above)

The Board of Trustees and staff of the Loon Preservation Committee thank all our supporters for their passion and commitment to our mission. Every dollar and donation of goods and/or services makes a difference in our work to preserve loons and their habitats in New Hampshire. We regret that space limits this listing to monetary donations of \$100 or more. Although we make every effort to be accurate, we would appreciate any notice of errors or oversights.

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Remembering Loons Now – and Forever

The greatest reward for remembering the Loon Preservation Committee in your estate planning is the knowledge that you are helping to ensure that the wild call of the loon will echo across New Hampshire's lakes for generations to come.

To recognize donors who have notified us of their estate planning gift, the Loon Preservation Committee has created the Loon Legacy Society. We invite you to join a special group of people who are making a lasting commitment to New Hampshire's loons.



"I have watched 'our' loons through many years by the lake. I've shared their joys and their travails but above all marveled at the welcoming calls which, for me, are inseparable from my New Hampshire experience. To be able to assist in assuring that the Loon Preservation Committee can continue its world-renowned work is truly an honor for me. Please join me in becoming a member of the Loon Legacy Society."

~Arthur "Sandy" McGinnes, LPC member since 1977

A Winter's Tale: Two loons, two very different fates

As we watch the loons returning to the lakes in spring, I'm sure many of us can't help but wonder where they spent the winter. The limited amount of data we have on wintering loons from New Hampshire can give us a general sense, but where **exactly** is any given loon spending its "off season"? We got answers from two of Squam Lake's loons this past winter, and the answer from one has us re-thinking our response to where New Hampshire loons spend the winter. This is also, sadly, a loon that will not be returning to Squam this summer.

Spotting banded loons on the ocean is difficult, so the few reports we receive are often of dead loons. So far, the recoveries have come primarily from the waters off the New England states, anywhere from Maine down to Rhode Island. We did have one loon turn up in Long Island Sound in New York, but that seemed an exception to an otherwise well-established pattern of New Hampshire loons wintering in New England waters. Previous recoveries of loons from Squam Lake have occurred in Massachusetts and Maine, with 3 birds being recovered from those coastlines, plus the Little Squam male from 2001-2016 (originally banded on Squam in 1999) was found dead in March 2017 in Gloucester, MA.

One of Squam's loons this winter apparently put another line on the map between New Hampshire and the New England coast. This report was in the welcome form of a live, healthy, foraging loon off Narragansett, Rhode Island, in mid-February. Based on the description from an observer experienced with band sightings, the most likely match is a currently



Photo Courtesy of Alex Constan

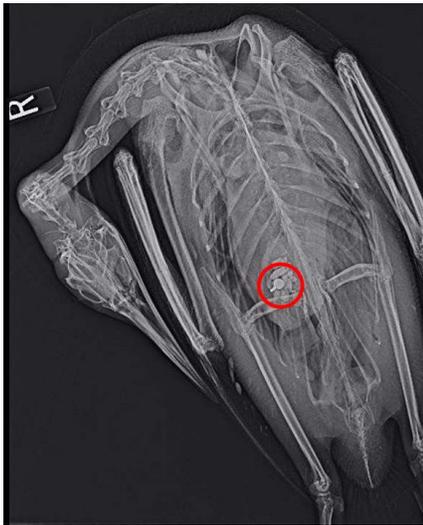
The Moon Island female in better days: here she is in 2012 with her two chicks in Dog Cove on Squam Lake.

unpaired female who frequents the western portion of Squam Lake, from Sunset Point to Mooney Point. She had been a very productive pair member at Great Island from 2001-2008, producing an impressive 9 chicks in those years. After that, she became a single, but was briefly the paired female at Moon Island in 2016. Days after laying an egg, she was evicted from the territory by an intruding loon and has been a single ever since. I will look forward to seeing her again this summer and to know, with a reasonable degree of certainty, that she spent the winter off Narragansett.

The likely sighting of this Squam female alive and well in Rhode Island was particularly welcome news after what had preceded it. Right before Christmas, we received a report that the female from Moon Island in 2018 had been picked up beached in Cape May, New Jersey, on November 30th and subsequently died at a wildlife rehabilitation center. This was devastating news: to lose one of Squam's loons was bad enough, but I had pinned a lot of hope on this fe-

male. Originally banded in Heron Cove in 2009, she had hatched 7 chicks and successfully fledged 3 chicks there between 2009-2015. After spending the intervening years as a single, she was the paired female at Moon Island in 2018. I could not have been happier to see her there. Moon Island had experienced a lot of instability and turnover in the female territorial position over recent years. The female from Heron seemed like just the strong and experienced bird Moon Island needed to stabilize that territory. My hopes seemed borne out last summer when she successfully raised a chick with her mate. With that pair, Moon Island looked set to be a stable, successful territory for years to come. The news from New Jersey ended those hopes.

And southern New Jersey of all places – the location was shocking in itself, hundreds of miles south of any previously-documented wintering New Hampshire loons. However, transmitters placed on loons from Maine have documented them wintering as far south as the Chesapeake, so perhaps this is less unusual than it at first appears. Part of the problem



The x-ray of the Moon Island female after she was recovered this past November in Cape May, New Jersey. The red circle indicates the lead jig-head that poisoned her.

is our limited data and the limited number of reports we get of wintering loons. In any case, she certainly set a record for New Hampshire and proved once again how much we have to learn about loon biology and life history.

But there was a more immediate question in my mind: why did she die? I set about trying to track down more information about what happened to her, and I finally made contact with the wildlife rehabilitator who had collected her. She told me that the loon had died within 12 hours of being picked up from the beach and that she still had the body and would send it back to me. She told me she had never had a banded loon before, so she saved it, figuring somebody would want it back. Boy, did I ever – at least we now had a chance to learn what happened.

I handed the loon off to the experienced hands of Dr. Mark Pokras of Cummings School of Veterinary Medicine at Tufts University, who has necropsied thousands of dead loons and the vast majority of the dead loons

collected in New Hampshire. I was waiting anxiously for the diagnosis, expecting some strange, coastal-related cause of death. Sadly, the answer from Dr. Pokras was all too common and all too upsetting: lead poisoning from an ingested lead fishing jig. Another Squam loon, gone due to lead tackle.

The only question remains, where did she get it from? The jig size and type could be used on either freshwater or saltwater: it was not one of the large saltwater jigs. She was picked up November 30th, and lead poisoning will kill a loon approximately 2-4 weeks after ingestion. Loons with chicks are more likely to stay on the freshwater lakes with their chicks longer into the fall, oftentimes into November. We will never know whether this jig came from one of her last meals on Squam, one of her first meals in Cape May, or from somewhere in between. Regardless, it is another Squam loon, another New Hampshire loon, whose life was cut short by lead fishing tackle, leaving me sad for her life lost, upset at the reason for it, and worried about what this means for the Moon Island territory and the potential for more territorial instability among Squam's loon population this summer and be-

yond as a result of her death.

So it was a winter full of news from Squam's loons, and we learned a lot: we got two important new data points of where New Hampshire's loons spend the winter, one of which changed our understanding of this subject; we glimpsed one loon living the life a loon should live in the winter; and we were reminded of the devastating effects of lead fishing tackle on loons, even when we were least expecting it. And I learned what happened to this loon: thanks to LPC's banding efforts and the foresight of a wildlife rehabilitator to save the body of this banded loon, I will not be wondering why she does not return this summer – and I will know to look for any effects of her absence in Squam's ongoing social and territorial instability this summer. A "Winter's Tale" indeed, with two very different endings...

~Tiffany Grade

We thank Vicki Schmidt of Barnsboro, New Jersey, for collecting and caring for the Moon Island female and for sending her back to us for necropsy. And we thank Dr. Mark Pokras and the Cummings School of Veterinary Medicine at Tufts University for performing the necropsy.



Kithe Wilson Photo

Colored leg bands are visible on this wintering loon feasting on a crab in Biddeford Pool, Maine.

Meet the Stars of LPC's 2019 Loon Cam

For the sixth year in a row, LPC is streaming live footage of loons nesting in the Lakes Region of New Hampshire. Our loon cam has become a world-wide phenomenon in recent years, with viewers in all 50 states and over 200 countries. Last year LPC streamed two separate nesting pairs back-to-back, with high definition video capturing the entire nesting process. This year we will once again live stream two nests, and viewers will have a front row seat to watch the trials and tribulations that nesting loons experience during their month-long incubation period. The loons on our loon cams have no easy task ahead if they hope to hatch and raise chicks—they will have to overcome many threats, including swarms of black flies, sweltering summer temperatures, opportunistic predators, and human disturbance.

Veteran loon cam viewers know our 2019 loon cam pairs well, as both pairs have been featured on our loon cam in past years. We have been broadcasting the same pair at the first loon cam location since 2014. In the five years since we began live streaming their nest, these loons have successfully fledged six chicks together. Though the pair from our second loon cam location has not been together as long (they were first documented together in 2017 and first featured on our loon cam in 2018), they have had an impressive track record as well. In the two years they have been together, these loons have fledged two chicks. That is an impressive feat for both of these pairs, as the average reproductive rate for loon pairs in New Hampshire is one chick fledged every other year.

Who are these loons that have



The leg bands on the male of the 2019 "Loon Cam 1" nest are visible as he slips into the water to get some relief from biting black flies.

enraptured so many viewers across the globe, and how do we know so much about their reproductive history? Both members of both loon cam pairs are banded with unique combinations of color bands, so LPC has been able to track them over the years. In doing so, we have compiled detailed information about them, their partners, and their reproductive output. LPC's first loon cam of the summer stars a female loon originally banded in 1998 and her partner, a male who was first banded in 2014. We are only able to capture and band loons when they have chicks, and the minimum age at which a loon can successfully breed is three years. Because of this, we know that all loons that we band as adults are, at minimum, three years old at the time of their banding. The webcam female was originally banded 21 years ago, so we know that she is, at minimum, 24 years old; however, because most loons don't actually breed until they are six years old, it is more likely that this female is 27 or older! She is one of the oldest loons of known age residing in New Hampshire,

one of just 13 loons in our state known to be over the age of 20. Her mate may be just as old as she is; however, because he was only banded in 2014, we cannot know for sure. What we can confirm is that he is at least eight years old, but is most likely 11 years old or more.

In the 21 years since she was first banded, the female from loon cam 1 has continued to breed on the same territory. In that time, she has hatched a total of 17 chicks, at least six of which were fathered by her current mate. While we only know with certainty that these two loons have been a pair since 2014 when the male was first banded, it is possible that they have been together much longer. Prior to the male being banded in 2014, the loon cam 1 female had been paired with an unbanded male since 1999. There is a chance (though it is impossible to confirm) that this pair has been breeding together for two decades! At press time, they were incubating two eggs.

We hope that their long history of success continues this summer!

LPC's second loon cam of the

summer features loons that we know less about. The female of the pair was first banded in 2017 and has been partnered with her current mate ever since. The male of the pair was first banded in 2006, on a territory bordering the one on which he now resides. During the time that he remained on that neighboring territory, his rate of reproductive success was slightly lower than the New Hampshire average, fledging just four chicks during the period from from 2007-2016. However, since 2017 when this male settled on his current territory and paired up with his current mate, he has fledged two chicks in two years — double the New Hampshire average. Will this pair nest again this summer and continue their two-year success streak? Tune in to find out at <https://www.loon.org/looncam.php>!

~Caroline Hughes

If you think you're too small to have an impact, try going to sleep with a mosquito.

LPC Hosts 30th Annual Northeast Loon Study Working Group at The Loon Center

On March 21st-22nd, the Loon Preservation Committee hosted the 30th Northeast Loon Study Working Group (NELSWG) meeting at The Loon Center. Thirty meetings speaks to the longevity and success of this group that was formed to provide a forum for researchers from throughout the northeastern states, the eastern Canadian provinces, and beyond to share findings about the biology and life history of loons; discuss threats to loon populations; and work to address challenges facing loons through management and public education. Meeting as a group allows researchers and state-wide organizations like LPC to place their findings into a larger regional context, and facilitates in-depth discussions about priorities for new research and new collaborations to benefit loons.

The subjects covered at the meeting were nearly as diverse as the participants, with a total of 30 presentations and discussion

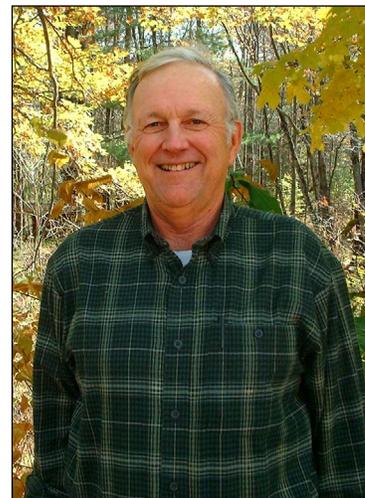
topics addressed over two intensive days. LPC staff presented latest findings of our research on contaminants in inviable loon eggs collected from failed nests, our ongoing research on the effects of increasing temperatures and precipitation on loons, and preliminary results of our work on the effects of different nesting raft covers on mitigating heat stress on nesting loons. We also shared results of our wildly successful Lead Tackle Buyback pilot program, and plans to dramatically expand that program this year to inspire other organizations to expand that effort to other states.

NELSWG continues to provide an invaluable opportunity to exchange findings and ideas with our peers and peer groups and hone our monitoring, research, management, and educational activities to assure the best outcomes for loons in New Hampshire and beyond.

~Harry Vogel

Remembering John Lanier

We were deeply saddened to learn of the passing of John Lanier on March 4, 2019. John first joined the ranks of LPC as a member of its Policy Committee in 1987. At the time, he was employed as the Forest Wildlife Biologist for the White Mountain National Forest. His invaluable advice on technical and research issues evolved into a formal Technical Committee to help guide LPC's research, monitoring, and management efforts. He would serve on that Committee, including as Chair, through 2009. His personable and soft-spoken nature complemented a talent for persuading people and agencies to work together to preserve our natural places. At the same time, he had little patience for bureaucracies and was well known, and much respected, for a no-nonsense attitude that put our natural resources first and all of the "politics and baloney" second. LPC was very fortunate to have someone with John's unique skills and passion for wildlife and natural areas working on behalf of loons in New Hampshire. But we were especially blessed to call John our friend.



LPC Welcomes Two New Trustees

The Loon Preservation Committee is delighted to welcome two new Trustees to the LPC Board – David Govatski and Jeff Patterson.

David Govatski and his wife, Kathi, live in Jefferson, NH, where he is self-employed as a Naturalist. He spent the past several summers as a ship naturalist in Alaska, British Columbia, and Iceland on small expedition ships. He also works with tour companies presenting programs and leading field trips in New England and the Canadian Maritime Provinces. David retired from the US Forest Service after a 33-year career as a Fire Management Officer, Forester, and Silviculturist. He first became interested in loons in 1980 while monitoring loon territories on the Ottawa National Forest in Michigan.

Jeff Patterson enjoys spending as much time as possible on Squam Lake with his wife, Eloise, and their four children. He was recruited to serve on the LPC Board by his Squam neighbor and friend, Sandy McGinnes. He is currently the Chief Financial Officer of SoundHouse, LLC, a company which acquires and owns music rights. When not on Squam Lake, he and his family reside in Lincoln, MA. In addition to LPC, Jeff serves on the boards of the Noble and Greenough School and Codman Community Farms.

The Board of Trustees is fortunate to recruit two such dedicated and diverse talents to help advise and support LPC staff in their efforts to protect New Hampshire's loons.

~Linda Egli Johnson

Birdathon/Bloomathon Numbers Down Due to Cold, Wet Spring

It was a quiet year for the annual Tamworth area Birdathon/Bloomathon but not for lack of effort! A cool, wet May delayed blooms and spring migrants. This annual rite of spring was founded by the late Bette Steele, and is the longest, continually-running count of its kind in New Hampshire – a great incentive to carry on the tradition!

Ned Beecher, Chris Clyne, Lucy Gatchell, Tiffany Grade, Lynne Hart, Ken Klapper, Jane Rice, Tin Mountain/Cold River Band Campers, and Tony Vazano made up the “Bird Team.” They counted 109 species in all – most of the certainties but no surprises. Greater Yellowlegs were seen in two places, and Wood Thrushes were almost common the day of the count.

The “Bloom Team” included Ingrid Albee, Ned Beecher, Amy Carter, Chris Clyne, John Cooley, Lucy Gatchell, and Jane Rice. They counted 46 blooms (as compared to 84 in 2018). This was the first time since 2002 that Bloodroot and Yellow Violet were among the blooms counted.



Greater Yellowlegs

The final count for the 2019 Birdathon/Bloomathon was 155 birds and blooms. Not a banner year (204 being the current record set in 2013) but indicative of a delayed spring in the Lakes Region.

Many thanks to the Lakes Region Chapter of New Hampshire Audubon for hosting this event each year and for sharing the proceeds from pledges with LPC; and to the intrepid volunteers who scoured Tamworth and contiguous towns in search of birds and blooms. And a special note of thanks to Jane Rice for bringing the teams out of hibernation and reminding them that, despite the weather, spring has arrived!

ANNUAL LOON CENSUS
SATURDAY, JULY 20, 2019
8AM - 9AM
CENSUS FORM ENCLOSED
(SEE PAGE 23)

SUMMER BULLETIN BOARD

Summer Nature Talks: Thursday evenings at 7:00pm, July 11 - August 22; FREE

Annual Loon Census: Saturday, July 20; 8am - 9am

A one-hour, state-wide count of loons on New Hampshire lakes and ponds. See census form on page 23 for instructions. Contact volunteers@loon.org with questions.

Loon Festival: Saturday, July 20; 10am - 2pm; FREE

Come by The Loon Center for loon-themed arts & crafts, face painting, balloon sculptures by Mo, educational loon slide shows, live animals and exhibits, music, refreshments & more!

Carl Johnson Memorial Golf Tournament: Monday, August 19; 7am-2pm; \$100 per golfer

A fun morning of golf at Ridgewood Country Club. Grand prizes and exclusive raffle. Breakfast and lunch included. Pre-register by August 12.

LPC Annual Meeting: Thursday, August 22; 6:45pm

You are also welcome to attend the volunteer potluck dinner at 5:30pm and/or the end-of-season loon report immediately following the Annual Meeting (see page 22). Contact volunteers@loon.org.



We will not be holding our Annual Gala & Auction this summer but are actively working on a new and improved gala to be unveiled next summer!



“Yakking for Loons” Lays Down its Paddles

After seven great years of paddling, camaraderie, and a fabulous boxed lunch, “Yakking for Loons” is laying down its paddles. The brainchild of neighbors and LPC members, Linda Allen and Joanne Chesley, “Yakking” had become a much anticipated annual event. Registration fees and pledges supported LPC, while a flotilla of “yakkers” paddled Green’s Basin on Winnepesaukee in search of loons. Paddlers were rewarded for their efforts with a bountiful boxed lunch donated by Joanne and husband, Curt, of Curt’s Caterers.

Linda and Joanne are both grandparents now which has changed the course of their lives – in a most wonderful way! Their incredible dedication of time and passion made this event grow from 34 paddlers the first year to a record 72 paddlers! And Curt Chesley remains the reigning champion of fundraising for the event. Thank you Curt!

In addition to Linda and Joanne, our thanks go out to the event sponsors – Curt’s Caterers and Irving Energy – and to the Allen and Chesley families for their tireless support!



Linda Allen and Joanne Chesley

Summer 2019 Nature Talk Series

at The Loon Center

183 Lee's Mill Road, Moultonborough, NH

Thursdays, 7:00pm ♦ Admission Free ♦ Donations Appreciated

July 11 **Rick Libby — The Wildlife of New Hampshire**

Rick Libby has been photographing wildlife for over 40 years during which time he has developed a rather unique approach to wildlife photography. Forsaking a tripod, most of his work is done from a kayak or using a monopod. Rick works to photograph wildlife, whether they be on land, water, or in the air, living their lives with as little disruption as possible.

July 18 **Ben Kilham — What Bears Have Taught Me About Being Human**

Black bears, thought to be solitary, have a different type of social behavior that possibly parallels early human behavior. They show evidence of reciprocal altruism, matri-linear hierarchy, and a mix of intentional and emotional communication. Ben has been the focus of several news articles and documentaries, including National Geographic's *A Man Among Bears* and Animal Planet's *Papa Bear*.

July 2 **SLNSC Naturalist — Creatures of the Night**

How do wild animals find food in the dark or escape predators? You don't have to stay up late to get a close look at elusive nocturnal creatures. Meet three live creatures of the night with a Squam Lake Natural Science Center naturalist to learn surprising details about the adaptations that make them well suited for night life.

August 1 **Marc Stowbridge — Astronomy for Birders**

After the birds have gone to roost, there is still much to see! Past president of the New Hampshire Astronomical Society and volunteer educator for the NASA/JPL Solar System Ambassador Program, Marc will discuss using binoculars and spotting scopes, as well as planetarium software, for astronomical viewing. Come learn about how a birder's tools of the trade can be used to view the wonders of the night sky.

August 8 **Jim Vernon — Geology of the Lakes Region**

The landscape we see today in the Lakes Region has evolved over hundreds of millions of years. From ancient volcanoes to inundation by shallow seas, to mile-thick sheets of glacial ice, to present day climate change, this part of New Hampshire has a long and dynamic history. This program will summarize some of the highlights of this long geologic history.

August 15 **Diane Hime — Rehabilitating Raptors**

A wildlife rehabilitator in New York state for 10 years, Diane specializes in fox, porcupines, fawns, and raptors. A Red-Tailed Hawk, Barred Owl, and a Great Horned Owl will be among her guests. She will discuss the unique characteristics of each species and what's involved in their rehabilitation.

August 22 **John Rockwood & Harry Vogel — LPC End of Season Report**

Wildlife photographer John Rockwood will share images of two local Common Loon families, from their arrival in spring through August. LPC Senior Biologist/Executive Director, Harry Vogel, will present trends in New Hampshire's loon population and preliminary statistics on how loons fared this year.



Save paper and send us your sightings on-line! You can submit this form at www.loon.org/census.php



New Hampshire Loon Census
Saturday, 20 July 2019
8:00 AM - 9:00 AM

Lake: _____ Town: _____

Observer(s): _____

Telephone: _____ E-mail: _____

Address: _____

Total number of people in party: _____

Observations:

	Time	# Adults	# Chicks	# Immatures	*Location/Direction
Example	8:17	1 AD			Flew in from east
1.					
2.					
3.					
4.					
TOTALS					

Please note any bald eagle sightings during this hour & the loons' response (i.e. vocalizations):

(1) Record only the FIRST sighting of each loon or group, then be sure to total the number of loons observed on the appropriate line. Note the direction in which the loons move or fly.

(2) If possible, please attach a sketch/map of census area and the location of any loons you observe.

(3) It is CRITICAL that observations continue for the ENTIRE HOUR.

(4) Remember, a report of zero is just as biologically important as a report of 10 loons.

(3) Your sightings from throughout the summer are also valuable. Please comment on loon activity observed at other times on the reverse of this page.

CENSUS FORMS MUST BE RECEIVED BY JULY 31 TO BE INCLUDED IN THE FINAL TALLY.

Please return this form to the LPC: PO Box 604, Moultonborough, NH 03254,
or you can fax it 603-476-5497 or email it to volunteers@loon.org.

If you were part of a coordinated census effort on a larger lake, please send this form to your coordinator so they can send the forms in all together.

Loon Preservation Committee
PO Box 604
Moultonborough, NH 03254

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for underwriting this publication.

