



# Loon Preservation Committee

## ANNUAL REPORT 2024

APRIL 1, 2023 - MARCH 31, 2024

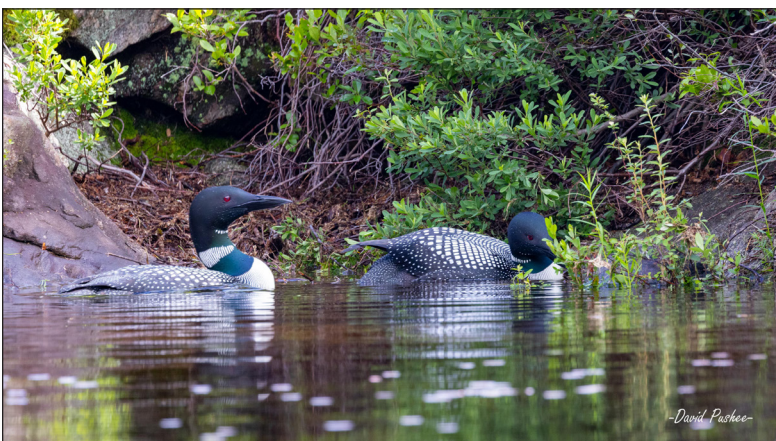
*The Loon Preservation Committee exists to restore and maintain a healthy population of loons throughout New Hampshire; to monitor the health and productivity of loon populations as sentinels of environmental quality; and to promote a greater understanding of loons and the natural world.*

First the aluminum band goes around the right tarsus of the captured male loon. Caroline Hughes uses pliers and lots of force to clamp it in place while two young summer biologists hold and try to calm the anxious loon, never before out of water for so long. Then Caroline clasps a white striped plastic band on the same leg and quickly places one orange and one yellow plastic band on the left leg of the captured bird. Finally, blood drawn and the loon weighed, he can be released into the quiet waters of Whitton Pond. And the whole process can be repeated for his mate, waiting expectantly in the darkness of a late night.

I was an interested witness to the banding and other vitals gathered recently on Whitton, my local lake. Simultaneously, another banding was taking place on Lake Winnepesaukee. The Loon Preservation Committee—in other words—never sleeps. We do state of the art research around the clock and then, with the blood and other biological information laboriously gathered, share what we have learned with other avian biologists around North America. The LPC's work with and research about loons is expanding all the time. We monitor over 343 lakes in New Hampshire and a population that has grown to 345 breeding pairs, with 137 chicks (last year). It is LPC's mission to make sure that this special part of our avifauna thrives generally, and in New Hampshire particularly.

We intend this year and in future years to employ your generous material and financial support to continue to strengthen the many ways in which the LPC enhances environmental and avian resiliency. Given the many serious threats to New Hampshire's human and avian sustainability, the LPC will marshal its and your forces to meet such challenges with the power of our monitoring, our research (including banding), and our concern for such an apex bird. Please join me in this scientifically significant endeavor.

Robert I. Rotberg, Chair  
Board of Trustees



The summer of 2023 was a tale of unprecedented rainfall and a record number of flooded loon nests in the state. Above: A loon pair on Upper Hall Pond unsuccessfully attempts to rescue their submerged egg after water levels rose more than a foot. Photo courtesy of David Pushee.



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**EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR’S MESSAGE:**

**Helping Loons Cope**

The Loon Preservation Committee’s Fiscal Year Ended March 31st of 2024 was a tough one for New Hampshire’s loons. The unrelenting rains of the summer of 2023 spelled trouble for a bird that nests at the water’s edge, and despite our intensive management our loons experienced their third-worst breeding season in LPC’s 48 years of work to help loons.

That management included a record number of loon nesting rafts floated on New Hampshire lakes to help loons cope with summer floods; protection of natural and raft-nesting loons with “Loon Nesting Area” signs and ropelines; continued work with dam operators to keep lake levels stable, as much as possible given record rains, during critical loon nesting periods; and a dramatic expansion of our Lead Tackle Buyback Program, which surpassed 57,000 pieces of lead tackle collected and kept out of our lakes and our loons.

An educated and motivated public is vital to save loons or any other threatened or endangered species, and outreach and education to teach people about loons and their needs was a major part of LPC’s work in Fiscal Year 2024. Our LoonCam, focused on a nesting pair of loons, drew 362,000 views and 39,000 posts from worldwide visitors. LPC staff gave 135 presentations throughout the state, and we continued to grow our outreach through our website (loon.org), e-newsletters, and educational social media posts.

New Hampshire’s record rainy summer was followed by a record warm winter. The resultant delay in migration threatened a record number of loons as ice-in on many lakes was delayed to the point where it intersected with the flightless period of wing-feather molt. Close to 30 loons unable to flee the encroaching ice were crammed into a room-sized last patch of open water on Lake Winnepesaukee for several days. In the midst of LPC’s rescue operations a warm south wind broke up the newly-formed ice and the remaining loons were able to disperse and survive their close call. This dangerous business, for the loons and loon rescuers, marked a sea change for loons in New Hampshire—the first time a substantial number of loons were able to overwinter on freshwater lakes without flying to the ocean.

The summer of 2023 and the winter of 2024 provided yet more evidence that the world is changing, for loons and for people. LPC is changing with it by testing and implementing new management and outreach initiatives informed by our monitoring and research along with our tried-and-true work. With your continued support we will help loons adapt and overcome their new and ongoing challenges and continue to thrive on our lakes.

Harry Vogel  
 Senior Biologist/Executive Director



**2023** was the sixth year of LPC’s groundbreaking Lead Tackle Buyback Program—a first-in-the-nation effort to reduce Common Loon mortality from ingested lead tackle—with over 57,000 pieces of lead tackle collected.

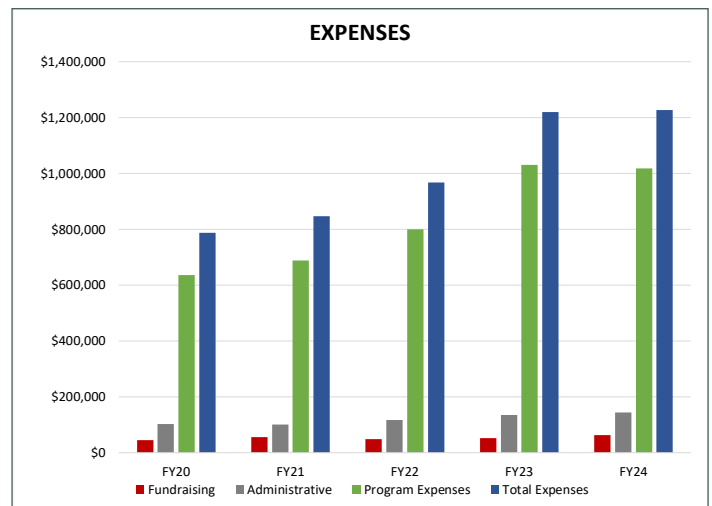
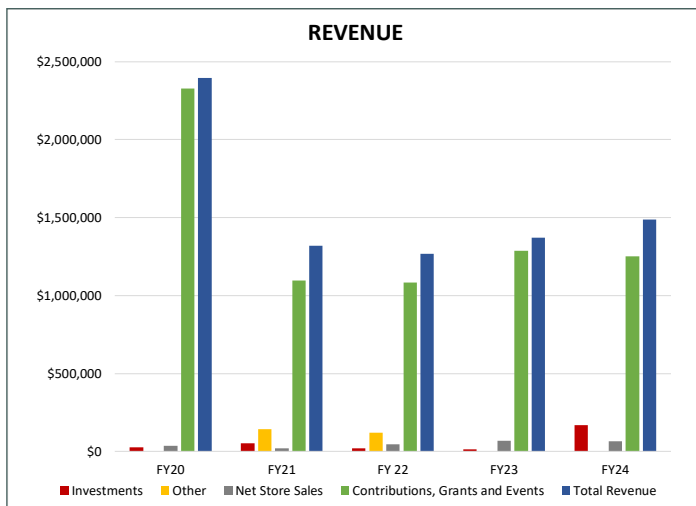
**Population and Productivity:**

	<u>2019</u>	<u>2020</u>	<u>2021</u>	<u>2022</u>	<u>2023</u>
Territorial Loon Pairs	313	321	326	345	345
Nesting Pairs	221	216	229	236	242
Chicks Hatched	193	203	192	244	196
Chicks Surviving to mid-August	148	156	133	177	137

## FINANCIAL SUMMARY:

**Loon Preservation Committee:** Summary of Activities and Changes in Net Assets  
Fiscal Year Ending: March 31

	FY20	FY21	FY22	FY23	FY24
<b>Revenue:</b>					
Contributions, Grants and Events	\$2,328,325*	\$1,098,165*	\$1,082,662	\$1,287,768	\$1,253,062
Store Sales, Net Cost of Goods	\$37,952	\$22,385	\$45,600	\$69,685	\$66,230
Investments	\$28,768	\$54,487	\$19,344	\$13,395	\$169,863
Other (PPP1, Energy Rebates, etc.)	—	\$144,066	\$120,681	—	—
<b>Total Revenue</b>	<b>\$2,395,045</b>	<b>\$1,319,103</b>	<b>\$1,268,287</b>	<b>\$1,370,848</b>	<b>\$1,489,155</b>
<i>*Includes gifts received during the capital campaign</i>					
<b>Expenses:</b>					
Program Expenses	\$636,374	\$688,111	\$800,597	\$1,029,983	\$1,018,304
Administrative	\$104,337	\$108,672	\$117,219	\$135,580	\$144,960
Fundraising	\$46,166	\$49,390	\$50,338	\$53,399	\$64,161
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>\$786,877</b>	<b>\$846,173</b>	<b>\$968,154</b>	<b>\$1,218,962</b>	<b>\$1,227,425</b>
<b>Increase in Net Assets:</b>	<b>\$1,608,168</b>	<b>\$472,930</b>	<b>\$300,133</b>	<b>\$151,886</b>	<b>\$261,730</b>



LPC's financial records are audited by Rowley & Associates of Concord, NH. Copies of the audit and the IRS 990 return are available on our website: [www.loon.org](http://www.loon.org).



Left: A loon nest on Lake Winnepesaukee is completely flooded from record rainfall.

Right: Artificial nesting raft sites were more successful, as they were able to rise and fall with changing lake levels.



# Loons Challenged by Extreme Weather

**F**rom May through August, LPC staff again teamed up for the 48th year with a dedicated network of volunteers to survey Common Loon abundance and productivity at over 500 occupied or potential breeding territories, on 343 lakes throughout the Granite State.

- The summer of 2023 was the rainiest on record in New Hampshire, and one of the worst for chick hatching success. The number of chicks fledged per loon pair, the basic measure of productivity, sank below 0.40 (Chicks Survived/Territorial Pair) for only the third time in LPC's 48-year monitoring period.
- The wettest summer on record made artificial nesting rafts and marsh nest sites more successful than the sandy or rocky substrate of island or mainland shorelines. LPC floated a record 151 nest rafts of which 56 were used for nesting, producing 27% of all chicks hatched in the state.
- The 2023 breeding season saw a record number of flooded nests (42). July brought record amounts of rainfall and a greater number of flash flood warnings in a single month than New Hampshire had experienced in any one entire year.
- Although the record-breaking weather of 2023 almost gave us the worst nesting season ever, there were some silver linings—a record number of nesting pairs (242) and nesting attempts (260), as well as breeding loons discovered in new and unusual places.
- The winter of 2023-2024 was the warmest on record in New Hampshire. To the best of our knowledge, this was the first winter that a substantial number of loons overwintered successfully on inland lakes, including Winnepesaukee, Newfound Lake, and Opechee.
- LPC staff and volunteers rescued 12 loons on 6 different lakes as they were iced-in. At one point in mid-February on Winnepesaukee a group of at least 28 loons were forced into a small patch of open water as the Broads skimmed over, one of a couple of brief ice-ins on the lake.



Cindy Zuckerbraun Photo



Left: LPC's Outreach Biologist, Caroline Hughes, and Field Program Coordinator, Ashley Keenan, hold an adult loon rescued from the ice on Paugus Bay in January. The healthy loon was banded and then released on the ocean, and has since been seen in the Lakes Region.

Above: A group of loons found themselves trapped by ice in the Broads on Lake Winnepesaukee in mid-February, during the warmest winter on record in New Hampshire.

**L**oons can deal with a bad year. By rescuing loons in distress, keeping lead out of our lakes, educating people about loons and their needs, and identifying and addressing causes of loon deaths, LPC works to keep adult loons alive from year to year, so that they have many chances over their lifetime to nest and raise young.