



# LOON PRESERVATION COMMITTEE NEWSLETTER

FALL 2024



Alex Constan Photo



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*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

### *Rain, Heat, Lead... and Hope*

Last year, a record wet June and July sorely tested our loons. This summer, we had less rain but more heat, and our record hot June and July proved almost equally as challenging for our loons as the flooding rains of 2023. Over the past two years, our loons have borne the brunt of both the increasing rain and temperatures long predicted in climate change models. That is evident in two unfortunate records: a record number of flooded loon nests in 2023 and a record number of loons incubating inviable loon eggs, destined never to hatch, this summer.

The good news is that the Loon Preservation Committee's management, built on 50 years of successful work to recover our threatened loon population, helped loons cope with both of those challenges. New records for numbers of nesting rafts floated in 2023 and then again in 2024 helped nesting loons ride the wave of last year's rising water levels, and LPC's new UV-reflective fabric on the roofs of those rafts helped cool birds on the nest this summer. For the past two years, we have seen 27% and 28% of New Hampshire loon chicks hatched from rafts floated by Loon Preservation Committee staff and volunteers – close to record levels. We would all much rather see loons nesting on natural shorelines, but LPC staff and volunteers are building, floating, removing, storing, and repairing an ever-increasing number of rafts every year. They are certainly not a panacea for all things ailing nesting pairs, but they have their place in the range of LPC's management actions to help loons.

New Hampshire will continue to have cool, dry summers of the sort that we have found to be conducive to loon nesting success – but our changing climate means that those ideal summers are likely to be fewer and further between than in the past. Given the increasing challenges facing nesting pairs, the survival of our adult loons becomes all the more important for the future prospects of loons in New Hampshire – and that makes the three entirely avoidable loon deaths from ingested lead fishing tackle on Merrymeeting Lake this year all the more vexing. Here is where a little sunlight can benefit loons, as well as those of us who could take this aggregation of bad news as a sign of their inevitable decline: after LPC reported on this tragic lead tackle trifecta, one of our participating Lead Tackle Buyback Program shops, Berry's Bait in Alton next to Merrymeeting Lake, told us that a slew of lead tackle had been turned in to be exchanged for \$10 vouchers from LPC to buy new, lead-free, loon-safe tackle. Most of the lead was brought in by kids who saw an opportunity, with a little incentive in the form of a voucher, to right a wrong and help a threatened species. With luck those actions, and the expanding environmental awareness they portend, will help ensure that those kids will still be enjoying loons on Merrymeeting and other lakes 50 years from now.

## Taking the Heat

Following the wettest summer on record in New Hampshire in 2023, the summer of 2024 was the hottest on record for the state. It's easy to imagine what this can mean for loons. Keeping an egg or two at just the right temperature and humidity in a vulnerable shoreline nest, for four straight weeks, is already a tall order. A sweltering heatwave, or a series of torrential downpours, makes the needed nest conditions that much harder to maintain. In fact, there weren't a lot of other good explanations besides the summer heat for the low nesting success that LPC's staff and volunteers documented around the state this year, down in the bottom quarter of the stack for the 50-year monitoring period (0.89 chicks hatched/nesting pair (ch/np), versus 0.98 ch/np, the long-term mean) (see Figures 1 and 2). Although nest predation bumped up from five percent of nest attempts in 2023 to 11% this year, that was very close to the long-term average (10%), par for the course. Last year, the flooding may also have washed out some nests before predators could get to them. There were a total of only six flooded or washed out nests this year, down from 43 in 2023, and the summer was notably light on nest failures assigned to human disturbance, with just one, and failures caused by territorial rivalry with intruding loons (just two). Keep in mind that because a specific cause can't be determined or assigned at over half of the nest failures we find, the numbers reported here are likely underestimates of the actual rate for each cause.

With many of the usual culprits missing in action, the clearest evidence shifting some of the blame

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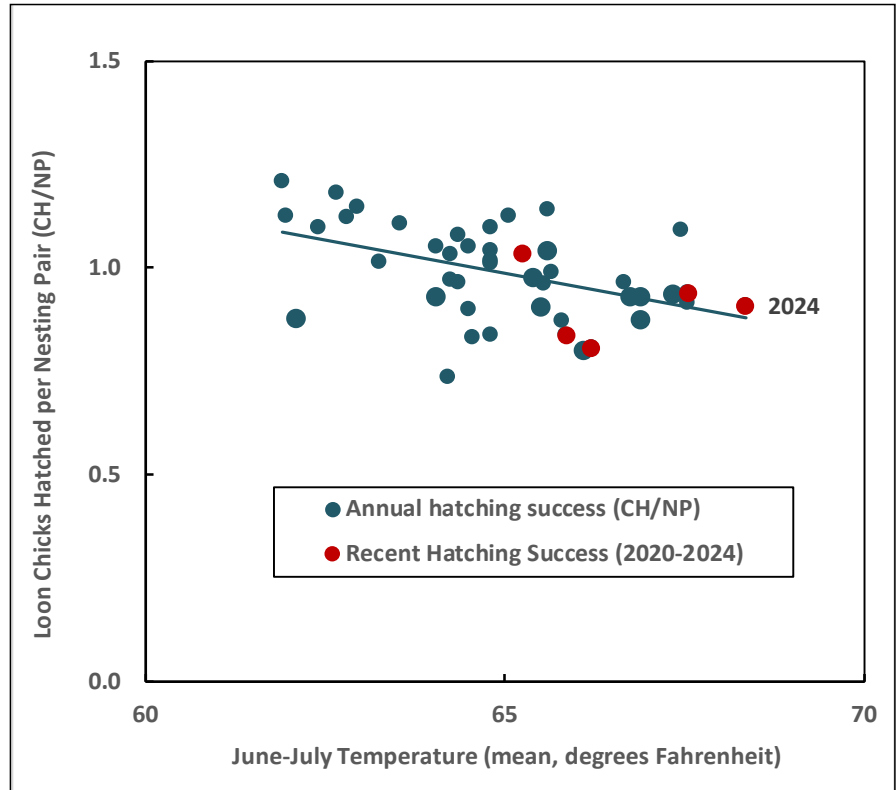


Figure 1. Statewide annual hatching success (chicks hatched per nesting pair) versus mean June-July temperatures, 1980-2024, with the most recent five years shown in red. Record heat correlated with low hatching success for New Hampshire's loons in 2024, conforming to the trend.

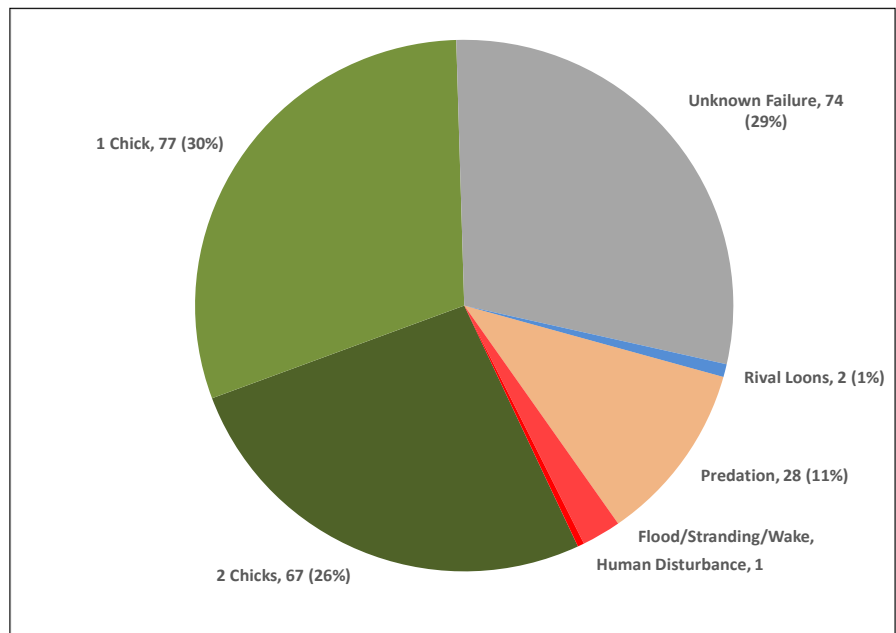


Figure 2. Nest outcomes in 2024 reflect modest hatching success, likely diminished by summer heat (increasing the number of unknown nest failures), and less flooding than last year.

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to hot weather was the number of overincubated nests, where persistent loons tended intact but inviable eggs well past the expected hatch date. For example, the loon pair on Canobie Lake nested in the first week of June and finally gave up the ghost eight weeks later, in early August. In 2024 there were 28 nests like this, three times the long-term average rate, and the highest rate we've ever seen (see Figure 3). After a record number of flooded nests in 2023, the overincubated nests this summer contributed to a disappointing 2024 that left New Hampshire's loons still waiting — like Goldilocks — for the return of more moderate weather conditions, the preferred middle ground.

The good news from a hot summer was that there were a few more new loons sticking it out in the heat. We counted fourteen additional pairs of loons (displaying a pair bond and defending a lake or part of lake for at least four weeks), with new nests and first-ever successful hatches popping up in the heart of the established population. For example, on Pawtuckaway Lake a new fourth pair of loons nested, and all four pairs on the lake hatched chicks (contrary to the subpar nesting statewide). From small ponds in the Monadnock and Seacoast region to coves on northern Lake Umbagog, these new territorial pairs inched the population slightly closer to historical carrying capacity, with many suitable lakes still vacant, reflecting the remaining potential for continued growth (see Table 1).

### **Nest Rafts are Catching On**

The hard work of LPC volunteers and staff, who have assembled and deployed dozens of new rafts in the last four years to sites where loon nests have been fail-

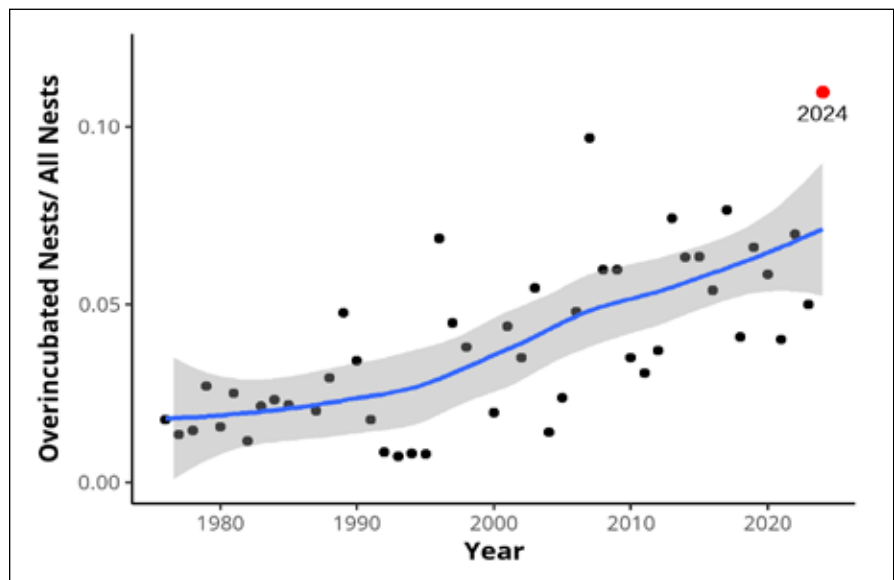


Figure 3. 2024 saw the highest rate of overincubated nests in 50 years of monitoring (1975-2024), capping a long-term upward trend. The blue trend line smooths the data (LOESS smoother); shading indicates the 95% confidence interval.

ing, continued to pay off this year, with seven rafts used for the first time, producing four hatched chicks. This tied 2024 with 2021 for the highest number of first-time raft nests in a season, and boosted the total number of chicks hatched from rafts this year (58) to 28% of all hatched chicks. It's encouraging to see these new rafts catching on with the intended audience!

### **Tangled Loons Rescued and Released**

A record number of loon rescues to date in 2024 (36) was highlighted by the successful release of several loons that were tangled in fishing line or tackle. These rescues ranged from a few minutes of quick work for LPC's North Country field biologist, Lauren O'Malley, and volunteer Kally Abrams, to untangle a beached adult loon at Akers Pond on the Fourth of July (see photo), to the removal of an embedded fish hook from the mouth of a juvenile loon on Pawtuckaway in August, to the most involved case, an adult loon on Gould Pond in Hen-

riker that required minor surgery and a few days with rehabilitator Maria Colby before release on a nearby pond. These three rescues were the fortunate few, since several other tangled loons, including two immature loons — 1-2 years



North Country field biologist Lauren O'Malley prepares to untangle a rescued loon and free it at Akers Pond on July 4th. Photo credit Kally Abrams.

old and not yet in breeding plumage – were recovered as mortalities, or were rescued but did not survive. The summer was bookended by yet three more rescue successes: an epic slog through knee-deep Suncook River mudflats to retrieve a loon stranded in an eddy on a blazing hot day in June; careful fostering to match an abandoned week-old chick from Swains Lake with new parents on Winnepesaukee in early July (see photo); and in August – at 9 pm on the final day of the field season – a detour from I-93 southbound for departing field biologist Christine Santos, to ferry a loon from the pavement of an industrial park in Salem to nearby Canobie Lake, one last good deed to round out her season. Teamwork was the common thread in all these adventures, involving



*A week-old chick abandoned on Swains Lake gets a quick relay to a release site on Winnepesaukee. Photo credit Michael Clasby (LPC).*

some combination of concerned bystanders, loon watchers and lake residents, emergency dispatchers, Fish and Game Conservation Officers, veterinary students and experts, wildlife rehabilitators, and LPC staff. This network came together at the drop of a hat dozens of times this summer, coordinating response, intake, and triage toward the hoped-for outcome, at least in some cases, of a successful release. Many thanks to all involved!

**Acknowledgements**

LPC’s membership and donor support is extended at every turn by generous in-kind donations of services and materials from local businesses throughout the state. We are inspired by and grateful for all of this help. We hope the *continued on page 6*

**Table 1. Results and Highlights for 2024 Common Loon Breeding Season in New Hampshire**

<b>Population and Productivity</b>	<b>2024</b>	<b>Five-Year Ave. 2024 vs. prev.</b>	
		<b>(2019-2023)</b>	<b>5 yrs.</b>
Territorial Loon Pairs	<b>359</b>	330	9%
Nesting Pairs	<b>236</b>	229	3%
Chicks Hatched	<b>211</b>	206	2%
Chicks Surviving to mid-August	<b>153</b>	150	2%
Nest Failures	<b>111</b>	114	-2%
Chicks Surviving/Territorial Pair	<b>0.43</b>	0.46	-6%
<b>Management Activity</b>			
Rafts	<b>156</b>	115	35%
Signs/Ropes	<b>135</b>	128	5%
Loons Rescued (through Nov 1.)	<b>36</b>	26	37%
<b>Survey Effort (occupied or potential loon territories)</b>			
Occupied - Territorial (Paired) Loons	<b>359</b>	330	
Occupied - Unpaired Loons (only)	<b>64</b>	51	
Loons Absent	<b>72</b>	130	
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>495</b>	<b>511</b>	

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following examples convey the breadth of this generous support:

#### Logistical support

Squam Boat Livery, Irwin Marine, Roberts Cove Basin, Middleton Building Supply (Meredith), E. M. Heath Hardware, Zeiss Optics (thermal imaging optics), Vortex Optics, Patterson Veterinary (radiograph).

#### Field Staff Housing

UNH Cooperative Extension and NH Fish and Game (Andy Schfermeyer and Andrew Timmins), Graylag Nature Preserve, Risley and Goodspeed families.

#### Wildlife Rehabilitation and Veterinary Care

Mark Pokras, DVM, Maria Colby at Wings Wildlife Rehabilitation Center, Meadow Pond Animal Hospital, Capital Area Veterinary Emergency and Specialty (CAVES), Hopkinton Animal Hospital, Center for Wildlife in Cape Neddick, ME, University of Miami - Comparative Pathology.

#### Cooperating Partners

NH Audubon, NH Fish and Game, NH Department of Safety (Marine Patrol), NH Department of Environmental Services (Dam and Wetlands Bureaus), US Fish and Wildlife Service (UNWR and NEFO), NH State Parks, NH Veterinary Diagnostic Lab, Squam Lakes Association and Squam Lakes Natural Science Center, The Harris Center for Conservation Education, Tin Mountain Conservation Center, BioDiversity Research Institute. Support for nest rafts, signs, and rescue equipment included funding by the US Fish and Wildlife Service on behalf of the Bouchard Barge 120 Buzzards Bay Oil Spill Trustees.

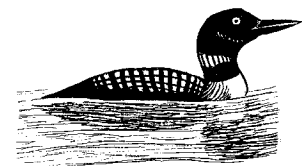
~John Cooley, Jr.



Photo courtesy of MattCohenPhotography.com



*It's not just loons! Monadnock field biologist Mike DiGioia fished this fledgling Red-eyed Vireo out of the water during a survey of White Pond in Windsor in late June, and reunited it with adult vireos on shore. Thanks for the ride, Mike!*



#### 2024 July Loon Census Results

On Saturday, July 20th, 454 volunteers took to 104 lakes to tally a mid-season snapshot of New Hampshire's loons. Census volunteers counted 450 adult loons, 71 loon chicks, and 4 immature (1-2 year old) loons. In addition to this count, which covers about half of the loon population, the census helps to monitor the progress of known loon nests, and the survival of chicks that have hatched in previous weeks. Occasionally, the count also turns up new loon chicks that have hatched since our last survey of a given water body, or even a surprise nest. Results are incorporated into LPC's summer-long monitoring data. We sincerely thank everyone who dedicated their Saturday morning to help us count loons!

~Caroline Hughes

## String of Lead Tackle Mortalities on Merrymeeting Lake a Stark Reminder of a Persistent Threat

On the morning of August 10th, LPC's Pemigewasset Region Biologist, Jayden Mowery, responded to a report of a loon in distress on Merrymeeting Lake. Upon arrival, he quickly located the loon, which had climbed onto the beach, and easily captured it. At the same time that Jayden was transporting the loon to the vet for x-rays and blood work, which would reveal that it was suffering from lead poisoning resulting from the ingestion of an illegal lead-headed fishing jig, LPC Senior Biologist, John Cooley, found himself also heading to Merrymeeting Lake to follow up on a second report. When he arrived, he found and collected a dead loon that had washed ashore just half a mile from where Jayden had rescued the first earlier that day. Tragically, the rescued loon did not survive, and a necropsy of this second loon revealed that it too had died as a result of ingesting lead tackle, meaning that Merrymeeting Lake lost two loons on the same day to lead poisoning. To make matters worse, these loons were not the lake's first victims of lead poisoning in 2024: on April 15th, LPC had rescued another loon, which had ingested a lead-headed jig and ultimately succumbed to lead poisoning.

### A Persistent Problem

As we collected the two Merrymeeting loons in August, we wondered if there had ever been another instance of multiple loons dying from lead poisoning on the same lake on the same day. Checking our mortality database, we found one other case: on July 4, 1998, two lead-poisoned loons were collected from Lovell Lake in Wakefield. And while not on the

same lake, there have been two additional instances of multiple loons dying of lead poisoning on the same day: on August 25th, 2000, Crystal Lake in Gilmanton and Sunset Lake in Alton each lost a loon to lead tackle ingestion; and on July 28, 2019, the same scenario played out on Shaw Pond in Freedom and Wicwas Lake in Meredith.

Lead tackle is an old foe for loons in New Hampshire. The first documented case of a loon dying of lead poisoning after ingesting lead fishing tackle occurred on Squam Lake way back in 1976. Since then, LPC's data shows that lead has been by far the largest single cause of adult loon mortality in the state. From 1989–2023, ingestion of lead tackle accounted for 38% of documented adult loon deaths (Figure 1), and these losses have had a population-level impact on our loons<sup>1</sup>.

### Factors Contributing to Lead Poisoning Risk

As of mid-October, seven loons

have died from lead tackle ingestion in New Hampshire in 2024. That three of them died on the same lake, including two on the same day and along the same half-mile of shoreline, may seem to point to a problem specific to Merrymeeting Lake. To some extent, this is true – features like its larger size, central location, and convenient boat launch make Merrymeeting Lake more attractive as a recreational spot, and increased recreational pressure likely increases the chances that someone may be fishing with lead tackle. However, it only takes a single person using lead tackle for a mortality to occur. As a result, we find that lead poisoning is a widespread problem that is not confined to larger, busier lakes. From 1989–2023, LPC documented loon deaths from lead tackle ingestion on 79 lakes across New Hampshire that vary greatly in size and accessibility – from tiny, remote, fly-fishing only Upper Hall Pond in the Sandwich Range

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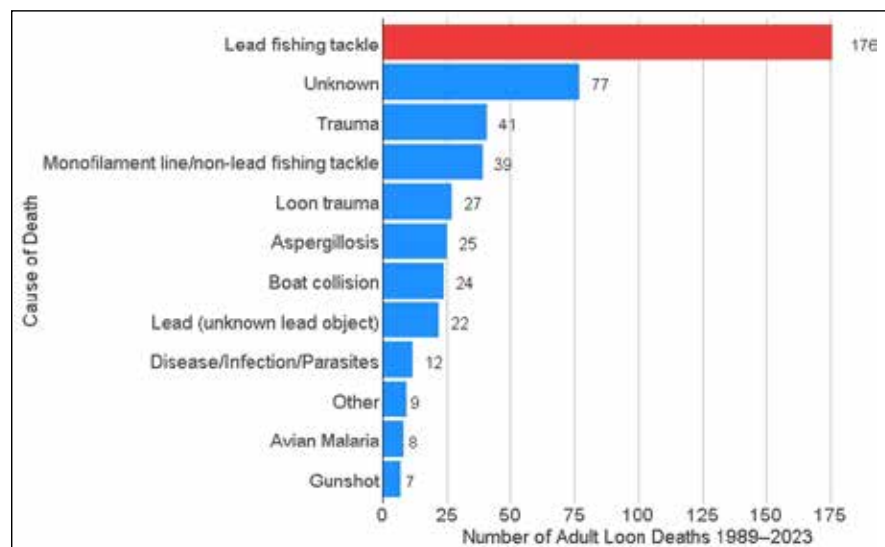


Figure 1: Documented adult loon mortalities in New Hampshire by cause, 1989–2023.

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Wilderness to large, centrally located Lake Winnepesaukee. The lakes where multiple lead tackle mortalities have occurred since 1989 (Figure 2) tend, in general, to be those that are larger and more easily accessible. However, smaller lakes, like Sunset Lake in Alton, and lakes with no public access point, like Pine River Pond in Wakefield, have also seen multiple lead tackle deaths, and there are several large, high-use lakes in the state (including Spofford Lake in Spofford and Lake Wentworth in Wolfeboro) that have not seen multiple lead tackle mortalities, or at least none that have been reported to LPC. This further underscores that while lake size and level of recreational use play some role in predisposing resident loons to higher risk of lead poisoning, chance – the bad luck of encountering an angler fishing irresponsibly – also plays a role.

### In a Sea of Threats, Lead Looms Large

Merrymeeting is a lake that exemplifies the multitude of pressures loons face as they navigate life on inland waters. Merrymeeting's loons have encountered a variety of threats in recent years, from entanglement in fishing line to battles between rival loons over territory, icing-in as the lake freezes over, eagle predation of chicks, and the emerging threat of avian malaria. Though they are consistently encountering a number of pressures (both natural and anthropogenic), the primary threat to loons on the lake has been lead poisoning resulting from lead tackle ingestion. With this year's data included, four of the five (80%) dead adult loons that we have collected from Merrymeeting Lake since 1989 died from lead poisoning<sup>2</sup>. This tracks what we see on a statewide level: lead tackle remains the single great-

est threat to our loon population.

Loons primarily ingest lead fishing tackle that is in active use rather than by picking up pieces of abandoned tackle from lake bottoms. This means that lead poisoning – the leading documented cause of death for adult loons in New Hampshire – is preventable: anglers simply need to make the change to non-lead tackle. Fortunately, our state legislature has supported loon conserva-

tion by passing a series of laws since 2000 restricting the sale and use of lead sinkers and lead-headed jigs. While lead tackle mortality rates can vary substantially year-to-year, long-term data indicates a declining trend (Figure 3), likely due to a combination of legislation, increased public awareness of the issue, and incentives (see below) to turn in old lead tackle. However, this year's seven loon deaths from lead poisoning remind us that while we are moving in the right direction, there is still work to be done to protect our loons.

### The Importance of Community Response

After the events of August 10th, news of the lead tackle mortalities spread quickly through the Merrymeeting Lake community. Residents jumped into action,

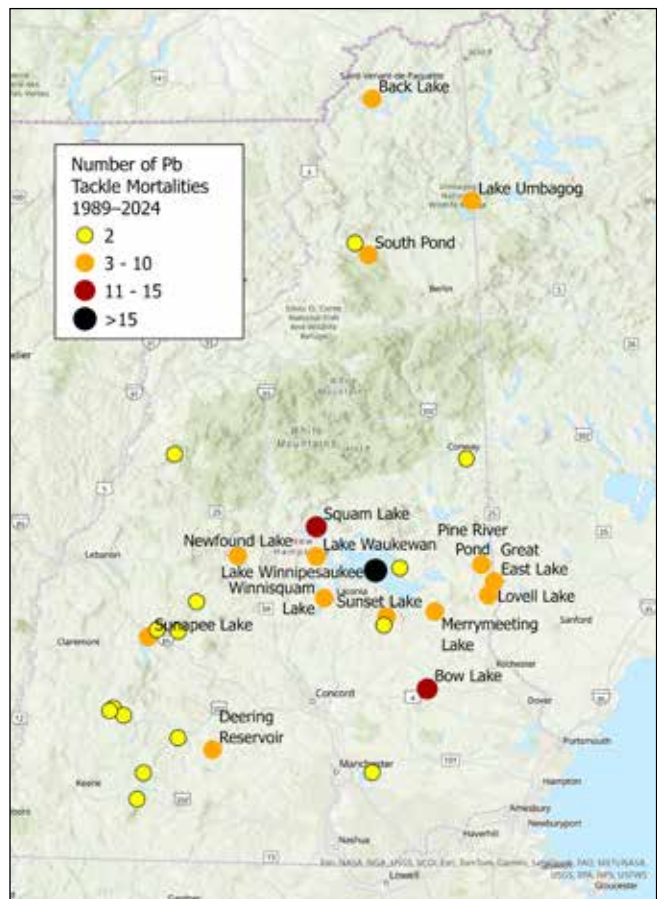


Figure 2: New Hampshire lakes with multiple (more than two) documented lead mortalities 1989–2023.

using word of mouth and social media discussions to educate their friends and neighbors about the harmful impacts of lead tackle on loons and share information about LPC's Lead Tackle Buyback (LTBB) Program, which allows anglers to exchange 1 oz. or more of illegal lead fishing tackle for a \$10 voucher at participating retailers. The community's efforts had the desired effect – Berry's Bait, the nearest participating retailer, reported a substantial increase in LTBB participation in the days and weeks following the mortalities.

The response of the Merrymeeting Lake community is exactly the kind of action that will yield positive results for our loons. In recent years, several communities have stepped up to address lead poisoning. After a lead tackle mortality on their lake in 2022, the



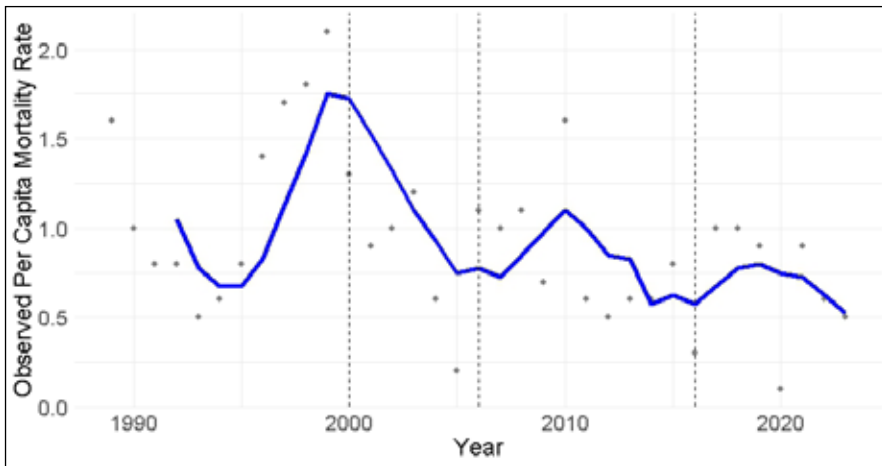


Figure 3: Trends in annual per capita lead tackle mortality collections (shown as number of documented loon deaths per 100 loons in New Hampshire’s loon population). Gray dots indicate observed annual mortality rates, blue line indicates the 4-year moving average, and dashed lines represent key legislative changes, including: 1) the 2000 law that banned the use of lead sinkers weighing 1 oz. or less and lead-headed jigs that measured 1 inch or less in lakes and ponds, 2) 2006 legislation which banned the sale of this same tackle, and 3) 2016 legislation which expanded the ban to include all lead-headed jigs weighing 1 oz. or less.

Newfound Lake Region Association approached LPC to learn how they could educate their community and provide safe disposal options for lead tackle. In 2023, after their second lead tackle mortality in two years, the Franklin Pierce Lake Association did the same. We worked with both of these associations to write articles, provide lead tackle collection receptacles for boat launches, and supply educational materials and non-lead tackle packets for distribution.

It is heartening to see communities acting to protect their loons. We hope that by sharing these all-too-common stories, other communities will be inspired to act proactively, before their lake loses a loon to this preventable cause of death. It only takes one piece of tackle used by one person to kill a loon, and as we’ve documented, lead poisoning deaths can happen on any lake, regardless of size or location. If you would like to work with us to educate your community or help provide re-

sponsible lead tackle disposal around your lake, please email [volunteers@loon.org](mailto:volunteers@loon.org). Community-based actions are crucial in the fight against lead tackle mortalities. Together, we can make a difference for New Hampshire’s loons.

~Caroline Hughes

- 1) Grade, T. J., M. A. Pokras, E.M. Laflamme, and H.S. Vogel. 2018. Population-level effects of lead fishing tackle on common loons. *The Journal of Wildlife Management* 82(1):155–164.
- 2) Four of the five documented loon mortalities on Merrymeeting Lake since 1989 have been the result of lead poisoning. However, the lead object could only be definitively identified as tackle in 3 of the cases. The fourth loon very likely had ingested a piece of lead tackle, but we cannot say that with 100% certainty.



After learning about the negative impacts that lead fishing tackle has on loons at Junior SLA summer camp, Hudson and Bond White decided to bring their tackle boxes to The Loon Center to go through them with LPC staff so that they could identify and remove any lead tackle. They received a \$10 gift certificate to The Loon’s Feather Gift Shop for their efforts, which they promptly spent!



[WWW.LOONSAFE.ORG](http://WWW.LOONSAFE.ORG)

As part of LPC’s Lead Tackle Buy-back Program, anglers can exchange one ounce or more of banned lead fishing tackle for a \$10 merchandise voucher redeemable at participating tackle shops. For more information, including a list of participating retailers, please visit [www.loonsafe.org](http://www.loonsafe.org).

## *(Nearly!) 50 Years of Floating Rafts on Squam Lake and Throughout New Hampshire*

The Moultonborough Bay loons on Squam Lake swam around and around their nest island, looking somewhat confused – and it was easy to see why. With the low water levels this past summer, their usual nest site sat high above the water with a jumble of rocks between the loons and the site. There was no way they could nest there this year. As I watched them, I felt a twinge of anxiety: would they find and use the raft that was waiting for them? LPC had put the raft near their go-to nesting location in years of low water levels – a spot also busy with nest predators that had destroyed the loons’ previous nesting attempts there. But the raft was away from the shoreline, affording protection from predators while helping the loons cope with low water levels. The big question was, would the loon pair use the raft? In this first year of low water levels since we had put it out, the question loomed large and I waited eagerly to see what would happen.

I did not have to wait long. Within a week of watching them trying to figure out how to make their island nest site work, I had the satisfaction of seeing them comfortably settled on the new raft. Four weeks later, a chick followed its parents away from the raft. The raft did exactly what it was supposed to: we put it out to help them cope in years of low water levels and beat the predators at the same time and, in its first test, it succeeded. This was one of seven loon chicks hatched on Squam Lake this year, and every one of them came from a raft – only the third year in LPC’s 50-year history in which every chick hatched on Squam came

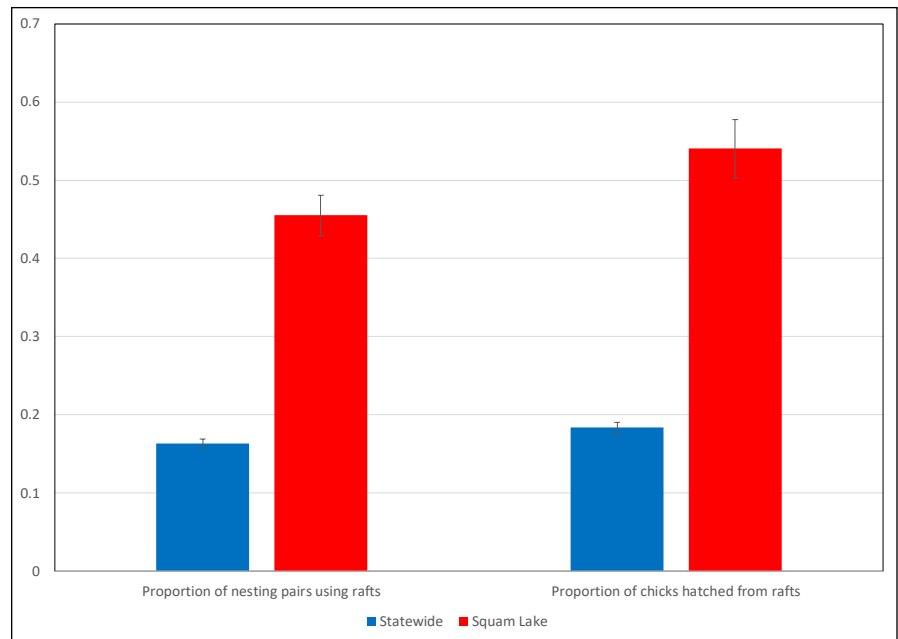


Figure 1: Proportion of nesting pairs using rafts and chicks hatched from rafts statewide and on Squam Lake, 1975-2024.

from a raft (the others being 1985 and 2016).

When we look back over those 50 years, one thing that stands out is the particular importance of rafts to nesting and chick productivity on Squam, even over and above statewide numbers. On Squam, nearly half of the nesting pairs have used rafts and over half of the chicks hatched have come from rafts. Both of these rates are ~200% higher on Squam compared to statewide averages (Figure 1). Rafts have become even more important in the last five years: statewide, 23% of nesting pairs use rafts and a quarter of chicks on average have hatched from rafts. In the last five years on Squam, nearly two-thirds of nesting loons have been using rafts and the proportion of chicks hatched from rafts has jumped to over 80%. But are these increases on both Squam and statewide in raft use and productivity attribu-

table to the same factors?

Before we begin to look at these questions, let’s look at the three situations in which a loon pair can benefit from a raft. Two of these cases are exemplified by the loons at Moultonborough Bay: water level fluctuations and shoreline predators. Because loons nest right at the water’s edge, their nests can be highly impacted by changing water levels. In the case of the Moultonborough Bay loons, they were unable to access their usual nest site when the water levels dropped too low. However, their alternate site, close to shore on a nearby marshy hummock, made them very vulnerable to shoreline predators. A floating raft, pulled away from the shoreline, helped them overcome both of these challenges in 2024. The third way rafts can help loons cope is with habitat loss due to shoreline development. A nesting site lost to habitat destruction

may, to some extent, be mitigated through the use of rafts. While rafts are not the solution for the sum of challenges facing nesting loons, they can help in these three specific circumstances when deployed in a responsible way. To ensure that a loon pair can benefit from a raft, LPC's policy is to supply a raft if a loon pair's nest fails for one of these three reasons over several years.

With that background, let's take a look at Squam, the place where it all started for rafts in New Hampshire. The first raft in the state was floated on Squam in 1977. Other rafts soon followed; and, by the late 1980s, every pair of loons on Squam that needed a raft, had a raft—and that has continued to this day. The early and rapid deployment of rafts on Squam was in response to heavy predation of nests and the thorough documentation of these losses by LPC biologists and volunteers around the lake. With many watchful eyes on these nests, the need for protection of loon nests from predators was apparent, and the "new technology" of loon rafts provided a solution. Fast forward to 2008 on Squam—right after the years of the critical decline in the loon population on Squam—and there is an unexplained dip in the number (and, thus, proportion) of pairs using rafts in the following years (2008-2019) before rebounding again

(Figure 2). Two factors are driving the increase in the past five years: 1) a return to more normal levels of raft usage; and 2) a decline in nesting of some pairs that do not use rafts. Hopefully some of these non-raft pairs will begin nesting again.

Statewide, proportions of nesting pairs using rafts began to climb steadily over the previous long-term averages starting around 2010—the year LPC

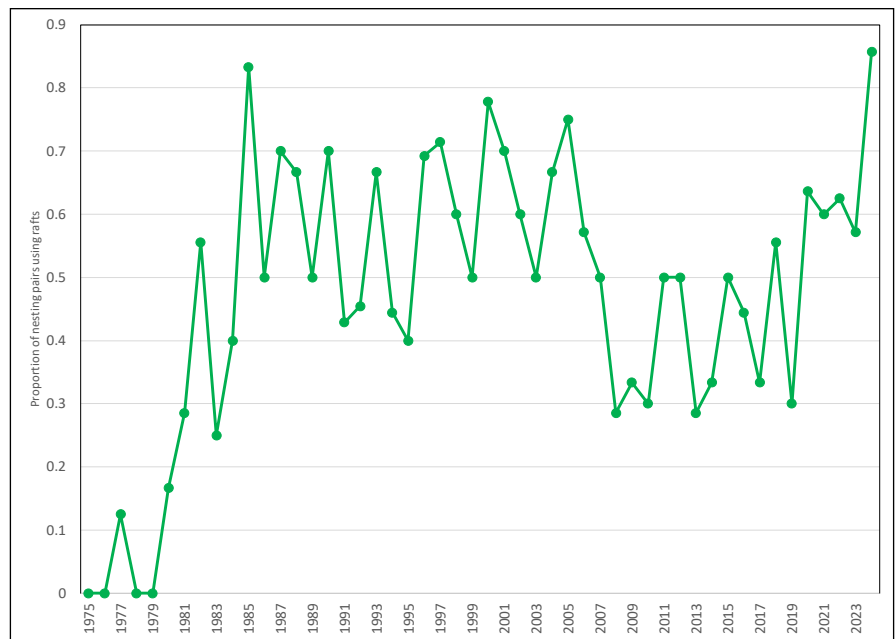


Figure 2: Proportion of nesting pairs using rafts on Squam Lake, 1975-2024.

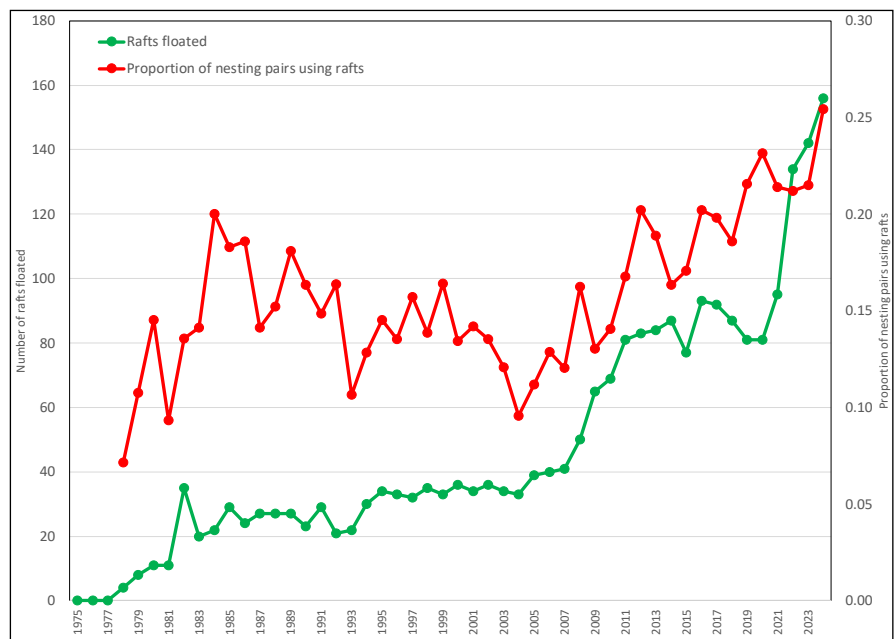


Figure 3: Statewide number of rafts floated and proportion of pairs using rafts, 1975-2024. The increase in both of these values since 2010 corresponds to the implementation of LPC's Loon Recovery Plan.

implemented its Loon Recovery Plan and, as a part of that, began putting out additional nesting rafts (Figure 3). As would be expected, the statewide proportion of chicks hatched from rafts has also climbed upward, tracking closely with the increase in pairs

using rafts.

So where does this leave us going forward, both on Squam and statewide? In both cases, we are at the point where loons that currently need rafts have rafts, but LPC will continue to keep a

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watchful eye and respond as needed for pairs that may require them in the future. And, indeed, more pairs could well need them. In the face of a changing climate, rafts are likely to become an increasingly important management tool, as they help loons cope with water level changes (New England is likely to have more frequent and intense storm events, which could flood nests) and hotter temperatures (LPC has placed shade fabric on rafts to lower the temperature by a few degrees for incubating loons, which overheat easily).

I will watch with curiosity to see what the Moultonborough Bay loons do in the next few years: if water levels are normal next year or the following year, will they return to their island site? Or, now that they have successfully hatched a chick from the raft, will they return to it regardless of water levels? Only time will tell.

Whatever happens in Moultonborough Bay, rafts will continue to play an important role in nesting and chick hatching on Squam Lake and beyond. All we have to do is to look at the number that counts the most for Squam: the seven chicks from the class of 2024 brought the total to 212 chicks hatched from rafts on Squam over the past 50 years! Now that is something to celebrate!

*~Tiffany Grade*


Matt Cohen Photo



Photo courtesy of Brian Reilly

**We Invite You to Join LPC's Loon Leadership Circle!**

The Loon Leadership Circle was formed in 2021 to honor and thank the many supporters who have donated \$1,000+ during a single fiscal year.



Loon Leadership Circle members receive a complimentary annual membership, a beautiful lapel pin, invitations to special events, and the satisfaction of knowing that their generous gift has allowed LPC to continue the important work of loon research, management, and outreach in New Hampshire.

Gifts may be single donations or multiple donations. Monthly donations may be scheduled through our website [loon.org/donate](http://loon.org/donate)

**Thank you for your support of New Hampshire's loons!**

**CORRECTION!**

*The Summer 2024 LPC Newsletter incorrectly listed two Loon Leadership Circle members as Anonymous in the \$1,000 - \$2,499 donation category. We apologize for the mistake and gratefully acknowledge Ellen Wood Barth and the Alexander Host Foundation for their very generous donations.*

**Loon Legacy Society**

*Remembering Loons Now – Protecting Loons Forever*

**Did You Know That You Can Name LPC as a Beneficiary of:**

- IRAs or Other Retirement Funds
- Life Insurance Policies
- Donor Advised Funds
- Living Wills and Trusts

**Thank you for considering LPC in your estate planning!**

For information on planned giving, contact your financial advisor, or LPC <http://loon.org/bequests/>



# 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.

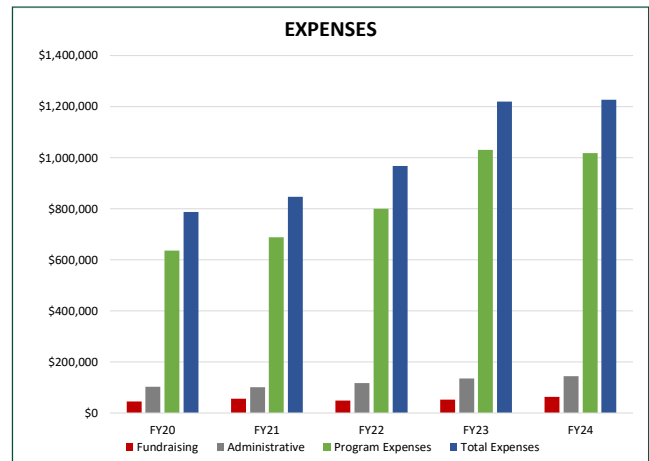
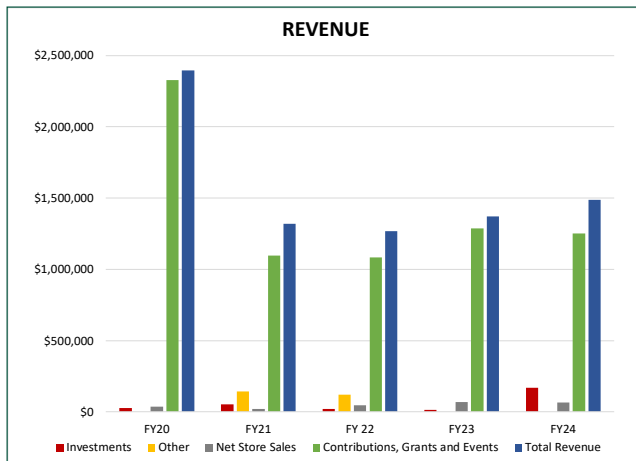
**Population and Productivity:**

	<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.



## Shalin Liu: One Woman's Commitment to Protecting Loons

Did you know that, for more than 30 years, students from Tufts' Cummings School of Veterinary Medicine have been involved in the Loon Preservation Committee's conservation and research efforts? What do these fledgling veterinarians do and how are their efforts supported?

From the outset, they've been mentored by Dr. Mark Pokras, former director of the Tufts Wildlife Clinic. They use their biomedical and animal handling skills in many ways, and no two days at LPC are the same. Students may assist staff in carrying out field observations, as well as being involved in rescuing and evaluating loons that are in trouble. Working with researchers at University of New Hampshire, University of Vermont, and other institutions, they undertake projects on contaminants like lead and mercury, as well as study emerging diseases like avian malaria, avian influenza, fungal respiratory disease, and algal toxins that may be related to climate change. If dead loons are found, students do necropsies to investigate the mortalities (the CSI part of the job), making important contributions to our understanding of lead poisoning, trauma from boats, and the significance of fights among loons.

Since 1987, over 50 veterinary students have been afforded these opportunities. This has helped shape the careers of these young women and men, encouraging more veterinarians to become involved in conservation efforts in the US and abroad, and spurring some to become leaders in the field.

One challenge has been to obtain funding to support students



Photo courtesy of Ken Cleveland

*Shalin Liu addresses guests at the grand opening celebration of the Summer Star Wildlife Sanctuary in Boylston, MA, in September of 2014.*

each summer, and the program has been successful in obtaining grants from a variety of conservation organizations. Early grants from the North American Loon Fund (NALF) and the Sigurd Olson Environmental Institute got our projects off the ground. Since 2011, major support has come from the Summer Star Foundation for Nature, Art, and Humanity and its founder, Ms. Shalin Liu. Ms. Liu has a long history of philanthropy, but to understand how she focuses these efforts she cites her "...positive stubbornness, dedicated to projects that move me."

Shalin grew up in Taiwan. Her father was a professor of literature at the National Taipei University of Nursing and Health Sciences. Despite political and social stresses in Taiwan at the time, Shalin was protected and had a very happy childhood. Many of her early years were spent on a farm where she was totally immersed in nature amidst Taiwan's great natural riches. Far from paved

roads, she shared her world with butterflies and wildflowers. As Shalin explained, "I didn't find Nature, Nature found me." Her childhood curiosity shaped a magical connection with wildlife, trying to put herself into the minds of the animals around her.

As the daughter of a teacher, education was a high priority. When it came time for college, Ms. Liu attended the National Taiwan University, where she studied philosophy and literature. In 1973, she moved to the United States to pursue a Master's degree in Asian philosophy at Indiana University. She later raised her family in the Boston area.

An avid lover of both the arts and nature, Shalin wholeheartedly believes that we all can help people to enjoy music, care about the earth and wildlife, and together, make our world a more beautiful place to live. "To embrace nature is a dream come true for me. And art is a way to live a life beautifully out of pure love

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and quiet courage.” It was this philosophy that led to the establishment of the Summer Star Foundation for Nature, Art, and Humanity. Shalin believes in the restorative power of nature: “I love going to the mountains, strolling in the wild countryside, meeting with wild animals.”

Over the years, Ms. Liu has looked for ways to make the world better. She uses her energy and determination to focus her philanthropy on the arts and conservation, particularly on programs that awaken and sensitize young people to become actively involved. In addition to supporting music education, some of her projects include:

- *Wildlife Clinic, Cummings School of Veterinary Medicine, Tufts University, where she has long supported wildlife care and rehabilitation programs and the training of veterinary students to be strong stewards of the environment*

- *Summer Star Wildlife Sanctuary in Boylston, MA, where she established a special place for people to meditate and reflect and for wildlife to flourish*

- *Yellowstone National Park, where she supports conservation education programs for underserved youth*

- *Taiwan, where she endowed a children’s environmental education center (the Life Education Center) at the National Pingtung University of Science and Technology*

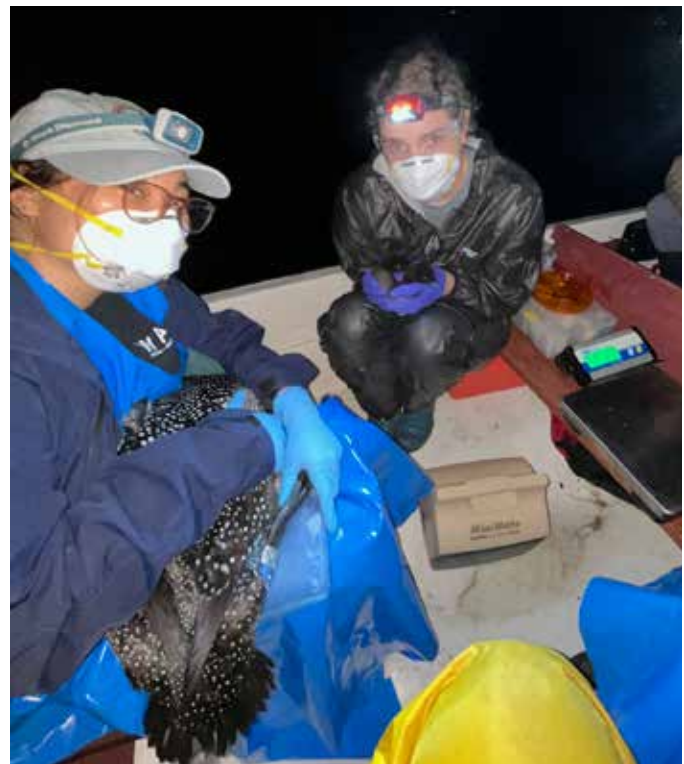
As someone interested in nature, Shalin has long been familiar with loons. She’s marveled at them on her trips to Acadia National Park and seen the extensive efforts to protect the small population in Yellowstone. But it has been the connection to the Wildlife Clinic at the Cummings School, dedicated to both helping

individual animals and caring for the environment, that inspired her to get personally involved with LPC’s work.

At the Wildlife Clinic, Shalin has seen some of the problems that loons face, like lead poisoning. She admired the energy and expertise that veterinary staff and students expend in trying to help these birds and,

in 2011, began to support veterinary student involvement in loon conservation and research. Since then, she has met with each student to hear, in person, about their experiences and plans for the future.

But it was only in the summer of 2023 that she visited LPC, saw the students in action, and got to know the loons up close, marveling at their mysterious nature and the magic of their calls. After touring The Loon Center and meeting with Harry Vogel and staff, Shalin participated in a loon tour of Squam Lake with Tiffany Grade. To top it off, Shalin was at the Center when Ashley Keenan and the vet students brought in a rescued loon. She was able to watch the careful examination and evaluation of the bird, the process of banding it, and the plans that went into the loon’s



*Tufts veterinary students Izzy Eisendrath and Katie Baxter hold an adult female loon and her two chicks during a night of banding. In addition to keeping the birds calm, the interns draw blood from the captured loons and monitor their stress levels. The following morning, they conduct blood tests and prepare any necessary samples to be sent to collaborators. They also conduct necropsies on loons throughout the summer at The Loon Center, to identify causes of death. Izzy and Katie are among the many Tufts veterinary students who have been funded by the Summer Star Foundation for Nature, Art, and Humanity since 2011.*

release. And after visiting LPC, she referred to loons as living calligraphy – a perfect combination of art, music, and wild nature.

So when you think about LPC and all the marvelous work that it does, think about the passionate and deeply caring individuals like Shalin Liu. People who quietly step up behind the scenes to support critical efforts to train young people and to nourish the connections among humans, art, and our natural world. People who want to make the world a better place.

*~Mark Pokras, DVM*

## *Tin Mountain Community Science Extends LPC's High Resolution Loon Monitoring*

Have you ever encountered an LPC Field Biologist paddling a New Hampshire lake during the summer? These biologists are entrusted with several vitally important tasks during LPC's field season. On their set of lakes, each biologist is responsible not only for gathering important data on Common Loon abundance and productivity, but also for floating signs to protect vulnerable loon nests from human disturbance, rescuing loons in distress, and coordinating the efforts of volunteer loon observers. Their job is not an easy one. A decade ago, Dana Duxbury-Fox, a life-long birder and active volunteer with LPC, recognized that her biologist seemed to have an extraordinarily heavy load. At the same time, Rick Steber, then a member of the Tin Mountain Conservation Center Board in Albany, New Hampshire, decided that the group should begin some new community science projects. He approached LPC biologists John Cooley and Harry Vogel looking for ideas. Together, in consultation with LPC, Dana and Rick created the Tin Mountain Loon Monitoring Group, which utilizes the coordinated expertise of skilled birders and trained volunteers to contribute useful data and lighten the load of LPC's small handful of seasonal staff.

That was nine years ago, and Dana is delighted to report that with LPC's help in designing the program, nearly twenty lakes in the Mount Washington Valley have benefited from having another set of eyes to monitor their loons. Dana, who facilitates the program, has high expectations of her volunteers, asking them to try and visit lakes weekly. The LPC

biologist is only required to visit each lake three to six times during their twelve-week field season, so the Tin Mountain program has ensured that valuable additional information is gathered during the periods between LPC staff surveys.

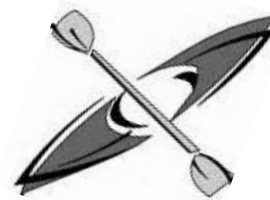
Volunteer data has long played an important role in LPC's monitoring program, providing our biologists with updates on time-sensitive occurrences such as nest hatches or failures, threats to nesting success, the need for management such as signs or ropelines to protect vulnerable nests, or the presence of injured loons. On some Tin Mountain lakes, LPC already had an existing network of volunteers in place for the Tin Mountain observers to integrate into. On other lakes, Tin Mountain volunteers became the sole observers supplementing LPC's staff surveys. In bolstering the volunteer survey effort of their lakes, the Tin Mountain Loon Monitoring Group has provided great benefit to LPC's monitoring and management efforts.

Each year, LPC identifies a set of lakes for the Tin Mountain volunteers to monitor and provides data on their productivity from the previous year. Dana then works with Tin Mountain staff to identify volunteers to cover each lake, arranges a training session to orient the volunteers to the program and introduce them to LPC staff, and develops a rapid line of communication between the LPC Field Biologist and the volunteers. This communication has been a strength of the program – volunteers report observations from their lakes both to LPC biologist and to others in the group. Not only does this keep LPC updated

with recent information from the Tin Mountain lakes, but it also increases the sense of community among the volunteers, keeping everyone in the loop with regards to what is going on with the loons across the larger area and serving as a stimulus for each volunteer to go out and report on their lake. The project has used a host of communication platforms over the years, including Google Groups, Slack, and group emails.

Dana encourages everyone to see if they can set up such a group in their part of the state. The project has proved very popular, with many volunteers returning each year. It not only provides another layer of protection for our loons, but also provides a wonderful opportunity for an organization or an individual to contribute to community science and have a fascinating outdoor summer experience. LPC staff agree with Dana that the program has played an exciting role, allowing for the collection and integration of loon information from multiple sources, including Tin Mountain volunteers, Tin Mountain staff, LPC seasonal staff, and the existing LPC volunteer network. It also provides a strong example of the benefits that can be derived from coordinated, community-oriented actions. We are excited to continue this valued partnership!

*~Dana Duxbury-Fox, John Cooley, Jr., and Caroline Hughes*



### *Maria Colby Honored at Loon Preservation Committee's 2024 Annual Meeting*

The Loon Preservation Committee held its 2024 Annual Meeting at The Loon Center on August 22nd. The meeting followed a volunteer appreciation potluck dinner to celebrate our volunteers by gathering for good food and good loon stories. LPC Chair Bob Rotberg opened the meeting with a welcome to members, volunteers, and guests. He shared his experience of accompanying LPC biologists to band loons this summer, reflected on LPC's world-leading research efforts, and thanked LPC staff, volunteers, and Trustees for their work to fulfill LPC's mission to benefit loons.

LPC Vice Chair Brenda Stowe presented LPC's slate of officers for the coming year: Bob Rotberg, Chair; Brenda Stowe, Vice Chair; and Bob Varney, Treasurer. She introduced a proposed change to LPC's by-laws to remove the requirement for a New Hampshire Audubon Ex-officio Trustee on LPC's Board to reflect LPC's continued evolution as an independent organization. This change was unanimously approved by LPC members at the meeting.

Brenda requested a vote of LPC members present to ratify two Trustees recommended to the LPC Board by LPC's Governance Committee and approved by the full Board. Kristen Begor previously served three three-year terms on the LPC Board including three years as LPC Board Chair. She coordinates the very successful efforts to protect and encourage loons on Lake Sunapee as head of the Loon Committee of Lake Sunapee. Charlie Nims is an avid birdwatcher who has been serving as an ex-officio representative of the New Hampshire

Audubon Board and on LPC's Finance and Facilities Committee. The Governance Committee recommended that Charlie become a full Trustee of the LPC Board. Members enthusiastically voted to accept both of these already-valued members of the LPC Board for new terms.

Bob Rotberg thanked retiring LPC Trustee Tom Deans for his service on the LPC Board, including Chairing LPC's Development Committee and representing the Conway Lake area of New Hampshire. He also thanked retiring Trustee Annie Montgomery for her service, including her involvement in LPC events and representing the Lake Sunapee region. Both of these outstanding Trustees will be missed, and Bob presented them with plaques to commemorate their contributions to loons and LPC's work to help loons in New Hampshire.

Bob Varney, Finance and Facilities Committee Chair, reported on a good year financially for LPC and noted that LPC's auditors applauded the work of LPC staff and their attention to detail as they gave LPC a clean audit for the Fiscal Year Ended March 31st of 2024. He noted that the committee has been carefully reviewing the maintenance and replacement of LPC's aging boats and vehicles to ensure the safety and efficiency of LPC staff as they work to recover NH's loon population. He thanked members and donors for their support which has allowed LPC to carry on its good work for loons while remaining financially sound. (LPC's audited financial statements and IRS Form 990 can be found on its website at loon.org.) He also thanked LPC's volunteers and

remarked on their value in helping LPC stretch its limited budget, and noted that LPC's Investment Committee is working closely with the Finance and Facilities Committee to ensure that LPC's endowment funds are invested carefully and properly.

Tom Deans, LPC's outgoing Development Committee Chair, thanked supporters for their generosity and reported that LPC had a record year for its annual appeal and saw an increase in bequests in Fiscal Year 2024. He encouraged everyone to consider including the Loon Preservation Committee as a beneficiary in their estate plans, and to contact Betsy McCoy, LPC's Director of Development and Membership, who could assist with appropriate wording.

### **Maria Colby Honored with Spirit of The Loon Award**

A highlight of the Annual Meeting was the presentation of the 17th Annual "Spirit of the Loon" Award, created to honor LPC's founder Rawson Wood by recognizing individuals who exemplify outstanding volunteer service to loons and the Loon Preservation Committee. LPC was thrilled to present the 2024 Spirit of the Loon Award to Maria Colby.

Maria is the wildlife rehabilitator who LPC staff members depend on to help diagnose and treat the overwhelming majority of rescued loons in New Hampshire. She is always willing to accept a loon in need of rehabilitation no matter the time of day, even when that need happens (as it often does after a night rescue) in the early morning hours. In the



*Maria Colby of Wings Wildlife Rehabilitation Center was the recipient of the 17th Annual Spirit of the Loon Award for her unprecedented work to rehabilitate New Hampshire's rescued loons.*

winter, Maria handles virtually all of LPC's ice rescued loons, up to 10 loons at a time. When LPC biologists rescue large groups of loons, she routinely stays with them at the veterinary office for x-rays until midnight or later before taking them back to her center, the Wings Wildlife Rehabilitation Center. She does all of this work without charging LPC. In recent years, LPC has received B-120 Oil Spill Mitigation funds to help offset some portion of her costs, but prior to that, she shouldered the burden of the cost of caring for the loons, including sourcing and purchasing fish, the cost of medical tests, costs of lead test kits, etc. She has even purchased lead test kits for LPC in the past, and she has purchased, secured permissions (at times a lengthy and involved process), and placed lead tackle collection receptacles at many town transfer stations. She has also supplied LPC with additional receptacles to distribute to lake associations to be placed at lake access points throughout the state.

Whenever possible, Maria is present with LPC staff to release rescued loons. She makes a point

at these releases of engaging with members of the public to teach them about loons and LPC's work, and uses these occasions as opportunities to recruit members and volunteers for LPC. She takes every opportunity to introduce LPC staff to NH Fish & Game Con-

servation Officers, members of the Wildlife Heritage Foundation team, veterinarians, and other potential collaborators. She is always thinking of ways to use her many and varied connections to further LPC's work for the loons.

Maria has been a critical part of LPC's loon rescue program and an important partner in LPC's efforts to protect and recover loons in New Hampshire. LPC and all of us who value loons and wildlife owe her a debt of gratitude for her work, and LPC was very pleased to make her our Spirit of the Loon Award recipient for this year.

Senior Biologist/Executive Director Harry Vogel followed the Spirit of The Loon presentation with a report on LPC's monitoring, research, management and educational programs in 2024 and the results of those efforts in safeguarding New Hampshire's loons. Thank you to all who attended LPC's 2024 Annual Meeting in person or virtually to help us celebrate another year of good work in recovering New Hampshire's loon population!

*~Harry Vogel*



*Maria Colby assists Outreach Biologist Caroline Hughes as she releases a juvenile loon that iced-in on Province Lake last December. Maria had to keep the loon for three days due to a nor'easter on the coast.*

## *Loon Appreciation Day Celebrated at The Loon Center*

The 45th Annual Loon Festival was another success story! The day dawned bright on July 20 as close to 400 people visited The Loon Center over the course of the event to learn about loons and enjoy the festivities.

The Meredith Rotary provided hot dogs, chips, ice cream and beverages for all to enjoy while listening to the acoustic duo, The Sweetbloods. Educational slide shows were presented throughout the day by LPC's field crew, and kids got the chance to dunk a biologist for correctly answering questions about loons! There was face painting, a balloonist, kids crafts and games to keep families informed and engaged.

Many thanks to the Meredith Rotary (Heidi Barrett-Kitchen, Tim Bergquist, Gary Dehnel, Ted Fodero, Richard Gerken, Vern Goddard, Carl Johnson, Jim McFarlin, and Chuck Thorndike), the Squam Lakes Natural Science Center (Victoria Brown and Judy Sniffin), NH Lakes Association (Erin Mastine), balloonist Lady Jane, face painter Emily Landry, and The Sweetbloods, as well as to our volunteers Steve Frasca, Eunice Jackson, Jayden Jech,



*Kids of all ages enjoyed making loon art at the Annual Loon Festival!*

Blaine Nelson, Sydney Pine, Mike Ruyffelaert, Sue Scudder, Nancy Simone, Holly White, Doug and Laurie Whitley, and LPC Board Member Michael Fenollosa.

The Loon Preservation Committee was honored to receive a resolution from the New Hampshire State Senate extending its congratulations in recognition of

the 45th Annual Loon Festival and celebration of Loon Appreciation Day, as well as extending best wishes for our continued success in protecting New Hampshire's loons. The Loon Festival (and Loon Census) are held annually on the 3rd Saturday of July. We hope you can join us for one or both again next year!

### *Season's Greetings from The Loon's Feather Gift Shop!*

*Selling "all things loon" and more!*

*Gift Shop Hours: Thursday - Saturday, 9am - 5pm*

*online shoppers visit [www.loon.org](http://www.loon.org)*

*Share your love of LOONS this holiday season and support loon conservation!*

*HOLIDAY CARDS ♦ ORNAMENTS ♦ STOCKING STUFFERS ♦ APPAREL & MORE!*

Winter is an etching,  
 spring a watercolor,  
 summer an oil painting,  
 and autumn a mosaic of  
 them all.

~Stanley Horowitz



LPC extends its deepest gratitude to the Meredith Rotary Club Major Projects Committee for granting up to \$20,000 to excavate an area near the Field Operations Center to construct a storage building to house equipment and supplies. The Club purchased the supplies and volunteers constructed the shed. Rotary Crew: Dan Whitney, John Columbus, Bruce Reichlen, and Ron Maher

**Loon Center Winter Hours  
 October 15 - May 21**

Thursday - Saturday,  
 9:00 am - 5:00 pm

Closed Thanksgiving, Christmas  
 & New Year's Day

Trails are open year-round,  
 dawn to dusk.

visit [www.loon.org](http://www.loon.org)  
 for year-round hours



Get your *LPC Knitted Beanie*  
 before the snow flies!

Choose from *Teal* or  
*Charcoal*

\$28.95 plus s&h

Call **603-476-5666** or visit our online shop at  
[www.loon.org](http://www.loon.org)

**SAVE THE DATE!**

**LPC'S 50th  
 Anniversary Gala**

June 26, 2025  
 Bald Peak Colony Club

More details soon!

**Looking for the Perfect Holiday Gift?**

**Share Your Love of Loons  
 and Give the Gift of Preservation  
 with a Gift Membership to LPC**

[Loon.org/personal-membership](http://Loon.org/personal-membership) OR Call LPC at 603-476-5666

- Your recipient receives:
- o The Loon Preservation Committee Newsletter twice per year
  - o LPC's e-newsletter delivered to your email inbox monthly
  - o Invitations to LPC's special events throughout the year
  - o A membership decal
  - o A 10% discount on all merchandise from The Loon's Feather Gift Shop (excluding sale and consignment items)

- You receive:
- o The satisfaction of knowing that you are helping to preserve the haunting call of the loon on lakes and ponds throughout New Hampshire.

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