## LOON PRESERVATION COMMITTEE



# NEWSLETTER

**SUMMER 2025** 





The Loon Preservation Committee 183 Lee's Mill Road, PO Box 604 Moultonborough, NH 03254 603-476-LOON (5666); <u>www.loon.org</u>

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

## Celebrating LPC's 50th

A nniversaries promote reflection, and the Loon Preservation Committee's 50th is a good opportunity to think on how far loons and LPC have come since we began our work to help loons in 1975. It was obvious by that long-ago summer that our New Hampshire loons were in serious trouble, with only a few remnants of their former numbers left to call in the night. Just south of us in Massachusetts they had been wiped out entirely, and it seemed to many that our loons would inevitably face the same fate.

Our understanding of threats facing loons in 1975 was rudimentary at best. We suspected that human encroachment on nesting and chick brooding areas was responsible for at least some of their dramatic decline, as well as shootings of loons for sport or misguided attempts to protect fish stocks. It seemed possible that contaminants like PCBs and DDT that had gained our attention for their effects on eagles, peregrine falcons, and osprey might also be impacting our loons. But our first lead-poisoned loon, our first confirmation of inviable loon eggs laden with mercury and other legacy contaminants (to say nothing of new pollutants like flame retardants and PFAS), wakeboats, and ocean oil spills were all still in our future. The heat waves and nest-flooding rain events associated with climate change, and new pathogens like avian malaria, West Nile Virus, and cyanotoxins able to thrive and expand their ranges in warmer and wetter summers would only add to our loons' troubles.

One by one we investigated these threats and turned that research into innovative and focused management to address the challenges facing our loons. We floated nesting rafts to help loons displaced from traditional nesting sites, or whose nests had been flooded or predated by shoreline predators, and loons began to hatch chicks from them. As temperatures increased we added covers and then shade fabric to cool heat-stressed loons. We floated signs around nesting loons to give them room to incubate eggs. We talked about loons and their needs to anyone who would listen.

Over 50 years our shaky but determined first efforts to help a rapidly declining species matured into a systematic monitoring, research, management, and educational effort to address the growing threats facing our loons—and against all odds we have continued to slowly recover our state-threatened loon population. The most important thing about our 51st year of work for loons is not that we are celebrating a remarkable anniversary, or the growing range of conservation programs and milestones I can list to evidence our hard work and successes—it is that we are out on our lakes once again this year doing the same things we've been doing for loons over the past 50 years. Only more so.

Harry

## An Earlier Ice-in Made for Fewer Winter Rescues

Remember winter? After the warmest winter on record in 2023-2024, December and January of 2025 were a degree or two cooler than average, harking back to "climate normals" from a halfcentury ago. Ice-in on Winnipesaukee was declared on January 14, three weeks earlier than the vear before. In fact, last year, in 2024, the lake ice barely "caught": even after the official ice-in declaration in mid-February, there was still enough open water that an unprecedented number of loons perhaps a couple of dozen stayed on the lake all winter long. Fast forward to this February, and Winnipesaukee sported a foot or more of ice, from Wolfeboro to Center Harbor. Pond hockey, icefishing bob houses, and the Alton Bay sea-plane ice runway were all back in place, after a couple of years off. New Hampshire's loons had left for the coast when they should, taking their cues from seasonable cold temperatures in November and December, migrating before the lakes froze.

#### Winter Rescues and Recoveries

Colder temperatures and an earlier ice-in thus made for a quieter winter rescue season in NH. A cold snap in mid-December trapped two juvenile loons, one on Weare Reservoir (Horace Lake) and the other on Franklin Pierce Lake. Volunteers and LPC staff, teaming up with rehabilitator Maria Colby and NH Fish and Game Sgt. Kevin Bronson, were able to rescue both loons and release them on the coast. In the only other winter case, LPC staff and volunteer Sharon Grader helped relay an adult loon rescued in New York by the Adirondack Center for Loon Conservation, and treated at the Vermont

Institute of Natural Science, to the closest saltwater, our usual winter release location at Odiorne Point in Rye.

The welcome lull in ice rescues this winter throws a brighter spotlight on the few cases we did see in December, and expect to see each year, of juveniles who fail to start (or finish) their first migration and are stranded at icein. Juvenile loons face long odds from the outset, with around 50% likely to survive their first three years and return as adults (versus annual adult survival of better than 90%). The odds are probably even longer for juveniles who are trapped in the ice and rescued. Even if some are apparently very healthy at intake - vigorous, in excellent body condition, very normal blood chemistry – the failure to migrate may often reflect some combination of injuries and deficits accumulated in the first year, the uphill climb from hatching to fledging and beyond. But we don't have much to go on in guessing how stark the late-fall bottleneck of this first migration is, or how resilient individual loons may be, when they run into trouble.

An individual clue came in April, when New Hampshire Fish and Game staff recovered a banded loon in Portsmouth that was rescued from the ice in late December of 2022 on Pleasant Lake in New London. We don't know where he was originally hatched, but this loon was a juvenile in 2022, and so had survived after rescue and release for three winters (and two summers) on the coast of New England, until this spring, beating the odds almost long enough to reach adulthood.

Recent findings from a Wisconsin study population, where many

banded juvenile loons have been tracked to adulthood, point to the influence of early rearing conditions on how juveniles fare as they migrate and mature. For the Wisconsin loons, chick body mass in the first two months after

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Frankin Pierce Lake volunteers, LPC's John Cooley and Ashley Keenan, NH Fish and Game Sgt. K. Bronson, and rehabilitator Maria Colby untangle a juvenile loon in December (above). A second juvenile, rescued the next day at Weare Reservoir (below), awaits release at Odiorne Point in the transfer box, after banding.



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hatching is a reliable predictor of juvenile survival and eventual breeding success in the years to come, for the individual loon (Walter Piper's blog: https:// loonproject.org/2024/12/02/silver-spoons-and-missing-loons/). This "silver spoon" effect stacks the odds: a good early development, even in the first 4-6 weeks of a chick's rearing, produces a lasting advantage, as each juvenile loon endures the rigors of migration and survival on the ocean, after it migrates. If the same dynamic is true for New Hampshire loons, the odds seem even longer for a loon in trouble at the start of its first winter. But the most alarming finding in Wisconsin is that chick body mass in the population as a whole has been declining steadily for two decades, diminishing survival rates and the subsequent breeding fitness of the population. If the plight of an iced-in juvenile loon in New Hampshire may reflect similar population-level problems, now or in the future, we have all the more reason to intervene, assess the loon's health, give it an initial helping hand, and follow it as closely as possible back in the wild. This will give us a closer, clearer picture of the factors that are shaping the odds, for the individual and the population, and, perhaps, how to improve them.

#### 2025 Northeast Loon Study Working Group

In March, LPC hosted the 35th annual Northeast Loon Study Working Group (NELSWG) meetings for a two-day session at The Loon Center. A cornucopia of research topics and discussions was well received, and energized the attendees for the upcoming field season. Always striking was the relevance of the various findings presented at NELSWG

to loon conservation in New Hampshire, even if the geography of the presenters spanned North America. For example, a refined approach to monitoring schedules on remote sub-alpine lakes in the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem in Wyoming, an innovative web platform to coordinate volunteer loon observations in Vermont, a close study of spring migration timing and molt on Lake Jocassee in South Carolina, and initial attempts to train Artificial Intelligence image recognition models to recognize individual loons in Wisconsin and Maine, are all likely to stimulate progress on related efforts in the Northeast, including at LPC.

~John H. Cooley, Jr.



The first rescue of the 2025 season was an adult loon tangled in fishing line on Newfound Lake, which was untangled and released immediately on the lake by Tufts veterinary interns Brynn Ziel and Khangelani Mhlanga (pictured).

A lake is the landscape's most beautiful and expressive feature. It is earth's eye; looking into which the beholder measures the depth of his own nature. ~Henry David Thoreau



Caption: A job well done – smiles from Maria and Dave Hackett on Pleasant Lake in Francestown, after floating one of the new rafts built at LPC in April, to replace a worn out raft there.

## A Record-breaking Year for the Lead Tackle Buyback Program

LPC's Lead Tackle Buyback
Program addresses one of the
most significant threats to loons
in New Hampshire: mortality
from lead poisoning caused by the
ingestion of lead fishing tackle.
From 1989–2024, lead tackle ingestion was responsible for 37% of
documented adult loon deaths in
the state (Figure 1).

Contrary to what many assume, evidence indicates that the majority of loons that die from lead poisoning are not picking up old tackle lost on lake bottoms. Instead, they are most often ingesting tackle that is in active use—consuming a fish that has broken an angler's line or striking at tackle or a fish that is on an angler's line and being reeled in. That is actually good news, because it means that if we end the use of lead tackle in fishing, there should be an immediate benefit for our loon population.

Through the Lead Tackle Buyback Program, LPC seeks to protect loons by educating the public about New Hampshire's lead tackle laws and about the danger lead tackle poses to loons and other wildlife. The program also helps anglers make the switch to non-lead, loon-safe alternatives by allowing them to exchange lead tackle for vouchers at participating retailers. Last year was a record year for the program, and thanks to a number of new partnerships, the 2025 program is off to a strong start.

## A New Record for Tackle Collected in 2024

In 2024, the Lead Tackle Buyback Program and its educational efforts resulted in the collection of 21,289 individual pieces of lead tackle weighing a total of 172.5 lbs. This marks a 75% increase in

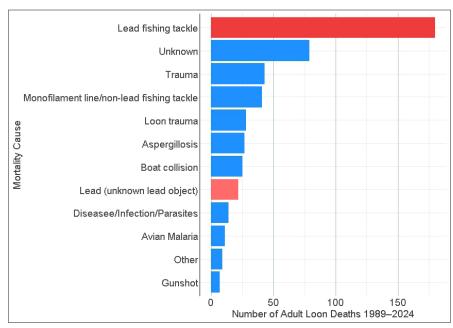


Figure 1: Adult loon mortalities by cause, 1989-2024.

the number of pieces of tackle collected and a 119% increase in weight of tackle collected as compared to 2023 and represented, by a wide margin, a record year for tackle collection.

Our participating shops, at which anglers could exchange one ounce or more of illegal-to-use lead tackle for a \$10 store voucher, remained the backbone of the program, accounting for 14,945 of the pieces of tackle collected in 2024. But these shops weren't our only collection points! Partnering lake associations collected 131 pieces of lead tackle. And five solid waste transfer stations also partnered with us in 2024, collecting an impressive 6,213 pieces of tackle.

#### 2025 Program Expansion

Throughout the fall and winter, LPC staff focused on forging new partnerships to expand the Lead Tackle Buyback Program's reach. Three new shops—Winnisquam Country Store, Newhook's Bait

and Tackle, and Sam's Outdoor Outfitters—have joined the program this year. Their addition brings our total to 14 participating retailers across the state, expanding access to previously unrepresented areas of the state and making it easier for more anglers to participate (Figure 2).

Recognizing that \$10 doesn't go as far in 2025 as it did in 2018 (when the Lead Tackle Buyback Program began) LPC has increased the value of the vouchers in 2025. Anglers who turn in at least 1 oz. of illegal lead tackle (lead sinkers and lead-headed jigs individually weighing 1 oz. or less) at any of our participating retailers will now receive a \$20 store voucher, which can be used to buy new, non-lead, loon-safe tackle or other gear.

The impressive amount of lead tackle collected at just a few transfer stations in 2024 highlighted the potential for these stations to play a major role in both educa-

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Figure 2: Poster of participating Lead Tackle Buyback retailers.

ing the public about the threat that lead tackle poses to loons and other wildlife and acting as sites for responsible lead tackle disposal. In fall 2024, LPC formed a new partnership with the Lakes Region Planning Commission (an organization that provides planning services to several communities in the Lakes Region) to foster connections with more transfer stations. As part of this collaboration, we hosted a solid waste operator training at The Loon Center. During this day-long event, representatives from eight local transfer stations learned about the serious impact of lead tackle mortality on New Hampshire's loon population and brainstormed with LPC staff about community education and lead tackle collection. As of May 2025, these eight stations have been equipped with educational signage and lead tackle collection receptacles.

LPC also worked with the Daniel Webster Council of Scouting America to design the Loon Safe Patch, which can be earned by scouts in New Hampshire. This patch officially launched in September 2024 and will be awarded to all scouts who collect

8 oz. (1/2 lb) of lead fishing tackle from their communities and turn it in to LPC for disposal. In addition to the patch, a commemorative plaque will be awarded to the scout troop whose members cumulatively turn in the largest amount of tackle.

We are excited about these new initiatives and partnerships, all of which help us to reach new audiences with our messaging and have great potential to help loons and other wildlife by removing toxic lead tackle from active use.

#### Why it Matters

Since 2000, New Hampshire has passed a series of laws that restrict the sale and freshwater use of lead tackle. However, the earliest laws were not sufficient to fully protect loons. It wasn't until June 2016 (less than 10 years ago) that the current, more protective standard, went into effect (Figure 3). Even now, many tackle boxes throughout the state may still contain now-illegal-to-use lead tackle purchased before the ban, and because regulations vary by state, visiting anglers may unknowingly bring banned tackle into New Hampshire. If they are unaware of our law prohibiting the use of lead sinkers and lead-headed jigs

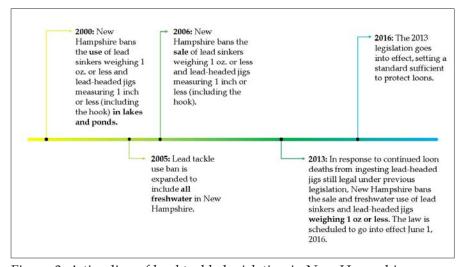


Figure 3: A timeline of lead tackle legislation in New Hampshire.

weighing 1 oz. or less, anglers may use this tackle in our waters, unknowingly putting loons and other wildlife at risk.

New Hampshire had six adult loon deaths due to lead poisoning from ingested lead fishing tackle in 2024. While this is a welcome decrease as compared to the period prior to legislation, these continuing deaths indicate that lead tackle is still being used on our lakes. By expanding our Lead Tackle Buyback Program and its associated educational efforts, we hope to continue reaching new audiences and raising awareness of the importance of removing lead tackle from active use. If you have an old tackle box tucked away, we encourage you to take a look through it and clear out any old lead – you might just save a loon or other wild animal.

~Caroline Hughes



The Loon Safe Patch will be awarded to all scouts who collect 8 oz. (1/2 lb) of lead fishing tackle from their communities and turn it in to LPC for disposal.



Kara Nadeau's second grade students from the Nottingham West Elementary School in Hudson learned all about loons in anticipation of this year's live webcams. They read books about loons, explored loon facts on LPC's website, enjoyed a loon craft, and even practiced making loon calls. We applaud Ms. Nadeau for teaching a unit on loons, and the students for their contagious enthusiasm!



### LPC Broadcasts Two Live Loon Cams in 2025

PC will be broadcasting live from two loon nests in the Lakes Region again this year, from early May through mid-July. There is no way of knowing what the outcomes will be by the time you receive this newsletter. But you can visit <a href="www.loon.org/looncam">www.loon.org/looncam</a> to see if a livestream is still active, as well as read the Loon Cam 1 and 2 Event Logs.

Many thanks to Bill Gassman, our volunteer webcam guru, and to everyone who makes these livestreams possible!

## 2025 FIELD STAFF SELFIES!

#### **LAKES REGION WEST**



**OLLIE KYLLONEN** 

Returning for a second season, Ollie is a recent graduate of UMaine Machias with a degree in Marine Biology. A favorite winter project was working with eDNA and applications of cell culture and DNA tools to capture salmon cells. He also gained experience duck banding and as a lab technician.

#### **PEMIGEWASSET**



**ELEANOR GREEN** 

Ela is pursuing a BS in Wildlife & Fisheries Biology and Forestry at UVM. She has experience handling a variety of wildlife, as well as with bird banding and mist netting. She has volunteered with the Spiny Softshell Turtle Recovery Program (Vermont Fish & Wildlife), and a Purple Martin Nest Watch (Izaak Walton League).

#### LAKES REGION EAST



MARCUS COSENTINO

Marcus recently earned a BSC Honours in Ecology and Evolutionary Biology from the University of British Columbia. His project focused on mathematical ecology and the effects of increased wildfire severity and frequency on populations of indicator passerine species. His long-term goal is to work as a population biologist.

vation at UNH. She was the

of a Dean's Scholarship for

completed a field research

Black-capped Chickadees.

4th student to be accepted in

the Wild Rockies Field Institute

program, and was the recipient

independent study. She recently

project on food preferences of

#### **SEACOAST**



MICHAEL DIGIOIA

Returning for a second season, Mike spent the past year in CT, banding songbirds and sawwhet owls, while also enjoying the winter and spring offerings present in the state. Mostly, though, he was counting the days until he could come back to LPC and keep fighting the good fight for NH's loons.

#### MONADNOCK



SYDNEY PINE

## Sydney is pursuing a BS in Wildlife Biology and Conser-



**JOSH WORWA** 

Josh recently earned a BS in Fish & Wildlife Conservation from UMN. He has extensive field experience conducting bird and wildlife surveys, including nest monitoring, banding, and habitat assessments. He was a research technician for a Red-headed Woodpecker study, and brings valuable data collection skills to the job.

#### **NORTH COUNTRY**



LAUREN O'MALLEY

Returning for a second season, Lauren is a rising senior at UVM in Wildlife Biology. She spent much of the past year in the woods, whether hiking or cross country skiing, and also took a deep dive into learning more about hunting and fishing. She spent her downtime playing guitar or talking to her friends about birds.

#### WINNIPESAUKEE



**RACHEL FORD** 

Rachel is a recent graduate of UVM with a degree in Animal Science and a minor in Wildlife Biology. While in Burlington, she worked at the ECHO Center on Lake Champlain (an aquarium and science museum) in their Animal Care department, and volunteered on a Fish and Wildlife project with Spiny Softshell Turtles.

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

#### **WINNIPESAUKEE**



ALEXANDRA MALLOUK

Allie earned a BS in Ecology and Evolutionary Biology from UM-Ann Arbor. Field experience includes a Sea Turtle Nesting Technician on Ossabaw Island and Tom Yawkey Wildlife Center. She served as a coastal environmental educator for UGA 4-H, including teaching courses in ornithology and beach ecology.

#### **OUTREACH INTERN**



**CADEN PAYNE** 

Caden is a recent graduate of Florida Gulf Coast University with a degree in Environmental Studies. Work experience includes an Environmental Education Intern at Wonder Gardens, and an Assistant Shorebird Steward for Audubon of Southwest Florida. He is excited to bring his outreach skills to LPC!

#### **TUFTS INTERN\***



KHANGELANI MHLANGA

An international student from Zimbabwe, Khangelani came to the US in 2018 to start her veterinary journey at Ithaca College. Since then, she has done research, worked in emergency medicine, wildlife rehabilitation, and surgery. She is especially passionate about infectious disease control and public health.

#### **TUFTS INTERN\***



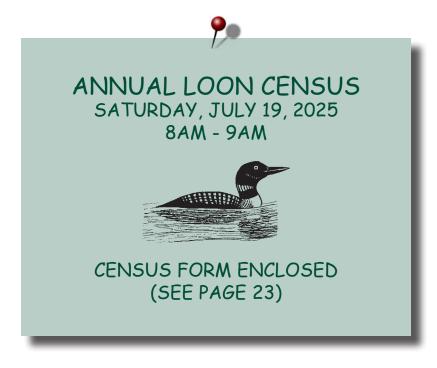
**BRYNN ZIEL** 

Brynn began working with wildlife in 2021, during her senior year at Vassar College. Her professor ran a Northern Saw-whet Owl banding project, and she quickly fell in love with the work. She has worked with harbor seals, a variety of waterfowl, and birds of prey, and as a veterinary assistant and technician.

\*Cummings School of Veterinary Medicine, Tufts University, Class of 2028

If you truly love nature, you will find beauty everywhere. ~Vincent van Gogh





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We are deeply honored to recognize those listed below for remembering the Loon Preservation Committee in their estate planning and, through their legacy gifts, leaving a lasting impact on New Hampshire's loons:

The Estate of Anne Carroll
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The Estate of Philip H. Steckler III
The Estate of Lucy E. Townsend



LPC's 50th Anniversary Raffle!

#### Stained Glass Loon

Stephen Pearson

This stunning leaded stained-glass art was handcrafted and donated by Don Chapman. Measuring 24" in diameter, it includes a chain for hanging.



## Buy one ticket for \$5...

#### "Uncommon" – Loon Watercolor

This watercolor captures the exquisite detail of a loon's plumage. Signed and numbered, this artist's proof was donated by the artist, Bob Ripley, and framed by LPC. Measures 26" wide x 21" tall.



#### Old Town Loon 106 Kayak

This premium recreational kayak, donated by Irwin Marine, is designed for comfort and smooth, efficient paddling. A sit-in design, it measures 10'6".



## or twenty tickets for \$50!

#### Loon Bench

This attractive outdoor bench showcases a pair of loons in a peaceful water landscape. The two-toned tube steel frame is water resistant. Measures 50" wide, 32" tall, and 19" deep; seat height is 16".

Drawing November 29 at 2pm, at the Holiday Open House!



## 50 Years Ago on Squam: Loon Research and a History of Firsts

Talking to visitors to Squam Lake, I always feel a sense of pride when I tell them that LPC started on that very lake. Whenever I boat past the Squam home of LPC's founder, Rawson Wood, I can't help but feel the history – and gratitude for what he, and so many others, did for New Hampshire's loons in those early days. Over these past 50 years, Squam Lake has been a focal point for advancing loon research and confronting the challenges facing loons - on Squam, in New Hampshire, and beyond.

And it started early, even before LPC was founded. In 1974, one year before LPC "hatched," Squam Lake was the site of the first rigorous scientific study of loons in New Hampshire. As with so much else related to the founding of LPC, it was Rawson Wood's idea to conduct such a study and to have Robert Ridgely carry it out (Noon 1990). Funded by the Audubon Society of New Hampshire and the Squam Lakes Science Center (as both of those organizations were known at the time) and the Squam Lakes Association, Ridgely documented the loon population on Squam Lake, nest outcomes, and causes of nest failures, as well as evaluated threats facing Squam's loon population and proposed recommendations to benefit Squam's loons going forward. These recommendations included continued study of Squam's loons, continuation of a public outreach program about the needs of loons (also started by Rawson Wood, of course!), and shoreline conservation (Ridgely 1974). Along with a concurrent survey of loons on Lake Winnipesaukee, Ridgely's study of loons on Squam provided the scientific basis for the founding of the Loon



Scott Sutcliffe (pictured bottom right, with an early LPC field crew) continued Bob Ridgely's research of the Squam loon population in 1975, and subsequently became Director of LPC (1978-1981).

Preservation Committee and the need to document the status of loons on other lakes throughout the state (Noon 1990).

With the first scientific study of loons in New Hampshire in 1974 and the founding of LPC in 1975, these were two significant years for loons in the state. As LPC launched its first field season in 1976, few could have imagined what would be learned about loons—and their challenges—in that year.

I still remember the moment when I became aware of the role of Squam Lake in a momentous discovery. Searching through a file cabinet at LPC looking for historic reports of loon mortalities, I came upon a document reporting on a dead loon collected on Squam Lake near Long Island on September 6, 1976. LPC sent the loon to the National Wildlife Health Laboratory (now National Wildlife Health Center) in Madison, Wisconsin, for necropsy (i.e., an animal autopsy) to determine

the cause of death. The diagnosis was the now all-too-familiar lead poisoning. But the necropsy report read, "To my knowledge, lead poisoning in a Common Loon has not been previously reported. I have seen it in a Sandhill Crane due to ingestion of a fishing sinker also. I will be publishing this case to further document the importance of lead in the environment." This duly happened – the veterinarians published their paper, reporting the first known case of lead poisoning in a loon and acknowledging LPC for the specimen. Little had I known that Squam was the place where mortality of loons from lead fishing tackle was first documented. As sad as that is, it was also the place where awareness was first raised, leading eventually to New Hampshire being the first state in the nation to pass legislation restricting the sale and use of lead fishing tackle. All too many loons from all too many other lakes have followed this Squam loon in death

from lead poisoning, but the sad mortality on Squam a mere year after LPC's founding would eventually launch LPC on the path to being a leader in the effort to eliminate what is still the leading—and completely avoidable—cause of death for adult loons.

In his letter of acknowledgement to the veterinarian who conducted the necropsy on the lead-poisoned Squam loon, Dave Hammond, first Executive Director of LPC, enclosed results of LPC's first pesticide testing on loon eggs. LPC began investigating the possible effects of contaminants on loons from its inception. Scott Sutcliffe, who continued Ridgely's research of the Squam loon population in 1975 and subsequently became director of LPC, published a paper in 1978 detailing the results of a study of contaminant residues (polychlorinated biphenyls [PCB] and pesticides, including DDT) and eggshell thickness in Lakes Region loon eggs. Ten of the 14 eggs tested were from Squam Lake, with the remaining eggs from Winnipesaukee and Lake Wicwas, all collected in 1975-1976. Unsurprisingly given that DDT had been banned only a few years prior, Sutcliffe found an 11% decrease in eggshell thickness from pre-DDT-era eggs and a correlation between DDT/DDE levels and eggshell thickness (Sutcliffe 1978).

Fifty years later, LPC continues researching contaminants in loon eggs. The general concern about contaminants that drove LPC's foray into contaminants testing in the 1970s transformed to a focused study in the wake of a precipitous decline in Squam's loon population and evidence of elevated contaminant levels on the lake where so much of LPC's work began. And yet, even as we have studied Squam's contaminants and found reason for concern, that circle of concern regarding contaminants has widened as we have again found elevated contaminant levels in loon eggs from other lakes around the state. There are new contaminants to worry about too, largely unknown to anyone but chemists when LPC was founded: brominated diphenyl ethers (BDE) and per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS), the so-called "forever chemicals." And the legacy contaminants that Scott Sutcliffe studied in New Hampshire's loons are still around and causing concern – witness the PCB fish consumption advisory issued for Squam Lake in 2020, a direct result of LPC's research on

contaminants in Squam loon eggs and follow-up fish testing by New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services.

So much has changed, yet so much remains the same. In 1974, Robert Ridgely wrote that the presence of loons on Squam Lake, "...certainly can no longer be taken for granted" (Ridgely 1974). Fifty years of focused conservation effort later, Squam's loons are still here, but the challenges continue – on Squam and throughout New Hampshire—and threats that were unknown when LPC was founded have been added to those that were facing loons 50 years ago. What will the next 50 years bring, and what will we learn?

~Tiffany Grade

Noon, J. 1990. The Squam Lakes and their loons. Loon Preservation Committee, Meredith, NH.

Ridgely, R. 1974. The Common Loon on Squam Lake. New Hampshire Audubon Quarterly 28(2):30-52.

Sutcliffe, S.A. 1978. Pesticide levels and shell thickness of Common Loon eggs in New Hampshire. The Wilson Bulletin 90:637-640.



## Why did the loon cross the...border?

s this newsletter went to press, colleagues forwarded photos of a banded loon migrating across Lake Ontario in late May – Coburg, Ontario, at 7:42 a.m., May 26, to be precise. Although only the right leg is visible, the colors (a green band over a white band with a black stripe) are a match for only two loons in North America – one banded as a juvenile in Flathead County, Montana, in 2015, and the other banded as a juvenile in 2022, on New Hampshire's own Highland Lake, Andover. The plastic band colors fade over time. And the New Hamsphire loon actually had a white dot on its green band. So how fresh do they look in the picture – new enough to narrow it down to the 2022 NH loon? And can you make out a white dot on that? Either way, hatched in Montana or New Hampshire, this loon's presence migrating over Lake Ontario is a long, probably accidental excursion from normal wintering and migration routes (for the Montana case) or an extremely rare long-distance dispersal for the New Hampshire loon. And all from the chance snapshot of Ontario photographer Kris Ito. Kris has vowed to stake out the fall migration in Coburg, to photograph both legs!

~John H. Cooley, Jr.

She's back again! The oldest banded loon in the Northeast has returned to Lake Umbagog again this spring, at the ripe old age of at least 35 years. The Sweats Meadow female was originally banded as an adult (at least four years old) in 1993. Photo credit: Katrina Fenton, USFWS-UNWR.





Ontario photographer Kris Ito captured this photo of a loon migrating across Lake Ontario in late May of this year. Leg bands visible on the right leg (a green band over a white band with a black stripe) helped to identify the origin of this loon as possibly from Highland Lake in Andover, NH.

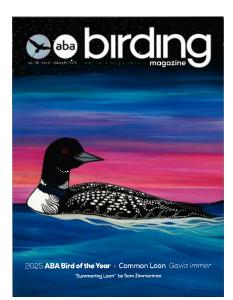


#### LOON PRESERVATION COMMITTEE ACTIVITIES

## Common Loon Named ABA's Bird of the Year!

s the Loon Preservation Committee celebrates its 50th anniversary, the American Birding Association (ABA) selected the Common Loon as its 2025 Bird of the Year! Although purely coincidental, we are thrilled that the Common Loon received this special recognition, allowing more people to learn about this iconic bird and the challenges it faces in our modern world. The January issue of Birding is chock full of articles about loons, including an interview with the cover artist, Sam Zimmerman/ Zhaawanoogiizhik, an Ojibwe artist and ABA's 2025 Bird of the Year artist.

All year, *Birding* will celebrate the Common Loon. Visit aba.org/magazine to learn more!



Ojibwe artist Sam Zimmerman/ Zhaawanoogiizhik's cover art – Summering Loon – portrays the ABA's 2025 Bird of the Year, the Common Loon.



LPC will not publish a Fall Newsletter this year. In its place we will publish a 50-Year Report in recognition of our 50th anniversary! An expanded version of our e-news will capture the summer and fall highlights, and the 2025 loon field season.

If you don't already receive the enews, be sure to subscribe so that you will receive the expanded fall issue. Simply go to <u>loon.org/newsletter/</u> and fill out the form on the right-hand side of the page.

The call of the maang, Ojibwemowin for loon, is so beautiful and spiritual when you hear it travel over the surface of the water. ~Sam Zimmerman/Zhaawanoogiizhik

## Annual Meeting August 21, 2025

## The Loon Center

5:00 pm Gather & Potluck Dinner

6:30 pm Annual Meeting

7:00 pm End of Season Loon Report

The Annual Meeting will be held both in-person and virtually. If you would like to join us virtually, please visit <a href="https://loon.org/annual-meeting">https://loon.org/annual-meeting</a> for information. If you plan to attend in-person and would like to participate in the potluck dinner, please email <a href="yolunteers@loon.org">yolunteers@loon.org</a> to let us know what you'd like to bring. We hope to see you there!



Ray Hennessy Photo

## www.loon.org/events

ach year, LPC offers a number of exciting and educational events across New Hampshire. These include powerpoint presentations, which teach attendees about loon life history, behavior, and biology, as well as guided paddling trips and pontoon tours, during which attendees can learn about loons while observing them on the water. We have a number of events scheduled this summer, including weekly presentations at The Loon Center on Wednesdays from 2–3 pm through August 5th. For a full list of summer events, including dates, times, and locations, please see our Event Calendar at www.loon.org/events.

When hearts unite, the burden takes flight. ~Clara West

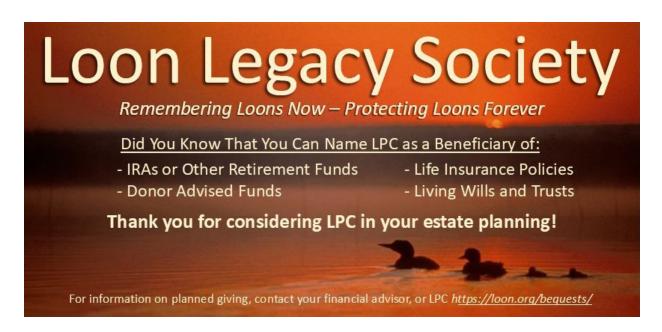


Two workdays in April resulted in nine new nest rafts and a dozen trail cam rafts, completing the five-year Bouchard B-120 oil spill restoration project push to provide more rafts to sites with high nest-failure rates in New Hampshire. Many thanks to our volunteers for lending a hand!





An early photograph of LPC Founder Rawson Wood building a loon raft.



## LPC BULLETIN BOARD

SUMMER NATURE TALKS: Thursdays at 7pm, July 10 - August 21

LOON CENSUS: Saturday, July 19; 8am - 9am (see census form, page 23)

LOON FESTIVAL: Saturday, July 19; 10am - 2pm

Come by and celebrate loons with arts & crafts, face painting, educational loon slide shows, live animals and exhibits, music, refreshments & more!

#### LPC ANNUAL MEETING: Thursday, August 21; 6:30pm

You are also welcome to attend the volunteer gathering and potluck dinner beginning at 5pm (contact <u>volunteers@loon.org</u> to reserve your space) and/or the End of Season Loon Report immediately following the Annual Meeting (see page 22 for description).

#### HOLIDAY OPEN HOUSE: Saturday, November 29; 10am - 2pm

Join us for some holiday cheer, horse-drawn wagon rides (weather permitting), a visit from Santa, and lots of fun activities for the whole family to enjoy!

## 50-Year Anniversary Mug!



#### STAYING CONNECTED

Follow LPC on social media!

FACEBOOK: @LoonPreservationCommittee

INSTAGRAM: @LoonPreservationCommittee

TWITTER: @LPC NH

YOUTUBE: @LoonOrgNH



## Help Loons and Celebrate your LPC Pride!

This commemorative mug is the perfect keepsake to celebrate your LPC pride! The black ceramic mug is beautifully etched with our 50th logo on one side and "Protecting New Hampshire's Loons and Their Habitats Since 1975" on the reverse. Microwave and dishwasher safe. 11 ounce; \$27.50 plus s&h.

#### **Loon Center Summer Hours**

<u>Daily</u> July 1 through October 13 9:00 am - 5:00 pm

Open Labor Day and Indigenous Peoples' Day

Trails are open year-round, dawn to dusk.

(see <u>loon.org/loon-center</u> for year-round hours)

### 2025 Summer Nature Talk Schedule

#### Thursdays, July 10 - August 21, 7pm + at The Loon Center

#### July 10 - Loons: Call of the Wild with John Rockwood

A spectacular multi-media show featuring photographs and videos of seldom seen loon behaviors on various lakes throughout New England. The vibrant photos and videos will allow you to experience all the thrills of loon behavior without getting wet—you'll feel as if you are sitting in the kayak with the Loon Man!

#### July 17 - Black Bears with Joe Callanan

Come learn about how Black Bears live comfortably in our midst and the true nature possessed and displayed by these "ghosts of the forest". These are very misunderstood omnivores that play an important role in our New Hampshire woods. Learn how to live responsibly amidst these powerful yet shy creatures.

#### July 24 - Cyanobacteria: Protecting Our Lakes with Bree Rossiter

How are cyanobacteria blooms impacting local lakes and why are they happening more frequently? Bree Rossiter, Conservation Program Manager for the Lake Winnipesaukee Alliance, will discuss the increase in blooms and explain how you can become a trained cyanobacteria watcher, helping protect both the lakes we love and the people and pets who enjoy them.

#### July 31 – Woolly Mammoths of New England with Susie Spikol

Discover the long-lost lives of the woolly mammoths and mastodons that once roamed New England with Harris Center Naturalist and woolly mammoth lover Susie Spikol! Learn how to tell a mammoth from a mastodon, who these ancient relatives of modern-day elephants were, and what happened to them.

#### **August 7 – Peregrine Falcons with Chris Martin**

Join NH Audubon's Senior Biologist, Chris Martin, for a lively talk about the continued restoration efforts that enable these striking birds to thrive and survive in the wild, as well as his continuing collaboration with the NH Fish & Game Nongame Program focusing on recovering several of the state's endangered and threatened raptors.

## August 14 – Animal Adaptations with the Squam Lakes Natural Science Center Join a Squam Lakes Natural Science Center naturalist for a lesson in animal adaptations. What do a turtle's shell, a skunk's stripes, and an owl's talons all have in common? They are all ex-

amples of adaptations that help the animal survive! Come meet some live animal ambassadors and discover the adaptations that help them survive and thrive in the wild places they live.

#### August 21 – End of Season Loon Report with Harry Vogel

LPC Senior Biologist/Executive Director, Harry Vogel, will present preliminary numbers and trends on New Hampshire's 2025 loon breeding season, including photos of loons and LPC volunteers and staff at work helping loons this summer. Harry and other LPC biologists will answer your questions about loons and LPC's work to recover the state's threatened population.

Nature talks are FREE and open to the public! Come and enjoy informative programs by experts in their field of wildlife conservation.

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



### **New Hampshire Loon Census** Saturday, 19 July 2025 8:00 AM - 9:00 AM

Lake:				Town:		
Observer(	s):					
Telephone:				E-mail:		
Address: _						
Total num	IBER OF PE	OPLE IN PART	Y:			
Observat	ions:					
	ТімЕ	# Adults	# CHICKS	# Immatures	*Location/Direction	
EXAMPLE	8:17	ı AD			FLEW IN FROM EAST	
I.						
2.						
4.						
TOTALS						
					RESPONSE (I.E. VOCALIZATIONS):	
(I)RECORDOR	NLYTHEFIR!	ST sighting of ea	ACH LOON OR GR		O TOTAL THE NUMBER OF LOONS OBSERVED	

- (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) Yoursightingsfromthroughout the summer are also valuable. Please comment on loon activity observed atother times ON THE REVERSE OF THIS PAGE.

#### CENSUS FORMS MUST BE RECEIVED BY JULY 27 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.

