



# LOON PRESERVATION COMMITTEE NEWSLETTER

SUMMER 2026



Ray Hennessy Photo



**The Loon Preservation Committee**  
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Moultonborough, NH 03254  
603-476-LOON (5666); [www.loon.org](http://www.loon.org)

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

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## DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

### Connections

It is a basic tenet of ecology that everything is connected to everything else. To that we at the Loon Preservation Committee can add a basic tenet of loon biology, that survival of adult loons is the largest driver of the continued viability of a loon population. Loons are long-lived birds (ideally, when that lifespan is not truncated by a lead sinker/jig or other untimely death) and are slow to mature and reproduce. If you don't begin to breed until you are six or seven years old and then hatch only one or two chicks – with, on average, just one chick surviving to fledge every two years – you had better live a lot of years to have a lot of chances to raise chicks and contribute to the next generation of loons on our lakes.

That sensitivity to adult survival is why we spend a lot of time and effort investigating causes of death of loons. If we can understand what is killing adult loons then we can work to limit those deaths, and in so doing remove factors limiting the recovery of New Hampshire's loon population.

Readers of our e-Newsletter might remember our report on two loons that died last summer of avian malaria (see page 3 of this newsletter for a fascinating addendum to the story of one of those birds, the Loon Cam 1 male). Those avian malaria cases might seem unconnected to Inga Sidor's report at our recent Northeast Loon Study Working Group meeting of the loon with smoke-filled lungs (page 5), but there is a common thread linking these birds: increasing temperatures have contributed both to northward range expansions of mosquitoes that spread malaria parasites and increasing numbers and severity of northern wildfires. The growing collection of new and persisting threats to loons (lead fishing tackle, fishing line entanglement, nest floodings from ever-growing boat wakes and storm events, and the list goes on) is making it harder to stay in front of the challenges loons are facing.

Fortunately, LPC is connected as well – to a growing array of collaborators, volunteers, and supporters united in common cause to discover those interconnections and ways to help loons cope with the various and related threats they are facing. Inga Sidor (a former veterinary intern at LPC, and now a veterinary pathologist) and Loon Cam watcher Liz Kilpatrick, both highlighted in this newsletter, are two of many examples of collaborators helping us to better understand loons. This understanding is a necessary precursor to help loons cope with their trials and continue their recovery. Some of those issues are more easily solved than others, but we have made progress even in helping loons cope with increasing temperatures, as is evident to anyone who has seen a loon nesting under shade fabric on one of our floating rafts. Through your interest in loons, you readers are connected to our efforts as well. Over more than 50 years of work, we have learned that these connections matter and that it takes a community to recover loons or any threatened species.

## Loon Cam Community Science Project Provides Insights into Loon Nesting Ecology

Since LPC first began streaming live loon nests in 2014, our Live Loon Cams have provided viewers with a rare opportunity for up-close observation of nesting Common Loons. This technology has allowed us to watch loons continuously over the entire incubation period, making it possible to document the exact timing of egg laying, chick hatching, the exchange of incubation duties between pair members, and many other noteworthy events.

Not long after LPC began streaming nests to YouTube (a platform that allows viewers to chat with one another in real time), members of our Loon Cam community took up the task of “time stamping.” Time stamping involves placing a note in the chat describing noteworthy events and the exact time they occurred, down to the second. Originally, these timestamps served the purpose of helping viewers who had stepped away from their computers to catch up on events they had missed by rewinding the video stream to the referenced time.

In recent years, the timestamps have proven valuable for much more than helping viewers keep up with the action. They have also become an important tool for improving our understanding of the details of loon nesting ecology and behavior. One viewer, Dr. Elizabeth (Liz) Kilpatrick from Fitchburg State University (MA) has worked closely with LPC’s Loon Cam Operator, Bill Gassman, to help formalize the time-stamping process and extract meaningful data from the chat logs. At the end of each day, chat logs are analyzed, timestamps are extracted, and spreadsheets are created to document each ex-

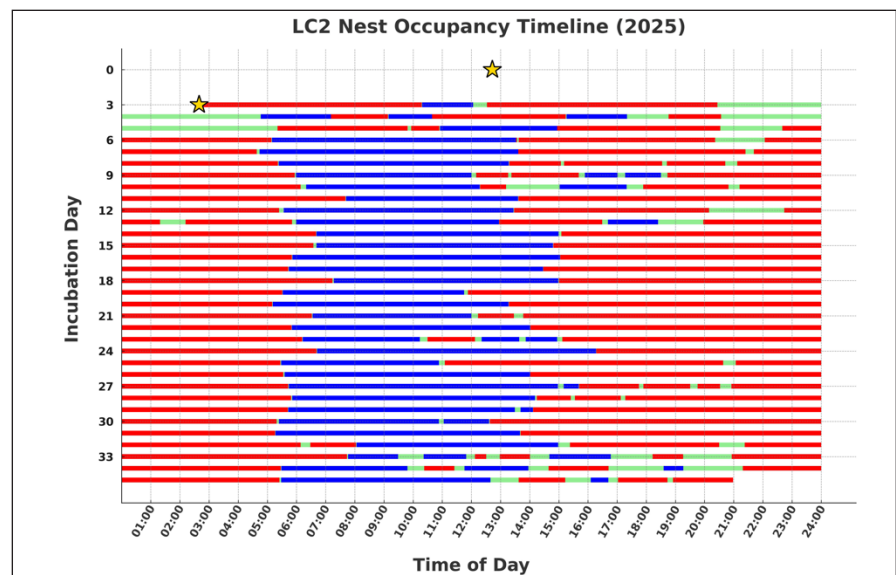
change of incubation duties between the loons. Using this information, Dr. Kilpatrick has generated detailed graphs that show the nest attendance patterns of individual loons throughout the incubation period.

The value of these detailed records became especially apparent last summer, after the male loon from Loon Cam 1 tragically died from avian malaria. His death came shortly after the pair abandoned their nest (which they had incubated well past the date the eggs should have hatched if they were viable). His death was noteworthy because since the first documented case of avian malaria in a New Hampshire loon in 2015, all documented mortalities from the disease in the state had been females, typically during or shortly after nesting attempts. The

Loon Cam 1 male was the first documented male loon mortality from the disease in New Hampshire.

Loons that have recently been nesting may have higher exposure to malaria parasites because they are unable to dive underwater to shake off mosquitoes (the vectors for the parasites that cause the disease) when they are sitting on nests. We had previously hypothesized that differences in incubation timing between male and female loons may help to explain the apparent disparity in mortality rates. Published observations from one camera-monitored nest<sup>1</sup> suggest that female loons spend more time incubating at night than males. Because mosquitoes are generally more active at night, increased nighttime incubation

*continued on page 4*



These graphs show the incubation patterns of the male and female loons of both Loon Cam 1 (LC1, page 4) and Loon Cam 2 (LC2, above) over the duration of their nest attempts. The red bars indicate female shifts, blue bars indicate male shifts, green bars indicate unoccupied times, and stars indicate times of egg laying. On Loon Cam 2, a clear and typical pattern emerged—the female took the night shift, incubating from approximately 2pm each afternoon through approximately 5am the next day.

*continued from page 3*

could potentially increase female loons' exposure risk.

As we reviewed the necropsy results for our Loon Cam 1 male, which confirmed that he was the first ever male New Hampshire loon to die from avian malaria, we consulted Dr. Kilpatrick's incubation graphs for the Loon Cam 1 pair and found that it was the male that typically took the night shift on the nest. This observation may help to explain his exposure pathway, and it would not have been possible without the dedication of the Loon Cam viewers who took the time to carefully document timestamps throughout the nesting season.

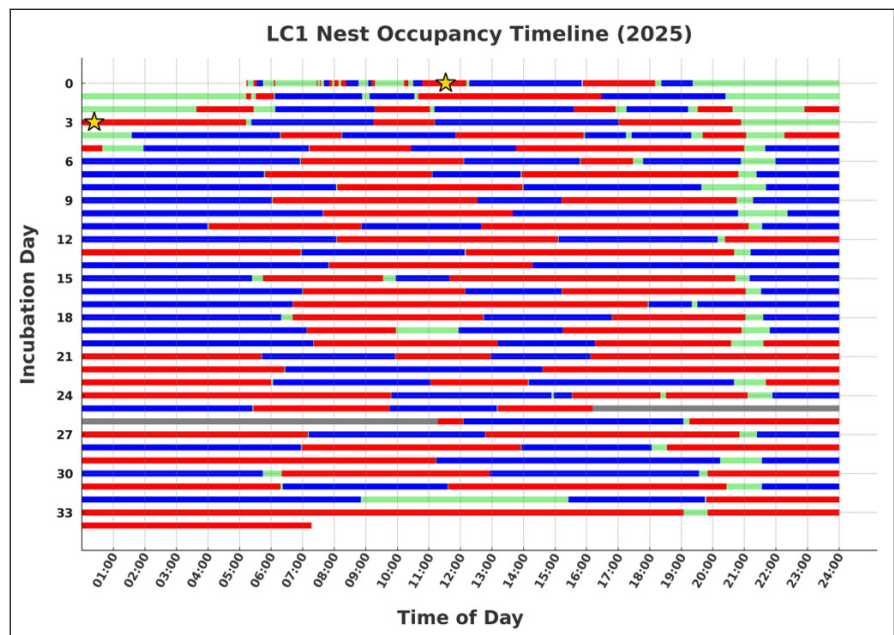
This summer, Dr. Kilpatrick and Bill Gassman are working to create an even more streamlined system for importing chat timestamps, organizing them, and generating graphics to document incubation behavior and other aspects of loon nesting ecology in even greater detail.

What began as a way for viewers to help one another avoid missing important moments has evolved into a community science effort capable of generating valuable information. After the demonstrated value of these efforts in helping us to better understand the factors that may have influenced the death of our Loon Cam 1 male last summer, we look forward to seeing what new insights the time-stamping project may help us to learn in the future.

*~Caroline Hughes*

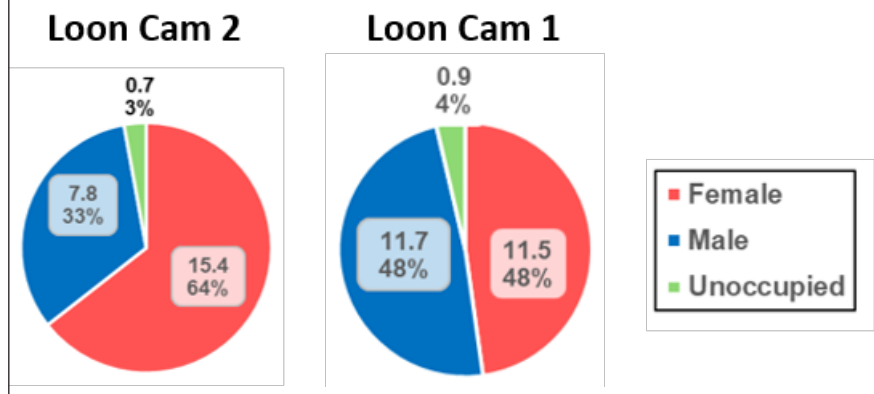
#### Literature Cited:

- 1) Goodale, W., L. Attix, and D. Evers. 2005. Common Loon, *Gavia immer*, nest attendance patterns recorded by remote video camera. The Canadian Field-Naturalist 119:455-456



On Loon Cam 1 (LC1, above), the pattern was less consistent. However, most days, the male (blue bars) took the night shift, incubating from approximately 9pm (21:00) through approximately 6am the following morning. Grey bars indicate times when the cam was offline.

### Average Daily Occupancy, Female vs. Male Days 6-30 (hours, %)



These graphs show the percentage of the time the eggs were incubated by the female vs. male loons. On Loon Cam 2, we saw a split of roughly two-thirds female and one-third male, whereas on Loon Cam 1, we saw an even split of incubation time between the female and male.

LPC's Loon Cam Operator, Bill Gassman, continues to innovate ways for viewers to keep up with the action on our Live Loon Cams. Visit [Loon.Org/LoonCam](http://Loon.Org/LoonCam) for links to the live feeds, as well as daily time-lapse videos compiled and posted by Bill.

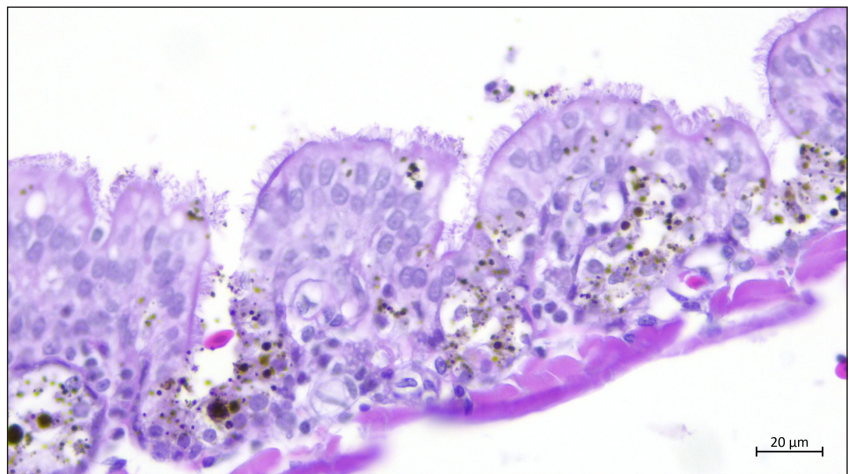
## LPC Hosts 36th Meeting of the Northeast Loon Study Working Group



*In mid-March, close to 50 participants gathered at The Loon Center for the 36th meeting of the Northeast Loon Study Working Group (NELSWG), with dozens more attending virtually. NELSWG brings together biologists, researchers, and citizen supporters from across North America, representing federal and state agencies, non-governmental organizations, and universities. NELSWG sessions are an annual opportunity to compare monitoring results and methods, report the findings of stand-alone projects, and update the group on the status of major ongoing research initiatives.*

### A Deering Mystery

The 2025 pathology cases presented by Inga Sidor, DVM, at NELSWG included a case from Deering Reservoir that wasn't as simple as it looked. Although a pre-necropsy X-ray showed a bullet in the loon's left leg, there was no sign internally that the bullet had done any major damage. Instead, infections and other injuries seemed to have combined as the ultimate causes of this loon's demise. To further complicate things, as Sidor and New Hampshire Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory colleagues examined tissues from the loon microscopically over the winter, they found, very surprisingly, smoke residue in the lung and trachea (see images). This loon, collected in mid-September, could well have been migrating from a breeding population where wildfire smoke is more common, like the Canadian provinces. Genetic testing to assign the loon to a breeding



*Cross sections of the lung and trachea tissues from a mortality collected at Deering Reservoir show gritty dark particles – unmistakably smoke residue, perhaps from Canadian wildfires.*

population – another topic on the NELSWG agenda – might answer this question, and we are reaching out to colleagues leading that work to see if they can help us resolve at least part of the mystery.

*~John H. Cooley, Jr.*



## *PCB's are still around. What does this mean for loons?*

**I**t was spring of 2024, and I sat stunned as I listened to the project manager at the laboratory LPC uses for egg contaminant testing on the other end of the phone line. It was something of a, "Houston, we have a problem," kind of call. He told me that the PCB levels of one of the inviable loon eggs we had sent for testing were so high that they were interfering with the analytical equipment. They were going to run the sample again, but the best they could come up with would be an estimated minimum level. I put down the phone in a daze and anxiously awaited the final results.

Polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) were banned in the United States in 1979 due to concerns over impacts on human and environmental health, yet they are still present at elevated levels in New Hampshire loon eggs. PCBs are a group of 209 compounds that were used in electrical insulators, capacitors, and appliances. They are persistent chemicals that do not biodegrade readily but do accumulate in the fatty tissues of long-lived animals like loons and increase up the food web until they are at high concentrations in animals like loons at the top of food webs (a process known as "biomagnification").

Loon Preservation Committee (LPC) was studying PCBs even when they were still legal to produce in the United States. In the mid-1970s, Scott Sutcliffe, then director of LPC, conducted a study on contaminants in loon eggs in the Lakes Region (Sutcliffe 1978). His testing, focused on inviable eggs primarily from Squam but including Winnepesaukee and a single egg from Lake Wicwas, found an average level of 24,600 parts per billion (ppb), with the

lowest amount coming in at 2,900 ppb and topping out at 67,900 ppb.

Fast forward 50 years from Sutcliffe's study: PCBs have been banned for nearly that amount of time, the Squam Lake loon population has experienced a catastrophic decline, and LPC is again testing loon eggs for contaminants, including PCBs—initially to try to understand the causes of the decline of Squam's loon population but more recently to broadly assess contaminant levels in loons across the state and to investigate their impact on New Hampshire's loons. Overall, the picture of PCBs in New Hampshire loon eggs is encouraging since Sutcliffe's study: the statewide average of PCBs in loon eggs has declined by 92%. But a closer look suggests reasons for ongoing concern.

On Squam, PCB levels vary widely across the lake, but eggs that are higher than average occur around the lake regularly enough—and at high enough levels—to cause concern. For years, the egg with the highest level of PCBs in LPC's "modern era" of contaminant testing was from the female in the Moultonborough Bay territory at 12,849 ppb—over half the average level from the 1970s and nearly seven times the current statewide average. As LPC conducted sediment testing to seek a source of the contaminants on Squam, we discovered an area with elevated PCB levels in the sediments, likely linked to another all-too-common use of PCBs during their heyday: spraying on dirt roads for dust suppression (NOAA 2024). In response to LPC's mounting evidence of elevated PCBs on Squam Lake, New Hampshire Department of

Environmental Services tested fish from the lake and, based on those results, issued a stringent fish-consumption advisory for PCBs (see LPC Summer 2020 newsletter, pgs. 16-17). This was a clear demonstration of loons as indicators not just for loon health or wildlife health, but even, in some cases, for human health as well.

As LPC tested eggs from more lakes, we soon found other places spanning the state with loon eggs well above-average for PCBs, from Merrymeeting Lake in the south to Lake Francis in the far north. But then came the phone call from the laboratory. The egg in question was collected in 2023 from Province Lake in Effingham and came in at 58,544 ppb—30 times higher than the statewide average and over eight times higher than the level that has been shown to affect the health and reproductive success of other bird species. And it is approaching the highest levels documented in loon eggs from the 1970s, with maximum levels ranging from 65,000-67,900 ppb (Fig. 1, page 16). Levels of dioxin-like PCBs, which are a group of particularly toxic PCBs, were nearly 19 times the statewide average and more than nine times the effects level in other bird species (Fig. 2, page 16). Subsequent testing of a 2016 Province Lake egg from LPC's archive revealed PCB levels that were not as high as the 2023 egg but still quite elevated—on par with the average Scott Sutcliffe found in the Lakes Region in the 1970s. And testing from the 2024 breeding season brought another lake to our attention with elevated PCB levels: Pool Pond in Rindge. Levels at this pond were similar to those for the Squam egg from

*continued on page 16*

## Thirty Years, One Loon

We don't truly know how long loons live; the oldest known individuals are in their thirties, including some of New Hampshire's own. Those oldest individuals alive today, banded as adults in the 1990s, have seen the world change considerably, whether they are aware of it or not. These loons were born in the primeval: before Wikipedia, before everyone had a smartphone in their pocket, before we had fully mapped the human genome. Hurricane Katrina, the 2008 financial crisis, and the Deepwater Horizon oil spill all happened within their lifetimes. The loons, of course, ignored all this. Their worldview begins at the ocean and ends at their home territory. Whether that be here in New England, the Midwest, or in northern Canada, these loons have been breeding through it all.

But in their own way, our oldest cohort of banded loons have seen change in the last few decades. For one loon in particular, his world has changed just as much as ours. Originally banded as the resident male territory holder in 1999 on Swains Lake in Barrington, and now at least 30 years old, this loon ruled the roost for almost two decades, claiming the whole 341-acre lake as his territory, with a series of several mates over the years. But times change. As New Hampshire's loon population slowly increased, by 2018 or 2019, our surveys found two breeding pairs at Swains, with the old male heading to the west end of the lake, leaving his former mate to find a new partner. In the years since, both pairs, each with one of the original pair members, continued their breeding success on neighboring territories.

2025 would bring about an

unexpected reunion, however. During my surveys, I realized that the old east female had changed territories, and the two former mates had reunited in the west, hatching and fledging a single chick. The neighboring pair to the east also fledged a chick, and all seemed well on Swains; two pairs of loons, two old mates reunited, and two chicks surviving the first of life's many trials. This concord would not last, unfortunately. More changes were in store for the old male.

Now, in 2026, the old male's world has been shaken up once again. I found on my first survey in May that, astonishingly, there was a third loon pair present on Swains Lake. The east pair remains, while the old male continues to occupy the west territory. As before, though, he has a new mate, and to my surprise, so does the old female, pioneering a new third territory between the east and the west. The old male

continues to defend his territory, even from a loon that until recently was his mate. Swains is, mathematically, large enough to host three pairs of loons, and so, in time, we may find that these three neighboring pairs are the new norm. The old male, resident on the lake since 1999, will have seen the number of loons on his lake triple, and the lake that was once all his own carved up to accommodate the new arrivals. For us as conservationists, this is good news. Common Loons in New Hampshire are still struggling, and having more breeding pairs is always a positive, a sure sign that the population is continuing to re-occupy historical habitat. But for that old male who has seen his home change so much, one can't help but wonder if he feels the same.

~Mike DiGioia,  
LPC Seacoast Field Biologist  
2024-2026



New Hampshire's loons are making waves in the tech world. The local Inter-Lakes High School robotics team, the Lakerbots #8046, have adopted a loon as their mascot, even giving up a wingflap when their team is announced at the start of the matches. This April, the Lakerbots qualified for the FIRST Robotics World Championships and traveled all the way to Dallas, Texas, with 600 other teams. Go Lakerbots!

# 2026 FIELD STAFF SELFIES!

## LAKES REGION WEST



**CADEN PAYNE**

Caden returns for a second season as a field biologist, after serving as LPC's Outreach Intern in 2025. This past year he worked in Vermont doing invasive plant removal, and performed trail work on St. Marks National Wildlife Refuge in Florida. All the while, Caden did a lot of birding and counted down the days until returning to New Hampshire!

## PEMIGEWASSET



**NICOLE WESTFALL**

Nicole holds a MSc in Conservation Medicine from Tufts University. She has a strong interest in understanding the health impacts of human-caused stressors in wildlife, and feels drawn to working with loons for this reason. She recently worked for the Fish & Wildlife Research Institute conducting right whale research in southeastern U.S.

## LAKES REGION EAST



**MARCUS COSENTINO**

Back for a second season of monitoring loons, Marcus spent the winter doing conservation work with Northern Bobwhite Quail in Texas. After that he drove to Utah where he spent the rest of the winter at Snowbird ski resort. He looks forward to reuniting with his loon pairs and volunteers in the Lakes Region East!

## SEACOAST



**MICHAEL DIGIOIA**

Though his background is mostly in paleontology, Mike is thrilled to be back for another summer of working with New Hampshire's loons! Over the winter he continued volunteer bird banding, and worked with New England cottontails with the Department of Environmental Protection in his home state of Connecticut.

## MONADNOCK



**ALICE WEIS**

Alice holds a BS in Ecology with a Minor in Environmental Humanities from Sterling College. They have a strong knowledge of natural history, and plant and animal ID, as well as experience canoeing and in wilderness training. They have served as a NH Lake Host, educating the public on invasive species.

## SUNAPEE



**ELI LAMMI**

Eli recently earned a BS in Wildlife & Fisheries Biology from the University of Vermont. He brings extensive field experience in avian surveys, aquatic species monitoring, and watercraft operation to the job. He is deeply passionate about avian ecology and is eager to work hands-on with Common Loons this summer!

## NORTH COUNTRY



**KATHARINE TURNBULL**

Katharine earned a BA in Biology from Earlham College, and has taken coursework in Library Science. Seasonal work includes E-fishing for Brook Trout to determine population status with NHF&G, and as a library cataloguer for the Mount Washington Observatory. She has a deep passion for wilderness and its protection.

## WINNIPESAUKEE NORTH



**CAROLINE BAXTER**

Caroline recently earned a BS in Biology with a Minor in Native American Studies from Northern Michigan University. She volunteered for the Bird Center of Michigan, where she assisted in the rescue, care, and release of injured passerines and waterfowl. Her sister Katie was one of LPC's vet interns in 2024!

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

## WINNIPESAUKEE SOUTH



**RACHEL FORD**

Since working on Winnepesaukee last summer, Rachel worked as a ski technician in Breckenridge, Colorado. She was particularly excited by the chance to see some new western U.S. birds. She was also accepted for a Master's program in Ecology & Conservation in Sweden and will be moving abroad at the end of the summer.

## OUTREACH INTERN



**MARIAH HAUG**

Mariah is pursuing a B.S. in Conservation and Wildlife Biology at Kansas State University where she works as a Field Technician for the Konza Prairie Biological Station. She has a strong background in wildlife care, public engagement, and environmental education, and looks forward to contributing to LPC's mission through outreach and conservation efforts.

## TUFTS INTERN



**CRISTOPHER PINEDA**

Cris is a DVM student at Tufts, with a passion for public health and conservation medicine. He became interested in wildlife as a research assistant in an Urban Wildlife and Conservation Education lab at Cal Poly Pomona while completing his animal science degree, and later as a Wildlife Rehab Technician at the International Bird Rescue in Long Beach, CA.

## TUFTS INTERN



**SAMMY SCHUCHMANN**

Sammy completed her undergraduate degree in Wildlife, Fish, and Conservation Biology at UC Davis. She has worked as a vet assistant and technician for over six years. After finishing her Masters in Conservation Medicine at Tufts University this summer, she will start vet school at Ontario Veterinary College to become a wildlife veterinarian.

# ANNUAL LOON CENSUS

**Saturday, July 18; 8am - 9am**

*(See page 23 for census form.)*

**See a Loon in Trouble?**

Please call 603-476-5666  
[www.loon.org](http://www.loon.org)



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

## Wishing her well!

Since her initial summer as Winnepesaukee Field Biologist in 2022, LPC's Field Program Coordinator Ashley Keenan has rescued loons, repaired boats, and coached seasonal field staff through thick and thin. Wearing many hats, Ashley has been an indispensable part of LPC's recent successes in the field.

We wish her all the best as she moves on to other exciting conservation work and adventures!

~John H. Cooley, Jr.



**ASHLEY KEENAN**

## Thank you to our donors: April 1, 2025 - March 31, 2026 (\$100 and above)

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| Ms. Kristie Medill &               | Association                       | Ron Smith & Kim Davis Smith        | Sharon Vezina                          |
| Mr. Alex Medlicott                 | Plante Moran                      | Janet and Jeff Smith               | Johanna and Dennis Vienneau            |
| Robert and Judith Melzer           | Pleasant Lake Preservation        | Joanne Smith                       | Diane and Gary Viera                   |
| Kay Meyer                          | Association                       | Martha Soucy                       | Village Kitchen, LLC                   |
| Millen Lake Association            | Nancy Polin                       | Amanda and Robert Spellman         | Susan Villani                          |
| Cynthia Miller                     | Harold Potts                      | Mr. and Mrs. Robert Spence         | Susan Vines & John Nikander            |
| Kathryn Miller                     | Barb Powell                       | Elizabeth Spencer                  | Patricia Vittum & Laurie Brocklesby    |
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 Theresa Einhorn  
 Mr. and Mrs. Richard Zeloski  
 Bob and Eileen Zewski  
 Joel and Cindy Zuckerbraun



**L**PC gratefully acknowledges gifts  
 given In Honor/In Memory of  
 the following:

#### IN HONOR

Rebecca Allen  
 Jack Argersinger  
 Elizabeth (Widge) Arms  
 Kristen Begor  
 Shaun and Ellen Berry  
 Peter Bloch  
 Laurie Brookes  
 Karin and Jeff Bouvier  
 Isabel Brintnall  
 Arthur S. Cafaro  
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 Sarah and Josh Eldred  
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 Robert and Karen Gallagher  
 Dorothy Gaumer & Fred Jean  
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 Tiffany Grade  
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 David and Eugenia Harrison  
 Marty and Bob Hopkins  
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Alex and Rob Magee  
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 Nancy Peterson  
 Betsy Sullivan  
 Bob Sanders  
 Mark and Kim Schiffrin  
 Margaret (Molly) Simpson  
 Marcia Steckler  
 Betsy Sullivan  
 Jodell Susi  
 The Loonies  
 Douglas and Sandra Thorpe  
 Trisha and Mark Watson  
 Scott Welsh  
 John and Debbie Wilson  
 Christine Woodside

#### IN MEMORY

Bette Arey  
 Craig W. Barry Jr.  
 Bill Basset  
 Mildred Beach  
 Dr. Mary Bove  
 Ralph Bristol  
 Alfred R. Brown  
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 Joe Clapp  
 Thomas A. Culbertson &  
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 Warren Downes  
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 Sally Horseman Lake  
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 Jack and Jean Oliver  
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 Jason Passmore  
 Perch Island Chick (Squam Lake)  
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 Gail Taplin  
 Dr. Rod Taylor  
 G.L. Thatcher  
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 Doris Watkins  
 Rawson Wood

**T**he conservation of nature, the  
 proper care for the human envi-  
 ronment and a gentle concern for  
 the long-term future of the whole  
 of our planet are absolutely vital  
 if future generations are to have a  
 chance to enjoy their existence on  
 this earth.

~Prince Philip~



**W**e 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 Elizabeth (Widge) Arms  
 The Estate of Mildred Beach  
 The Estate of Harold Quinton

continued from page 6

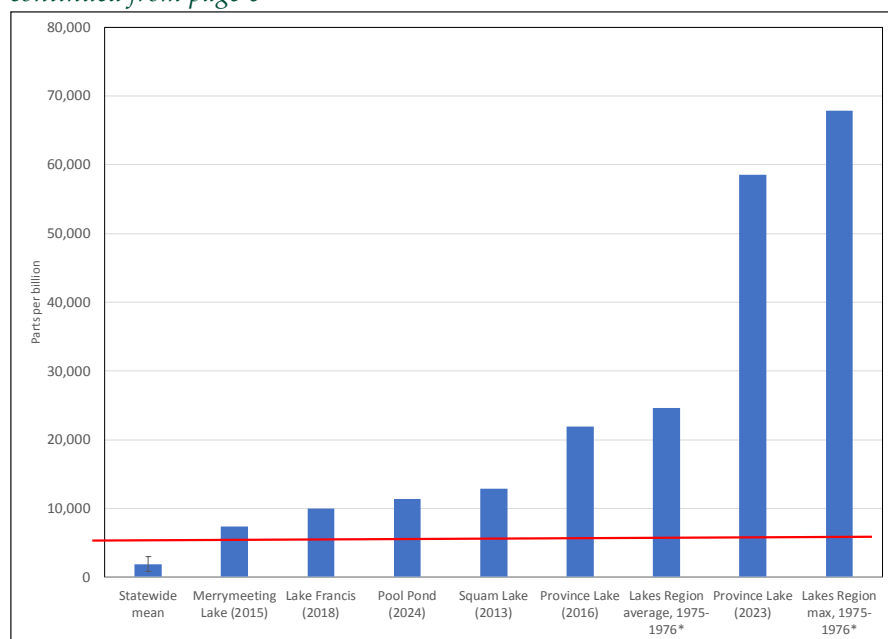


Fig. 1: PCB levels in New Hampshire loon eggs. \*Data from Sutcliffe (1978).

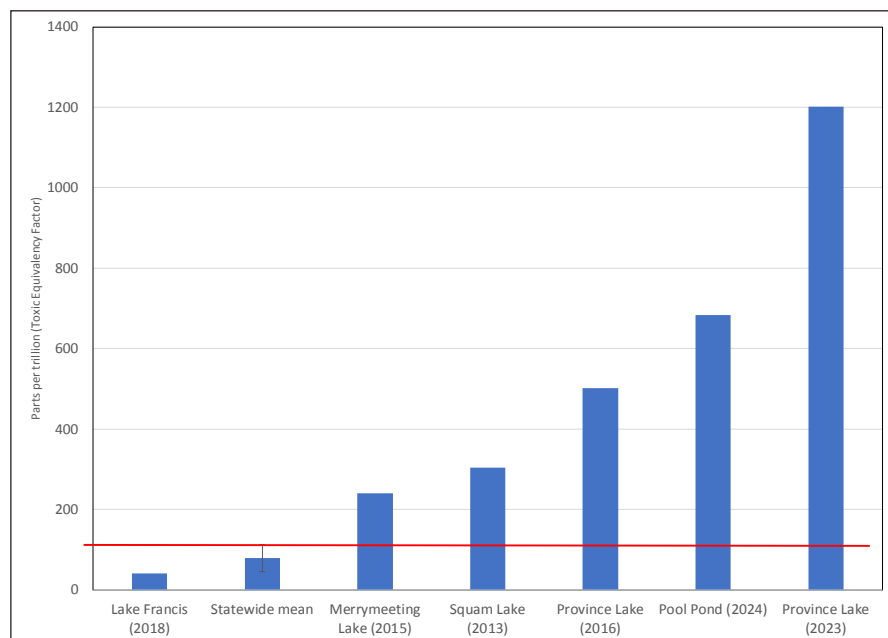


Fig. 2: Levels of dioxin-like compounds in New Hampshire loons.

of good news for loons, loons are not genetically pre-disposed to be particularly sensitive to dioxin-like compounds, unlike some other bird species (Farmahin et al. 2013). However, when an organism is exposed to a cocktail of chemical contaminants, as New Hampshire loons are, it is difficult to separate out the effects of the various contaminants. Additionally, studies have demonstrated that the effects of contaminants may be exacerbated in populations facing multiple stressors (Bustnes et al. 2015). LPC's research has increasingly produced evidence to support the hypothesis that contaminants, including PCBs, in combination with other stressors, may have contributed to the population decline and poor reproductive success experienced by Squam's loons.

As demonstrated on Squam, loons are valuable indicator species and they can show us where there may be broader systemic problems in an aquatic ecosystem, which may extend to human lake-users as well. LPC has recommended that the State conduct follow-up fish testing on lakes that we have found with elevated levels of PCBs or other contaminants. LPC will continue to research levels of PCBs and other contaminants in inviable loon eggs and their effects on loons and share our results with state agencies and in publications. As we work to study and protect loons, what we learn will benefit not just loons but the lake ecosystems they call home.

Moultonborough Bay, but the dioxin-like PCBs were more than twice the levels of those on Squam.

Decades on from the banning of these chemicals, PCBs remain at elevated levels in some of New Hampshire's loon eggs. What

does this mean for the state's loons? While the effects of PCBs in loons specifically remain unknown, in other species PCBs have been associated with toxic effects to the embryo, reduced reproductive success, and changes in parental behavior. In one piece

~Tiffany Grade

See literature cited next page.



## From Tackle Boxes to Transfer Stations: LPC's Statewide Efforts to Protect Loons Unite Scouts, Anglers, and Communities

Last year, LPC published an article in our summer newsletter outlining the many ways we are working to educate the public about the threat that lead fishing tackle poses to loons. That article also introduced the Loon Safe Patch Program, a collaborative effort between LPC and Scouting America New Hampshire designed to recruit scouts to help remove lead tackle from active use in New Hampshire.

Our Summer 2025 newsletter eventually made its way into the hands of Herschel Chambers, Chairman of Moultonborough Scout Troop 142. Troop 142 sprang into action. The scouts checked tackle boxes within their own homes, spoke with friends and family members, and even constructed lead tackle collection receptacles and deployed them at community locations. Within months, the troop had collected 448 individual pieces of tackle weighing a combined total of more than three pounds. Six of the troop's scouts earned the Loon Safe Patch, and together, the troop earned the 2025 Loon Safe Troop Award.

At the award presentation ceremony, held at The Loon Center



*Moultonborough Troop 142 received the Loon Safe Troop award for collecting 448 individual pieces of lead fishing tackle, the largest amount turned in by any NH scout troop in 2025. In addition to the six scouts from Troop 142 who earned the Loon Safe Patch in 2025, 12 additional New Hampshire scouts also earned the patch.*

in early April 2026, Troop 142's scouts and leaders affirmed that though they had already won the top prize once, they intended to continue collecting lead tackle in order to earn patches for more of their scouts, compete for the 2026 Loon Safe Troop Award, and, most importantly, to continue helping to protect New Hampshire's loons from lead tackle.

*continued on page 18*



*Scouts interested in earning the Loon Safe Patch can visit [www.loon.org/patch](http://www.loon.org/patch) for more information.*

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*continued from page 17*

## Why Lead Matters

Loons reproduce slowly. Most will not produce chicks for the first time until they are 6-7 years old, and the average New Hampshire pair fledges just one chick every two years. Because of this slow rate of reproduction, adult survival is critically important for maintaining a loon population. When adult loons die from preventable causes, such as lead poisoning, it can affect the stability of the population. In New Hampshire, lead poisoning resulting from the ingestion of lead fishing tackle has been the single largest cause of documented adult common loon mortality, accounting for 36% of known adult loon deaths from 1989-2025. Lead tackle mortalities have occurred frequently enough to significantly slow the recovery of our state's threatened loon population<sup>1</sup>.

It's not just loons that are affected by lead fishing tackle. More than 30 other species, including Bald Eagles, Wood Ducks, and Common Mergansers, have been documented to ingest it as well<sup>2</sup>. Because of its impacts on loons and other wildlife, the sale and freshwater use of lead sinkers and lead-headed jigs weighing one ounce or less is banned in New Hampshire. However, old tackle boxes are often passed down generationally, and as a result, tackle purchased prior to the ban remains in use across New Hampshire's lakes. Tackle regulations also vary state to state, which means that visitors to New Hampshire's lakes may bring lead tackle with them that is legal to use where they live but prohibited to use in New Hampshire's waters.

LPC's data has indicated that the majority of loons that are dying from lead tackle ingestion on our lakes are not picking up lost tackle from the lake bottoms.



*The Ashland (NH) transfer station and nine other Lakes Region transfer stations hosted educational signs and a lead tackle collection receptacle in 2025.*

Instead, they are ingesting tackle that was in active use — consuming a fish that has recently broken an angler's line or striking at a fish or tackle on a line as it is reeled past them in the water. This means that there is a clear solution to help our loons: informing those who fish about the problem, encouraging them to check their tackle boxes for lead, and providing opportunities for safe disposal.

## A Growing Network of Partners

Troop 142's inspiring efforts are a perfect example of the good that can happen when communities come together to support wildlife conservation. The Loon Safe Patch Program is the most recent in a growing network of community partnerships that LPC has worked to build in order to educate the public about the impacts of lead tackle on loons and other wildlife, encourage anglers to check their tackle boxes for lead, and remove this toxic tackle from potential use before it can harm a loon or other wild animal.

Last year, in addition to our work with scouts, LPC also partnered with the Lakes Region Planning Commission to recruit 10 Lakes Region Transfer Stations to help protect loons from lead

poisoning. As trusted community locations that residents visit regularly, transfer stations provide a unique opportunity for repeated messaging about the dangers of lead fishing tackle use and an easy, convenient way for people to dispose of their old lead tackle responsibly.

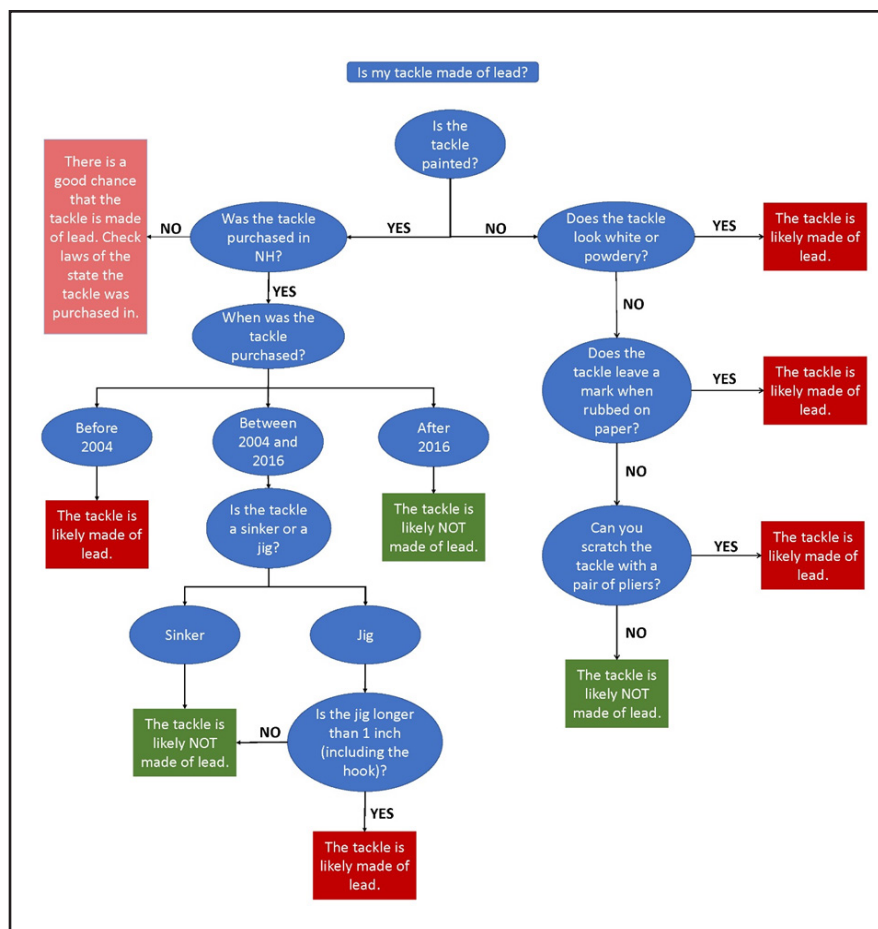
In April 2025, each participating transfer station received educational signage and a lead tackle collection receptacle. In just eight months, those eight stations collected 1,092 pieces of tackle, demonstrating the potential for transfer stations to become powerful long-term partners in protecting loons and other wildlife from lead poisoning. This year, we hope to recruit additional transfer stations to continue expanding this promising aspect of the program.

Over the years, LPC has been joined in our lead tackle collection efforts by dozens of New Hampshire Lake Associations. These organizations have helped the cause in numerous ways. Some have hosted lead tackle collection receptacles at their headquarters, boat launches, or annual meetings. Others have used newsletters and other communications to educate their members about the threat that lead tackle poses to loons. Some have encouraged

their lake hosts to distribute packets of non-lead tackle to boaters, while others have hosted booths at local fishing derbies or lake celebration events to help anglers check their tackle boxes for lead. Together, these efforts have helped to keep loons safer on lakes across New Hampshire.

Since 2018, local tackle shops have also played a critical role in helping anglers transition away from lead tackle. LPC's Lead Tackle Buyback Program now includes 14 participating shops statewide. At these shops, anglers can exchange one ounce or more of prohibited lead tackle for a \$20 store voucher that can be used to purchase non-lead alternatives or other fishing supplies. As community hubs for anglers, these shops have become invaluable partners in helping us to reach the people most directly connected to fishing on New Hampshire's lakes. Importantly, they have also helped to make the transition away from lead tackle easier and more accessible for anglers who want to do the right thing for loons and other wildlife.

One organization alone cannot protect loons from the threat of lead tackle. Every new partner working to educate the public and encourage safe lead tackle disposal helps keep our loons a little safer. We hope that you will also consider joining us in these efforts! If you have an old tackle box, we encourage you to take the time to look through it for lead before heading out on the water this summer, and encourage your angler friends and family members to do the same. You can also help to spread the word by connecting us with your local scout troop, transfer station operator, lake association, or tackle shop owner. Every new partnership helps to strengthen our growing statewide effort to protect loons



*Need help determining if your tackle is made of lead? This flowchart can help!*

and other wildlife from lead poisoning.

We are deeply grateful to all of our current partners, and we look forward to welcoming even more individuals and organizations into this effort in the coming years.

*~Caroline Hughes*



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## LOON PRESERVATION COMMITTEE ACTIVITIES

### *The Loon's Feather Gift Shop is stocked for the summer!*

Come by The Loon Center and browse the extensive collection of loon-themed clothing, jewelry, books, puzzles, home goods and more – *and all profits benefit our loon monitoring, research, management, and education programs!* While you're here, enjoy an award-winning video on loons and our educational displays. And don't forget a walk on our nature trails! There is much to do at The Loon Center, *and all at no charge!*

Can't make it to The Loon Center? Visit The Loon's Feather Gift Shop online at [loon.org/shop](https://loon.org/shop) for a sampling of our loon merchandise. And while you're browsing, explore the many projects of the Loon Preservation Committee and the work we do to protect New Hampshire's loons!



### Annual Meeting at The Loon Center ~August 20, 2026~

5:00 pm Gather & Potluck Dinner  
6:30 pm Annual Meeting  
7:00 pm State of the Loon Report

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

## 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 <https://loon.org/bequests/>

# THE LOON CENTER BULLETIN BOARD

**SUMMER NATURE TALKS:** Thursdays at 7pm, July 9 - August 20 (see page 22 for descriptions)

**LOON FESTIVAL:** Saturday, July 18; 10am - 2pm

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

**ANNUAL LOON CENSUS:** Saturday, July 18, 8am - 9am (see page 23 for census form)

**LPC ANNUAL MEETING:** Thursday, August 20; 6:30pm

You are also welcome to attend the volunteer gathering and potluck dinner beginning at 5pm (contact [volunteers@loon.org](mailto:volunteers@loon.org) to reserve your space) and/or The State of the Loon Report immediately following the Annual Meeting (see page 22 for details).

**HOLIDAY OPEN HOUSE:** Saturday, November 28; 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!

## Loon Ice Trays!



**K**ee your summer beverages cold and fun with loon-shaped ice! These trays, with cover, hail from Minnesota and are BPA free. Each generous cube is 2.5" long and 1" deep. Four loons per tray.

\$21.95 plus s&h

Visit our on-line store at  
[www.loon.org/shop](http://www.loon.org/shop)

## STAYING CONNECTED

*Follow LPC on social media!*

**FACEBOOK:** @LoonPreservationCommittee

**INSTAGRAM:** @LoonPreservationCommittee

**YOUTUBE:** @LoonOrgNH

[www.loon.org](http://www.loon.org)

## Loon Center Summer Hours

Daily July 1 through October 12  
9:00 am - 5:00 pm

Open Labor Day  
and Indigenous Peoples' Day

Trails are open year-round,  
dawn to dusk.

(see [loon.org/loon-center](http://loon.org/loon-center) for year-round hours)

# 2026 Summer Nature Talk Schedule

♦ Thursdays, July 9 - August 20 ♦  
7pm at The Loon Center

## **July 9 – Loons on Lake Jocassee with Jim Paruk and Brooks Wade**

Join loon experts Dr. James Paruk and Brooks Wade as they discuss their extraordinary 10-year study on Common Loon overwintering and migration at South Carolina's Lake Jocassee, a stunning reservoir rated by National Geographic as one of the world's "50 last great places on Earth." Learn about their unique partnership, new findings on wintering loons, and other highlights of Jim's 30+ years of loon research.

## **July 16 – Ancient Elephants: Woolly Mammoths of New England with Susie Spikol**

Join Harris Center Naturalist Susie Spikol for a fascinating journey to the Ice Age. Discover the colossal beasts that once roamed New England. Learn to distinguish woolly mammoths from mastodons, explore their link to modern elephants, and uncover the mystery of their disappearance from our region. Don't miss this captivating look into New England's prehistoric past!

## **July 23 – Hidden Stories: The Unseen Lives of Animals - A Fawn in the Forest with the Squam Lakes Natural Science Center**

Join a Squam Lakes Natural Science Center naturalist and discover the hidden lives, surprising behaviors, and survival strategies of local wildlife, explored through real trail camera photos and videos that focus on the challenges and exploration of a young fawn. The evening will also feature a live animal ambassador of the forest.

## **July 30 – Winter Ice Rescues with John Cooley and Caroline Hughes**

Join LPC Senior Biologist John Cooley and Outreach Biologist Caroline Hughes for a gripping look at LPC's winter loon ice rescues. Hear the stories of these critical operations that save loons trapped by sudden freezes. Learn what these high-stakes encounters reveal about loon life history, the value of rescue teamwork, and the growing threat loons face from a changing climate.

## **August 6 – Wiggles and Waggles: Loons on the Lake with John Rockwood**

Get ready for an unforgettable journey with these photogenic loon twins! Follow Wiggles and Waggles from the day they hatch to their migration to the ocean. This newly-updated show is packed with stunning photos and videos—including exclusive underwater footage of adults and chicks—that brings you right into their world. Experience all the thrills and the cuteness of loon families!

## **August 13 – Owls: Masters of the Night with Joe Callanan**

Join us for a captivating journey into the shadows of our forests to learn all about the incredible owls that call New England home. Discover the secrets of their natural history and the unique adaptations that allow each species to thrive right in our midst, under the cover of darkness. Don't miss this thrilling talk and the chance to understand the silent, mysterious world of these magnificent raptors!

## **August 20 – The State of the Loon Report with Harry Vogel**

Join LPC Senior Biologist/Executive Director Harry Vogel to hear the story and results of LPC's work for the loons this year. This engaging presentation features stunning photos of loons, and dedicated LPC volunteers and staff in action. Harry and other LPC biologists will be on hand to answer all your questions about loons and the vital work to recover New Hampshire's threatened loon population. Get this essential update straight from the experts!

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



**New Hampshire Loon Census**  
**Saturday, 18 July 2026**  
**8:00 AM - 9:00 AM**

Lake: \_\_\_\_\_ Town: \_\_\_\_\_

Observer(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Total number of people in party: \_\_\_\_\_

**Observations:**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**CENSUS FORMS MUST BE RECEIVED BY JULY 26 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](mailto:volunteers@loon.org).

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

Loon Preservation Committee  
PO Box 604  
Moultonborough, NH 03254

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