

Loon Committee Urges Public to Give Nesting Loons Space

Nests at water's edge are vulnerable to threats

Press release

The Loon Preservation Committee (LPC) is reminding the public that from now through mid-to-late July, loons will be nesting throughout the state. Loons nest on lakes and ponds and often build their nests along the shoreline of islands, in marshes, or along the mainland shoreline in protected coves.

Adapted for life in the water, loons cannot walk on land. As such, they build their nest right at the water's edge. These nests are vulnerable to boat wakes and to human disturbance.

"Because they cannot walk well on land, loons are vulnerable when they are on the nest," said LPC Senior Biologist/Director, Harry Vogel. "If they sense a threat, such as a closely approaching boat, they will flatten themselves low over their nests, with their heads angled toward the water, to try to hide. If the threat persists in the area, they will flush from their nest."

If adult loons are flushed from the nest, their eggs may be exposed and vulnerable to predation or temperature changes that can render the eggs inviable.

Those who plan to boat, fish, or hike on or around New Hampshire's lakes during the loon nesting season are urged to be careful. If a loon nest is found, it should be given plenty of space – 150

feet at minimum, and more if the loon shows signs of distress, such as lowering its head over the nest.

If a member of the public accidentally flushes a loon from the nest, they should leave the area immediately so that the loon can resume incubation. Following New Hampshire's no-wake laws helps to avoid swamping loon nests or washing



A loon in this flattened out position on the nest is feeling stressed and should be given more space. Caption and photo: Loon Preservation Committee

their eggs out of the nest.

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

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Loon Nest Watch Continues on Highland Lake

Chicks should hatch by June 28

Donna Hartwell-Baker, East Andover

Happy Summer Solstice! As I sit in my kayak on Highland Lake, on the longest day of the year, I can see that "Mother," or perhaps "Father," Loon is diligently sitting on the nest. It is a long 28 days of taking turns incubating the eggs. We do not yet know if there is one egg or two – generally, they lay two eggs.

Today marks the 21st day of the 28 day (approximately) gestation period. By June 28, we can expect the arrival of a chick or two chicks. They usually hatch within a day or two of each other.

About 50% of eggs laid will hatch. Both parents will stay close to the nest site while they are hatching. When they feel secure enough, they will venture out onto the lake with their chicks alongside or on top of their backs and tucked under a wing. They will need to be on alert for predators both above and

below the water.

A very large snapping turtle has taken up residency on the largest of the rocks off the north-east side of the island where the black and white buoy is. Snappers have been known to snatch a floating chick, as well as eagles from above.

It is helpful if the loon parents are given plenty of space (100') so that they can keep their attention on protecting the chicks. Motor boats and especially water skiers and wake tubers will need to keep a close look out for the loon family, as the chicks are not able to get out of the way and/or dive.

We are blessed each year with this pair of mating loons. Not every year do we have chicks to watch. So far it looks very good that this summer we will!

As always, if anyone would like to report a sighting or share photos with either the Beacon or within the Loon News email group, please send to Donna Baker-Hartwell at DonnaBH@tds.net or Articles@AndoverBeacon.com We would be happy to add you to the mailing.

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