

# MINNESOTA LOON MONITORING PROGRAM

*Working with you to monitor our state bird*



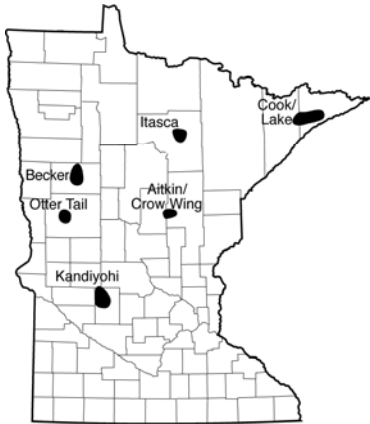
## Why Monitor Loons

Loons are...

- Good indicators of water quality because they need clean, clear water to observe and catch food.
- Sensitive to disturbance and lakeshore development.
- Indicators of the effects of contaminants like mercury and lead in the environment or the impacts of events like the BP oil spill.
- Enjoyable for Minnesotans to watch!



## Monitoring Program



The Minnesota Loon Monitoring Program is a long-term project of the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources' Nongame Wildlife Program. With the generous assistance of hundreds of volunteers, information about common loon numbers is collected annually on more than 600 lakes distributed among six regions, or "index areas" of the state. These areas were selected because they are typical of larger portions of the state in ways that matter to loons: varying human population growth, acid rain sensitivity, public or private land ownership, and/or road density.

Volunteers visit each lake for one morning during a 10-day period in summer, count the number of adult and juvenile loons seen, and report these observations for data management and analysis.



## Want to Monitor Loons?

Here are answers to frequently asked questions.

### When do I survey?

- The survey generally runs for 10 days from the last week of June through the first week of July.
- Surveys are done once between 5 a.m. and noon during the monitoring period.
- Pick nice weather days with little wind.

### How long does it take?

- Survey time depends on lake size:
  - ◇ Small (<150 acres) 30—60 min
  - ◇ Medium (150-400 acres) 30 min to 2 hrs
  - ◇ Large (>400 acres) 2 to 4 hrs



Photo by Stephen Maxson

### What equipment do I need to survey?

- Binoculars and/or spotting scope.
- Bird identification guide book.
- Surveys can be conducted from shore or by boat or canoe.

### What can I expect to see?

- Larger lakes are more likely to have loons.
- Most breeding pairs will have 0 to 2 young.

### Can I survey any lake?

- This survey design has 100 lakes in each index area that need to be adopted by volunteers.

*With over 20 years of data, this information gives us the ability to detect significant changes in the adult population and reproductive success of the state's common loons, and to anticipate any problems that could jeopardize the future of our state bird.*





## Becoming a Volunteer

Have questions, want to know more, or figure out which lakes are available for adoption? Contact:

**Aitkin/Crow Wing counties** Karen McLennan, Brainerd, 218-203-4352, [karen.mclennan@state.mn.us](mailto:karen.mclennan@state.mn.us)

**Becker County** Sherry Seado, Bemidji, 218-308-2620, [sherry.seado@state.mn.us](mailto:sherry.seado@state.mn.us)

**Cook/Lake counties** Ashley Toonstra, Grand Rapids, 218-328-8823, [ashley.toonstra@state.mn.us](mailto:ashley.toonstra@state.mn.us)

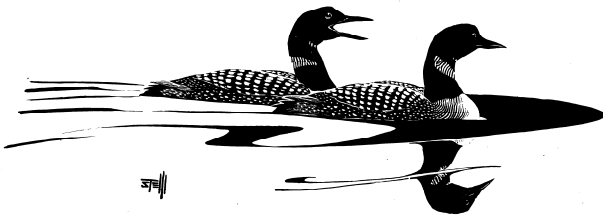
**Itasca County** Ashley Toonstra, Grand Rapids, 218-328-8823, [ashley.toonstra@state.mn.us](mailto:ashley.toonstra@state.mn.us)

**Kandiyohi County** Dorie Tess, New Ulm, 507-359-6036, [dorie.tess@state.mn.us](mailto:dorie.tess@state.mn.us)

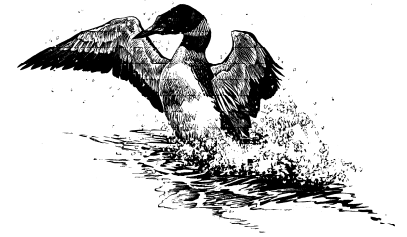
**Otter Tail County** Sherry Seado, Bemidji, 218-308-2620, [sherry.seado@state.mn.us](mailto:sherry.seado@state.mn.us)

Detailed instructions and lake maps will be provided.

**Common Loons** are large diving birds that spend their summers on open fresh water lakes and their winters on the seacoast. During summer, they sport distinctive black and white breeding plumage. They grow to 3 feet long, weigh 10 pounds and have a wingspan of 4 to 5 feet.



## Tips for Monitoring Loons



- Watch loons from at least 200 feet away.
- If you find a loon, watch for a few minutes to see if another adult or young are nearby.
- Use their calls to find them, but only count the loons you see.
- Adults have a black and white pattern, young have gray to brown plumage.
- Have fun!

## Other Ways to Help

- Healthy lakes, shorelines and watersheds benefit many species, including loons.
- Give loons space during nesting and chick rearing—loon chicks cannot dive when very young to get out of the way of boats; they also tire easily.
- Use non-lead fishing tackle and responsibly dispose of fishing line and tackle.
- Report harassment of loons to your local conservation officer (be sure to get boat identification information too!).
- Apply only phosphorus-free fertilizer if you live on a lake; excess phosphorus can lead to increased algae and plant growth.

## Minnesota's Nongame Wildlife Program

*Funded by Minnesota citizens*



**What do we do?** We work to help Minnesota wildlife, including butterflies, bees, songbirds, eagles, loons, frogs, turtles, and bats thrive.

**How are we funded?** We are funded almost entirely through donations. We do not receive money from license sales or state taxes.

**We need your help! We value your support. Please donate today!**

[Mndnr.gov/nongame/donate](http://Mndnr.gov/nongame/donate)



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