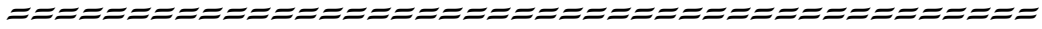


LOON ECHOES

Newsletter of the Michigan Loon Preservation Association

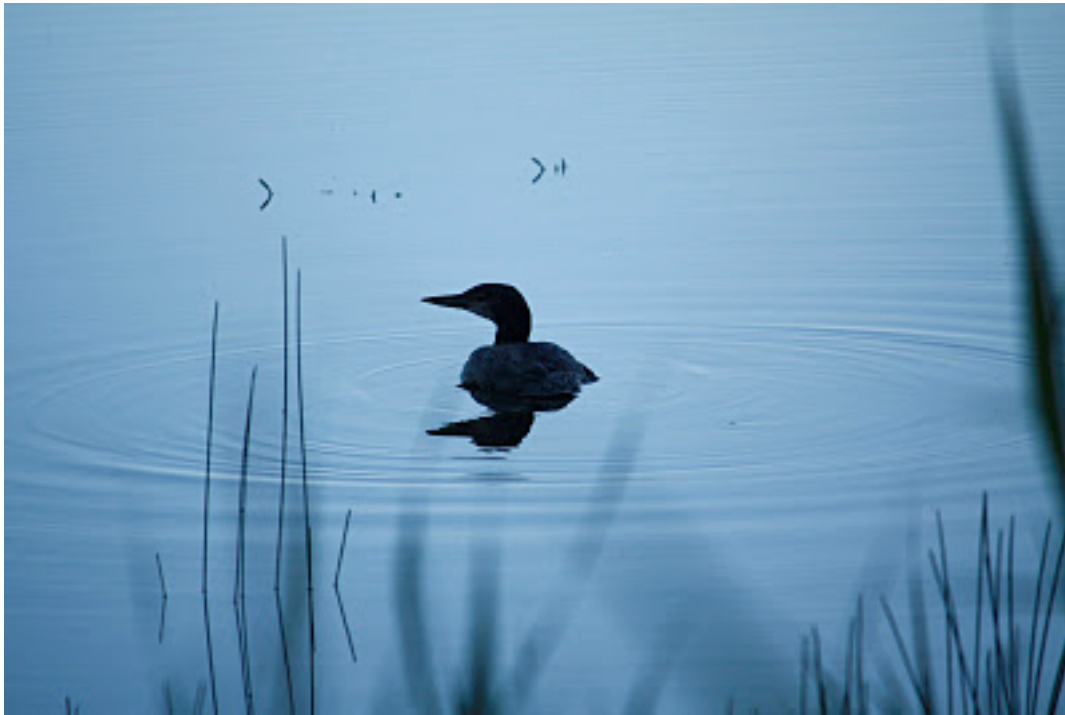
Autumn Renewal ~ ~ ~ ~ Autumn 2011



Our Dedicated Members, The Foundation of MLPA and Loon Protection

This edition of Loon Echoes is our annual Autumn membership renewal issue. As we move toward the new year of 2012 and our twenty-fifth anniversary, only a few weeks away, we look toward our members to help us continue our important work of loon protection. It is your membership fees and donations that enable us to carry forward these efforts from year to year. Those who have renewed or have become new members after October 15 are already signed for membership through 2012. We thank you sincerely, and also thank all members who will be sending in their renewals. The dedicated support of our members is our foundation, and we are most grateful to you all!

Thank you!



“Peaceful Morning” by Ross Powers, MLW Area Coordinator

Tremolos on Lake Meauwataka

By Ross Powers

If you have visited a lake with loons on it, you undoubtedly have heard them.

Loons have a very distinctive sound and are not shy about letting everyone know they are on the lake. Even in the black of night, they can suddenly pierce the silence on the lake with their calls.

Loons have several kinds of calls, meaning different things, but I am especially aware of their famous tremolo call. This is a very loud alarm call. When they shriek this tremolo call repeatedly, it sends a chill up my spine. Once you have heard it, you will never forget it.

We often hear the tremolo on Lake Meauwataka, now that the bald eagle population has recovered. I call it the “air raid siren”. The pair of adult loons on the lake will quickly let each other know if there is an eagle anywhere around, even if they are far apart. The voice of the loon carries easily across the water and soon they both join in the verbal fray. What a racket! The poor eagle, once discovered by a loon, has lost all of his advantage of stealth and surprise.

The eagle is probably looking for a dead or distressed fish, but on occasion I have seen them try for a small duck or loon. One time when I looked up to see what the crazy loons were stressing about, I saw an eagle gliding low across the lake. It was headed straight for one of the loon chicks! Then I noticed both adult loons across the lake screaming and almost airborne, streaking like two torpedoes. I was amazed at their speed! They were closing fast, head on, with pointed beaks aimed right at the eagle. I realized that these big birds were playing a serious game of chicken! The eagle looked startled at their aggression, and abruptly shot up and away from the oncoming loons. As if that were not enough of a “put-down”, the loons then verbally abused the poor bird until it was out of sight. This was an important lesson for the chicks.

After that, I noticed that the young loons had learned to quickly lie flat in the water and look cautiously up for big birds, every time they heard the tremolo. Now when I hear their alarm call, I search the sky to admire the majestic eagle soaring over the lake. It is one of the benefits of having loons on the lake.

One nice summer day I was observing the juvenile loons close to shore, resting and waiting for the adults to catch fish for them. They are almost as big as the adults and I know that they can dive and fish, but the lazy young birds just lollygag around and let their parents do all of the work. As the adults dove to fish, a Great Blue Heron flew over the young loons. I was amused to see the young loons duck for the reeds and flatten out. They were surprised, because there was no warning call from the adults, and confused because even after the adults surfaced, they did not sound an alarm. The big heron slowly flapped away unaware of the scared little loons trying to find shelter in the reeds. After the heron was gone, the young loons were reluctant to come out from the reeds to get fed by the adults. Another lesson for the young loons . . . learning friend from foe. I find the loons on our lake very entertaining. You only have to listen and learn; you will be amazed!

*The MLPA periodically publishes an online news page called **Tremolos**, filled with other peoples' experiences with Michigan's loons*



Dear Auntie Arloon

I am wondering about loon migration and the return of the loons to their northern lakes. Are there any updates on where the birds have been that were geo-tagged?

Thanks.

S. Noi Targim

Dear Mr. Targim,

I just heard from Jeff Lange, a Michigan Loonwatch Area Coordinator from Northern Michigan:

In summer 2010 a female loon and one of her two chicks were on a lake near Petoskey, Michigan. This special band carries a Geotag, an archival device that has recorded the loon's position twice daily since last August. Other information recorded daily is whether the loon is swimming in saltwater or freshwater, and the depth of its dives.

This female has returned to Round Lake this season (geotag and all), and we will recapture her this summer to remove the device and retrieve the data. Then we will know her exact migration route south, where she spent the winter, and her route back north.

A further update from Jeff from summer 2011:

A loon captured, banded, and implanted with a satellite transmitter this August has finally left Sturgeon Bay and arrived at a stopover in Alcona County!

Peg Comfort, Area Coordinator from Antrim County, reports that six of the pairs banded in 2010 returned to the same lakes and the same nest sites in 2011.

Visit the following site for migration pathways followed by specific loons that were radio tagged and satellite tracked by the U.S. Geological Survey:

http://www.umesc.usgs.gov/terrestrial/migratory_birds/loons/migrations.html

***** A reminder from Auntie – PLEASE RETRIEVE ALL FISHING LINE AND TACKLE. FISHING LINE CAN ENTANGLE WILDLIFE, INCLUDING LOONS. USE NON-LEAD TACKLE – LEAD CAN BE INGESTED AND POISON WILDLIFE AND IS A MAJOR CONTRIBUTOR TO LOON MORTALITY.**

Loon Migration Routes: U.S. Geological Survey Results

*By Joanne C. Williams
State Coordinator MLPA-MLW*

The USGS has been radiomarking Common Loons since 1998 in an ongoing definitive study to help determine their migration routes. In 1998, the North Central U.S. area was studied; beginning in 2003, the Northeastern U.S. was focused upon. In 2011-2012, Michigan was included in the study. MLPA/ Michigan Loonwatch is pleased to have been able to participate and assist this past season.

Only a small number of loons are selected for the project each year, and for only one complete seasonal cycle. This allows for optimal scientific study with minimal impact both on birds and the population.

Seven Michigan loons were marked and implanted with satellite transmitting devices this summer. Their movements are being followed as they migrate to their wintering waters and will continue as they return in the spring. The devices will then be removed; although small leg bands will remain on the birds for further identification purposes. The implanted devices will also record loon dive depths; and of course, the location of the birds on either an inland lake or the Atlantic Ocean or Gulf will indicate whether they are in fresh or salt water.

This study is important in another way. It reinforces the data about loon migration that has been known for well over a century, through careful observation and recording of information that had been done for many years, by biologists and other observers, prior to modern electronic techniques.

Loon monitoring and protection programs in several states, including our own Michigan Loonwatch, also have observed and recorded loon activity, migration and territorial and seasonal activity and movement over many years; and are continuing to do so. These records are invaluable and provide a continuity of loon population numbers, nesting success and activity over time.

The USGS information tells us that loons from the North Central United States (Minnesota & Wisconsin) follow two distinct routes: a) Stretching southward west of the Appalachian Mountains toward the Gulf of Mexico; and b) Crossing southeast across the Appalachian Mountains to the southern Atlantic coast.

The study data reflects the importance of inland waters in the southeastern U.S. during migration. Loons were recorded on lakes in Indiana, Ohio, Kentucky, Tennessee, North Carolina and Alabama. For the past several years, a loon pair has been reported to MI Loonwatch as over-wintering on Lake Lanier, near Gainesville, in north Georgia. Loons from the Eastern United States cross over eastward to the Atlantic Ocean to winter off the New England Coast.

It is interesting to revisit some early knowledge about migrating and wintering loons, as reported in the November 2010 issue of Loon Echoes. In his 1919 book, Life Histories of North American Diving Birds: Order Pygopodes, biologist Arthur Cleveland Bent, who had been observing loons since 1872, reported on their winter range:

“Mainly within the United States (particularly along both coasts) and western Europe. East to northern New England (Maine) and the Atlantic Coast States. South to Florida (Caloosahatchee region) and the Gulf Coast (Louisiana and Texas). West to the Pacific Coast (Lower California to British Columbia). North to the northern United States and the Great Lakes. Has been recorded in Nova Scotia in winter. In Europe from the British Isles south to the Azores, Madieras, the Mediterranean and Black Seas.”

Loons have been on Earth for eons, and now are facing increasing difficulties as areas and quality of their habitat decrease and they face increased human influence. But the studies and efforts of groups and individuals on their behalf will hopefully allow us to better care for them and help them for years to come.

Editor’s Note: *Gulf of Mexico oil spill loon impact update:* U.S. Agencies, Gulf States universities studies and Bird Studies Canada, the largest & most scientific of loon researchers in the world, have all confirmed that loon numbers were not much affected by the oil spill. Given our knowledge of loons’ wintering areas and feeding habits, this was an expected finding, and much welcomed. However, monitoring of the effects of the oil on loon survival in the area is ongoing. Loon Rangers are and will continue to be closely observing loons for signs of possible toxicity in coming seasons, in relation to ingestion of Gulf water & food. We will continue to update our members on this issue and concern.



“Following Mom” by Laura Tom, Loon Ranger



Three

*We were just three,
Two loons and me.
They swam and fished,
I watched and wished,
That I, like them, might dive and play
In icy waters all the day.
I watched, I wished. I could not reach
Where they were, till I tried their speech,
And something in me helped, so I
Could give their trembling sort of cry.
One loon looked up and answered me.
He understood that we were three.*

*Elizabeth Coatsworth
from The Sparrow Bush*

Something Told the Wild Geese

*Something told the wild geese it was time to
go. Though the fields lay golden
Something whispered, -- "Snow."*

*Leaves were green and stirring, berries,
luster-glossed, But beneath warm feathers
Something cautioned -- "Frost."*

*All the sagging orchards steamed with
amber spice, but each wild breast stiffened
At remembered ice.*

*Something told the wild geese it was time to
fly, --- Summer sun was on their wings,
Winter in their cry.*

Rachel Field

Loon Ranger Reports Are Coming In

We are happy to have received a record number of Loon Ranger Lake Reports this Fall; the data is being processed. Reports are welcome at any time, so please send in yours if you haven't already. Remember, the absence of loons is as important as their presence. Reports are welcome by mail, e-mail, in person, by telephone, parachute drop, owl mail, pony express or dogsled.

Since July 1st, 2011, we have signed up 24 new Loon Rangers. It is wonderful to have all these active, caring people in our Loonwatch Program, along with those Rangers who have been with us, caring for and helping the loons for many seasons! Many thanks to them all, and to the Area Coordinators who have been working so hard to find Rangers to help cover more of Michigan's lakes and to monitor and protect the loons there.

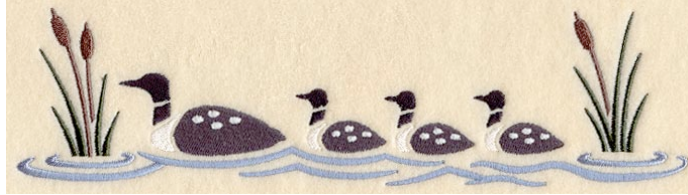
Migrations

We are very pleased to welcome two new Area Coordinators. Rick Winkley is covering Crawford, Otsego & Roscommon Counties, taking over from Denise McEvers, our Area Coordinator there for many years, now retired. Also new on board is Chris Nelson, covering Alcona & Iosco Counties.

Our sincere thanks to them both for taking on these duties!

Young Loons and Ice

We are hoping that all of our young loons can make it off the lakes before ice-up. It is a sad situation & hard for us to see Nature's Way when some cannot. We hope for the best for each chick as they face their first long migration journey. Much awaits them as they learn the ways of the world beyond all they have ever known. We wish them well until, in time, they return on a warm southern wind.



Your MLPA membership is vital to our ability to continue to help protect and preserve Michigan's beautiful loons. Your support enables our Michigan Loonwatch Program to succeed from year to year. Please take a moment to renew your membership. Thank you!

An MLPA membership makes a great gift! Memberships and donations may be made through our web site as well as by mail: www.michiganloons.org

MLPA Membership Form

Please indicate if this is a gift membership and include the giver's information

Mail to: Luanne Jaruzel, MLPA
10181 Sheridan Rd.
Millington MI 48746

Yes, I would like to initiate/continue my membership in MI Loon Preservation Association and have indicated my membership category below:

- \$10 Introductory/Individual
- \$15 Family/Student/Senior
- \$20 Supporting Individual
- \$25 Contributing
- \$50 Sustaining/ Organization/ Business
- \$100 Award
- \$500 Benefactor/Life

MLPA Contacts:
Luanne: 989-871-4819
Joanne: 989-828-6019
Arlene: 231-796-6153

Name (or Organization) (Date)

Address

City State Zip

Amount Enclosed

Wishing You All A Wonderful Holiday Season!
From *Loon Echoes*, Michigan Loon Preservation Association and Michigan Loonwatch