

The Common Loon

Common Loons are large, goose sized, black and white diving birds that spend their summer on open fresh water lakes and winter on the sea-coast. They feed mostly on fish. They are 2-3 feet long, weigh 8-12 pounds and have a wingspan of 4-5 feet.

Approximate range of the Common Loon in Michigan



Except for a few isolated southern Michigan lakes, Loons in Michigan nest only in the upper 1/2 of the Lower Peninsula and the entire Upper Peninsula.

The Michigan Loon Preservation Association/Michigan Loonwatch Cooperates with the Michigan DNR with educational and protective measures to help loons



Michigan's Nesting Loons

It is estimated that Michigan has fewer than 500 nesting pairs of Common Loons remaining in the state, and perhaps considerably fewer. The Common Loon is a threatened species in Michigan. Nests are usually made on small islands or in quiet bays, coves, and inlets. They are especially vulnerable to personal watercraft entering these critical areas. **The nesting season in May and June is the loon's most Critical Time**, and loons are not like ducks and geese, which have large broods. Loons lay only two eggs, which both parents take turns incubating for 28-29 days.

Boat Traffic Can Cause Loss of Eggs

Loon parents leave if watercraft come within 150 yards of the nest (the length of 1 1/2 football fields), leaving the eggs without warmth or protection. They then become vulnerable to predators.

If disturbed often, loons abandon the nest. A pair may re-nest if it isn't too late in the season, but they only have two chances. If two loons are together near inlets, marshy shorelines, or backwaters in May or June, a nest site may have been disturbed.



Nursery Room

Loon chicks rest, feed and grow in and around their territory during the months of June, July and August. Look for them in backwaters and along the shoreline.

Boat Traffic Can Cause Loss of Chicks!

- **Young chicks are not waterproof!** They need to be able to climb up on their parents' backs to stay warm and dry. When watercraft come close, parents leave their chicks to defend their territory.

- Young chicks are very buoyant and **can't dive quickly** to get out of the way. They can be run over.

- **Chicks tire easily.** The presence of watercraft causes them to keep swimming instead of feeding and resting. This can weaken them, affecting their ability to survive.

