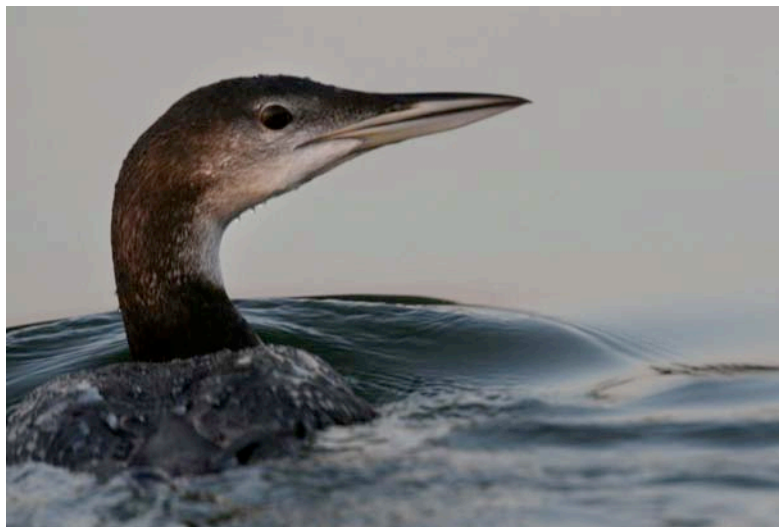


# *LOON ECHOES*

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*Newsletter of the  
Michigan Loon Preservation Association  
August 2010*

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*“First Year: So Proud” by Clay Wilton*

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## ***Our Loon Rangers: Real Help and Real Answers***

*By Joe Rogers and Joanne Williams*

The Gulf oil spill may be one of the worst man-made ecological disasters in North America. There are some groups running around now trying to come up with counts of many different species. Although that approach satisfies the need to try to do something, it is really too little too late. One year’s worth of rushed data cannot scientifically establish a trend. What is needed is many years of careful scientific data collected to rule out yearly variation, to pinpoint the effects of this disaster.

With the loon’s life cycle, it may take many years of careful data collecting to understand the effect on those loons which migrate to the Gulf. We know from loon migration watchers such as those at Whitefish Point and Lake Erie Metro Park, and places and points on Lake Ontario, that many of our Great Lakes loons travel out to the Atlantic; that is hopeful. Some may work their way down the Atlantic into the Gulf of Mexico. There are very few sightings of loons around the Mississippi River and lakes surrounding

its waterways, and of course, there is no indication of loons migrating across the Appalachian Mountains

One of the problems with the oil spill in the Gulf is that much of the oil has remained below the surface, making it difficult to see and follow prey. It is doubtful that a loon swimming in clear waters would purposely swim into a dark blob. As a sight hunter they cannot hunt in dark, cloudy water.

Our number-one hope is that the loons will be able to avoid most of the oil concentration in the Gulf, an area disturbing and unnatural to them, with no fish for food. This seems to be supported by the fact that one knowledgeable report states that only 15 loons have been found in the oil recovery process so far.

Only many years of careful observation of our nesting loons, as has been done over the past decades by our Loon Rangers, will be able to pinpoint the bad effects of this oil spill on our loon population. The destruction of the food in their wintering forage areas may affect their survival more than direct oil contact itself. Eventually any kind of stress up here will have possible negative affects on the adults and young. The continuing increase in hurricanes has also been a factor in the survival rate of young loons that remain in their migration grounds for up to four years before returning north.

We really need to concentrate our efforts on protecting the nest areas and young produced, working wherever and however we can to reduce all the stress and negative impacts of man's activities in the loons in our area. Only protecting and helping the loons here is a really meaningful and productive expenditure of our time, money and other limited resources to help promote and protect this most beautiful Great Lakes resource, the Loon.



**Editor's Note:** *Truly, continuing operations and long-term records are the most accurate source to evaluate the loon population,. A one-year survival count here will not show trends; Loon Ranger counts are the long-term best effort at finding this. A one-year counting of young to look for returns from any specific area is of no logical help. No young return until 3-4 years of age; even so, very few actually do return. We must put our efforts toward protecting the loons that are here each season; hoping that they and their young will be safe here and that they will return.*

*In May, Minnesota received two loons for release, after they had been rehabilitated from having been found starving early in the crisis. We hope that most will have been able to move out of the Gulf area on their own and avoid that area as much as possible,*

*Loons need fresh, clear water to hunt and we hope the trend of clearing of the Gulf waters continues and that the loons will be able to move on before too much oil affects them severely. We are hopeful, too, that by the time this year's loons finish their*

*migration, most of the activity will be over with the animals dealing with and influenced by the oil spill.*

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### *Mission Statement of the MLPA*

*The Michigan Loon Preservation Association is a non-profit organization whose mission is to preserve the Common Loon as a breeding bird in Michigan through public education, research and the protection and management of loons and their habitat.*

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### *Loons and the Gulf Oil Spill*

*By Ross Powers*

*(For the full-text version of this article, please visit <[michiganloons.org](http://michiganloons.org)> and <[michiganloonwatch.blogspot.com](http://michiganloonwatch.blogspot.com)>*

The loss of a few loons in the disastrous oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico is insignificant when compared to other losses. A way of life and a whole ecosystem is at stake. The Gulf of Mexico, like the Great Lakes basin, is a unique eco-system. It is home and hatchery for everything from shrimp to pelicans. It is a stop-over and resting area for many migratory birds. Some of Michigan's juvenile loons are there now. They will stay for a few years before returning north to nest as adults, congregating in near-shore areas where the fish and crabs are easy to reach. That is where the wind deposited the smothering crude oil.

Crude oil is a killer loaded with all kinds of solvents and "light ends" that taint fish and invertebrates. Contact with the sticky tar-like oil is usually fatal to waterfowl and waterbirds. Most critters will die unnoticed and never be rescued or counted. Plants, oysters, and crabs are not able to flee and were surely killed.

Although large amounts of dispersants were used, natural bio-degradation will eventually handle the diluted petroleum, IF the thick masses of oil are removed. It remains to be seen what damage this pollution event will cause to the ecology of the Gulf. But in any case, it may be some time before the loons recover from the loss of life and habitat. Because of oxygen depletion, the loons that have also lost the use of the inshore surface waters will not find the abundance of fish they might normally find offshore, and will have to move out to other areas.

As a retired environmentalist, I worked on many oil spills and know that you can't prevent them, but you can prepare for them. Responsible oil companies have spill prevention plans that include contingencies for worst-case scenarios. Immediate response with proper equipment is required to contain and clean up an oil spill. A recent oil spill

has also spoiled many miles of the beautiful Kalamazoo River; it will suffer the same slow recovery along its shores where ducks and geese gather. These tragedies affect us all.

MLPA is the only organization that is tracking the population fluctuations of the Common Loon in Michigan. That is why it is important to continue these population counts. I feel sorry for all the Loon Rangers that worried over young chicks all these years, only to realize that they are in danger in the Gulf. When the next generation of Michigan loons migrates out of our area of influence, we must trust that Nature will prevail over the folly of man. We can only hope for the best and count the returning pairs in the spring. Yes, we could use your help. To volunteer to help protect Michigan's loons and to assess the damage to our loon population during this crisis, contact: Michigan Loonwatch, P.O. Box 294, Shepherd MI 48883, [michiganloons@yahoo.com](mailto:michiganloons@yahoo.com).

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***Editor's note:** Bird Studies Canada reported, on August 6, 2010, that fortunately the worst-case scenario that everyone had feared has not materialized. The winds were favorable and very little of the oil was deposited in near-shore areas, and the warm water and air allowed the spill's light-end oil to disperse more quickly. Concern for Canadian birds included the sub-adult Northern Gannet and Common Loon. It now appears that a combination of favorable factors has made the effect on these and migrating birds much less drastic than had been feared. BSC will continue to monitor and report on the situation in the Gulf, and urges citizens to support their bird study and protection group of choice as we continue to work to protect our wildlife. To read the **Bird Studies Canada** full-text article: Please visit <[BirdStudiesCanada@bsc-eoc.org](mailto:BirdStudiesCanada@bsc-eoc.org)>*

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## ***Loons Need Your Help . . . . .***

We've reached late summer and it has been a challenging season for the Michigan Loon Preservation Association as we move out on our own. Our protection of loons continues and has resulted in a very successful hatching season. Loon Rangers have installed nest islands and educational buoys in addition to educating their neighbors about loons. In the lower peninsula, we have added another lake with three successful pairs.

We thank all of you for becoming members. You can help by forwarding this e-newsletter to all your friends. Once they hear about these beautiful birds they will want to help them, too.

Please consider making a summer gift to the loons of at least five dollars to help us continue our work of protecting loons. Our newsletter, Loon Echoes, is another means of enlarging our circle of loon friends. An individual or business can help underwrite an issue of *Loon Echoes*.

- As you consider your level of support, remember **IF EACH OF US DOES A LITTLE, TOGETHER WE CAN ACCOMPLISH A LOT.**

To contribute, please complete the following form and send your donation made to MLPA to:

Joanne Williams  
PO Box 294  
Shepherd MI 48883

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Name/ Business Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

E-Mail \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ My summer gift to help protect the loons  
\_\_\_\_\_ My gift to underwrite Loon Echoes

THANK YOU FOR HELPING THE LOONS.  
AN ACKNOWLEDGEMENT WILL BE SENT TO YOU FOR TAX PURPOSES



*Photo by Joel Bull*



***With Dedication: Helping Loon Nesting Success***  
*By Jeff Lange*

For the fourth year in a row, Carol Kay Hobbs has very generously built and delivered PVC artificial nesting islands for distribution by Loonwatch volunteers in Northern Michigan. These loon rafts have been placed on lakes where loons breed from Emmet County east to Alpena. The raft pictured here is being scouted for use by the Round Lake loons near Petoskey. Because of Carol's dedication, these and other loons that use the rafts, will have far better nesting success, and the state's breeding loon population will be that much richer.

Artificial nesting islands are used to remedy many problems loons face on their nesting lakes. While anchored to the lake bottom with cable attached to cement blocks, they float, so are able to ride out fluctuating water levels. Also, a nesting raft provides a nest site away from shore, reducing nest destruction and egg loss due to scavengers. They also can be useful where loons have lost their nest site to lakeshore development. And because loons prefer island nest sites, a

nesting raft makes lakes more suitable to loons where they have no natural island.

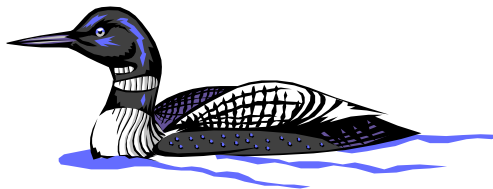
The materials used to build these nesting rafts were generously funded by Dirk Cox of St. Mary's Cement Plant in Charlevoix. The cement blocks were donated by Lyle Klieber. Carol's sister, Joan Burnett, and Gary Smith and Todd Luft also contributed to the building of the rafts this season.

Thanks Carol!



*“At Home” by Jeff Lange*  
MI MLPA Member Loon Rescue

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Atlantic Ocean & Indian River Lagoon  
Vero Beach, Florida

Having been an MLPA member for many years I have thoroughly enjoyed (and envied) the stories about Loon encounters and rescues. You can imagine my excitement when my husband and I came upon a stranded Loon on the beach of the Atlantic Ocean in Vero Beach, Florida where we winter. The Loon was just in to its summer plumage...just starting to molt.

We couldn't determine whether the Loon was injured or had simply been 'deposited' on the beach by the breakers. I chased off a couple of seagulls who were hanging around. They are notorious for going after the eyes of marine life stranded on the beach. We didn't approach but kept a good distance to avoid causing undue stress. We figured he was in enough stress already. Our goal was to get a qualified rescue person to our location to take care of the Loon. We called the Florida Audubon Society and the Florida Marine Animal rescue offices but it was Saturday and the offices were closed. We finally got through to the Vero Beach Sheriff's office. They took the information and my cell phone number and had the Humane Society of Vero Beach's weekend "on-call" rescue person give me a call. That only took a few minutes.

The rescue person was unavailable to come until much later in the day so I inquired as to do in this situation. After he told me, we followed his instructions. My husband distracted the Loon in front and I got behind the Loon and quickly covered it with a sweatshirt (heat-to-toe). Then I carefully scooped up the bird, keeping him completely covered to keep him calm and avoid that lethal beak. Surprisingly, the Loon was very docile and didn't put up a fuss.

We drove the Loon about 2 miles to the Indian River Lagoon where we carefully placed him in the water. The Lagoon is a safer and calmer spot for marine life to recover from stress. We were concerned when we saw that both his feet were sort of straight out in back. I didn't know if that was normal or not. Also, we noticed that when he tried to swim, his left side didn't work too well as he tended to go more in a circular direction. We stayed, just in case. After about an hour, he seemed able to navigate quite well, although we didn't see him dive. It looked as though he just needed time to recover from whatever the problem was and that he would be okay.

We called the Audubon rescue person to keep him apprised of the situation. He indicated he would go by and check on the Loon later that day. Just to be sure, Dick and I returned to the location a day later to try and see the Loon again. No sign of the Loon! We figured he was doing just fine. I felt very excited about the encounter and was glad we had a hand in a rescue. Hopefully, he will be on his way north soon.

*Fran & Dick Leonard  
Gun Lake, Middleville, MI  
March 25, 2010*

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*"On the Migration of the Sandhill Cranes" from A Naturalist in Alaska by Adolph Murie*

*Words are inadequate to describe the flight, the many variations in the formations, the alternate beating of wings and sailing, the beauty of the flocks in silhouettes against the white mountain and blue sky, and the exhilarating poetry of it all in this primeval wilderness country.*

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## *Joy of the Morning*

*By Joanne C. Williams*

I have just returned from visiting my family in Western New York, where my roots are deep and the spirits and voices of my ancestors still echo in the welcoming green mountains and valleys of the North Country. Each day at first light as I greeted the sun, the mists of early morning, covering all with life-giving dew, began to fade and the little birds sang their welcoming songs to the new day. And each morning without fail, one voice was there, one little unseen wren singing sweetly as with all his whole heart; and more faintly heard, from a way not far, the answering song of its mate. They say to all who hear, “This is my home; here is where I belong.” And it thrills my heart to its depths, filling me with an awareness of life, of the beauty of this place; these are the gifts that his song reveals to me; and encompassing all is the joy it brings.

So it is with us humans; our souls need such things that connect us to who we are on this beautiful world spinning in the Milky Way; our home that we share with other beings that, like us, are locked into this moment of time and space. And so it is, at each turning of the seasons we welcome the changes they bring and the cycles of life that turn as we travel the Great Circle together.

Here on the beautiful Northern Michigan lakes we await that sound that tells us each Spring at ice-out that all is well and things are as they should be. It is that ancient and haunting voice – the call of the loon. Each year I welcome the messages that our territorial loons are returning- - - a note, a call from a Loon Ranger, “They’re here; they’re home!”

Sometimes, they say, it is a waking to a sound that thrills the heart, the call of the loons in the early morning mists across the lake. We know that soon to follow will be the entrancing mating dance as the loons reaffirm their pair-bonding, and in a few short weeks of quiet patience day after day, will come another call: the excited voices of the parents as they proudly welcome their new chicks into the world. It is one of the most joyful times as well for us who love the loons. My thoughts go so often to these happy days and occasions, the yearly rituals that we welcome with joy and gratitude.

Then, as the Summer wanes, in single moment will come that first unexpected feeling, a sudden sense, a knowledge that we somehow cannot quite grasp; that of coming change. We know that it is the first chill wind of Autumn. Soon our loons will begin their migration to the warm southern waters; the adults first and the young to follow. This is how it is, how it has been for years beyond our knowing - - - Welcomes and Farewells. This is how it is; how it is meant to be.

We are now locked within a great crisis to our treasured Earth and her wildlife, indeed a crisis to us all. We cannot know how the terrible situation in the Gulf of Mexico will play itself out over time, but this much is certain—we fear for those young loons who are



there and those birds that will be migrating there in the Autumn. What loons return to us we will be grateful for, working even harder to protect them and their young, hoping that they will choose the Atlantic waters to winter over.

In a few weeks, the season will again turn, our loons will head south; and as for us, we will journey through the Winter, thinking of the warm mornings yet to come when joy will fill us as we waken once again to the voices across the water in the early mists. We will await that day, looking toward the Spring with hope in our hearts.

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*PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION, LOON STYLE* Photo by Joel Bull

## *Dear Auntie Arloon.....*

*Auntie –*

*I just love my little loons, especially when they're just hatched. But why do the chicks ride on the parent's back? Are they taking a rest from all that swimming?*

*Doris Dorsey, Backus Lake*

*Dear Doris,*

*This is a question Auntie is often asked. Considering that the chicks leave the nest soon after they hatch, it certainly is true that they may be taking a break. But there is more to it than that or Auntie Ar isn't a lover of loons.*

*The newly hatched chicks are downy and are not waterproof because they don't have their "roof" of feathers. So if the water is rough, the down may become waterlogged, just like a wet cotton ball. Because a wet chick can become chilled in early summer's colder water, back riding is a way to keep warm.*

***Unfortunately, too, the young chicks are just a mouthful for an underwater predator, such as a snapping turtle or a large fish. Sensing danger, the parent encourages the chicks to hitchhike because these predators are reluctant to tangle with a large, defensive adult loon.***

***I wouldn't be a real scientist if I left out the most important reason for those of us that love loons. Loon chicks ride on the adult's back because "it is cute!" Just another reason for protecting these interesting birds. So enjoy your little passengers and care for them because we want them to grow up on Backus Lake.***

***Keep those cards 'n' e-mails coming.***

***Auntie Ar***

*P.S. Auntie Ar reports on "Get the Lead Out". Riverside Marina in Bellaire MI and Butch's Tackle and Marine in Clam Lake MI carry unleaded tackle. Be sure to ask for and purchase non-lead tackle at your local bait shop. Let Auntie know the name and location of stores that have non-lead tackle so we can include them on the website and in the newsletter.*

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## *Membership Corner*

***Summer is in full swing and our Michigan Loons are trying to do what they do best.*** The Great Lakes Loons ball team is winning games and playing good baseball. Our Common Loons have nested and are trying to feed their families and raise their young, teaching them the skills they will need to survive on their own. Loon Rangers and other people concerned about the loons are watching the birds, monitoring the lakes and talking with people around their area to educate them on the needs and concerns of the birds.

Our members have been busy too – sending in their renewals and often adding a “little extra” to help out Michigan Loon Preservation Association in its efforts to support this effort. Thank you to everyone that has been able to help us out already this year. Even a \$5 or \$10 extra donation, when added to the others, helps us meet the needs of our budget. The MLPA Board wants you to know your help is very much appreciated.

If any of you meet someone that is interested in loons over the summer, or that may want to join as a member, consider giving them a \$10 introductory membership as a gift. Many people that tried the introductory membership last year have renewed at the regular rate for this year.

I hope you all have a wonderful summer filled with loon calls and sightings.

*Luanne Jaruzel*  
*MLPA Membership*

*Your MLPA membership helps to protect and preserve  
Michigan's beautiful loons!*

### ***MLPA Membership Form***

***Mail to:***

Luanne Jaruzel, MLPA  
10181 Sheridan Rd.  
Millington MI 48746

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

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

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Name (or Organization) \_\_\_\_\_ (Date) \_\_\_\_\_

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Address \_\_\_\_\_

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City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_ Amount Enclosed \_\_\_\_\_

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***Inuit Loon***

***“Wild and Free” by Kristy Morris: July 2010: Rifle River***



**Upcoming Event**

CraneFest: October 9 & 10: Bellevue

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**IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO HELP AT  
EVENTS**

Contact Arlene -- 231-796-6153

[westhova@ferris.edu](mailto:westhova@ferris.edu)

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**CONTACTS**

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Joanne Williams [michiganloons@yahoo.com](mailto:michiganloons@yahoo.com)

Membership: Luanne Jaruzel [jaruzel@tds.net](mailto:jaruzel@tds.net)

If you wish to receive e-mail alerts about loons, please send your  
e-mail address to Luanne <[jaruzel@tds.net](mailto:jaruzel@tds.net)>

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

[www.michiganloons.com](http://www.michiganloons.com)

[www.michiganloonwatch.blogspot.com](http://www.michiganloonwatch.blogspot.com)

[www.wildliferecovery.blogspot.com](http://www.wildliferecovery.blogspot.com)

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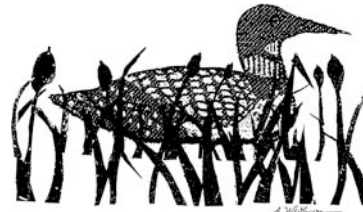
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*“Back to the Wild” by Barb Rogers, Wildlife Recovery Association  
Kristy Morris & Joanne Williams: July 2010: Clare County*