

## Ways Watercraft Affect Loons

Canoes slip quietly into nesting areas and can startle loons off nests. Fishing Boats, especially bass and pike anglers, spend lots of time in waters perfect for nest sites. Speed Boats send waves crashing into the shoreline. Personal Watercraft can speed in shallow water and may run over chicks.

### Please Obey all Loon Nesting Buoys and Signs



Floating buoys warning that a nest is near mark some loon nesting areas. Loons give a warning call, too. Their distress call sounds like a laugh. Listen for and heed this call. It means: "Please move away."

If you see a loon "dancing" straight up out of the water, and slapping with its wings, it is urgent that you move away. You are in their territory.

### What Everyone Can Do

Enjoy loons from a distance. Listen to their lovely, haunting calls. Enjoy the solitude of Michigan's lakes. Loons need this solitude to breed and raise their young. If loons are gone, your solitude might be slipping away, too.

## The Michigan Loon Preservation Association

The MLPA is a non-profit affiliate of the Michigan Audubon Society and the North American Loon Fund, formed to protect Loons. This concern arose because of dwindling loon numbers due to many causes, among them lake development, pollution and loss of safe habitat.

The Mission of the Michigan Loon Preservation Association is to conserve and enhance the Common Loon population through research, habitat protection and restoration, species protection, and public awareness and involvement.

### For more information, contact us at:

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Or visit us at:  
[www.MichiganLoons.org](http://www.MichiganLoons.org)

To Report Harassment of Loons, call the DNR  
Report All Poachers Hotline at  
1-800-292-7800.



MLPA is grateful to the Montana Loon Society, and the author, Donna Love, for permission to adapt their brochure for our use in Michigan.

# Michigan's Loons and



## Responsible Watercraft Use

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

Michigan has many treasures, including its beautiful lakes.

The Common Loon, known for its haunting calls and striking black and white breeding plumage, uses a number of these lakes for its summer nesting grounds.

Watercraft operators are naturally drawn to these lakes and often come into close contact with loons. Responsible watercraft use will help ensure that both humans and loons continue to share Michigan's lakes.

*This brochure is funded partly by a grant from the Michigan DNR Natural Heritage Grants Program Nongame Wildlife Fund.*

## 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.

