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May 2025

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News and Events

On Saturday, May 17th, the Lakes Region Chapter of NH Audubon is holding their annual Birdathon/Bloomathon! Meet at 7 AM at The Loon Center for a walk on the trails of the Markus Wildlife Sanctuary, guided by Lakes Region Chapter President, Jane Rice. The goal of the day will be to see and document as many bird species and blooming wildflowers as possible. Light refreshments will be available on the Loon Center porch, and the Loon Center will open to welcome participants at 8:30 AM.

LPC at Work

April brought ice-out to New Hampshire's lakes, and ice-out brought the return of loons. As loons return, things get busy at LPC! Over the past several weeks, LPC staff and volunteers have been hard at work building and floating nest rafts. While we would prefer for all loons to be able to nest successfully at natural sites, some are unable to do so due to problems such as water level fluctuations or, at nest sites on mainland shorelines, mammal predation. Loons are long-lived birds, and occasional nest failures are natural and normal. If a pair can produce chicks once every three years, they do not need a raft. However, in cases where nest failures have occurred repeatedly (three or more years in a row) due to a problem that a raft can solve, we float nest rafts to try to provide them with an option for a nest site where they may be more successful. Our staff and volunteers have already started floating rafts across New Hampshire, and by the time we finish up in mid-May, we will have floated more than 150 rafts statewide.





LPC biologists and volunteers construct a raft in mid-April. This was one of 10 rafts built in 2025.



In addition to nest rafts, we also constructed 12 new camera rafts this April. These small

structures will be attached to some of our nest rafts across the state and will be used to mount game cameras, which will allow us to document detailed information about nest attempts.



LPC staff and volunteers launch a nest raft in the Sunapee Region. This is one of more than 40 rafts that have already been floated in New Hampshire as of April 30th. Many more will be floated in the next two weeks.

As we are out on lakes to float rafts, we're also conducting our first loon surveys of 2025! We've already documented the return of many loon pairs, and we've started to resight banded loons as well. If you are out and about on lakes and happen to snap a photograph that shows the bands on a loon, please send it to us—in return, we'll be glad to share the loon's identity and information about its history with you! Please remember to always observe and photograph loons from a responsible distance (ideally 150 feet or more) to avoid disturbing or stressing them.





LPC volunteer Polly Chapman was able to snap this photo from inside of her house as the loons came ashore on her beach to copulate. This loon is the female of the pair, who was banded last August. We were delighted to receive Polly's photo and to learn of this loon's return! This pair is often one of the first to nest in New Hampshire—if they follow their normal timing, we expect them to begin nesting within the next 10 days!



LPC volunteer Kathy Springsteen confirmed the return of the banded male on her lake with the help of a camera with a long lens.

Member a Day in May Membership Drive

For more than a decade LPC has conducted an annual Member a Day in May Membership Drive. This year, in celebration of LPC's 50th Anniversary, we want to expand that goal and are looking for 50 new members to join LPC during the month of May. Members provide the foundation of support for our work to help loons and we hope that you will considering joining today! If you are already a member, please pass the message along to your friends and family who might want to support LPC. To learn more about Member a Day in May, and LPC membership in general, [click here](#).

All new LPC members who join during the month of May will be entered to win one of three loon themed raffle prizes:

The Loon Kitchen Bundle



Two loon-themed dish towels and cutting board made from recycled counter material. Cutting board comes with a wooden display stand and is just the right size to use for charcuterie for two.


Rustic and Refreshing Loons



Two mason jar mugs, etched with a loon design. Perfect for enjoying your favorite cold beverage on the porch or the dock.

Loon-themed Relaxation





Enjoy a cup of tea in the etched cobalt blue mug while you complete the lovely Loon Lake puzzle from Cobble Hill.

About Loons: Nesting

Here in New Hampshire, loon nest initiation typically occurs between mid-May and late June, though some of our pairs may initiate nests as early as early May and others may start as late as mid-July. By the end of the first week of June, we expect that about 50% of New Hampshire's loon pairs will be nesting.



Loons are ground nesters, and because they cannot walk well on land, they tend to build their nests close to the water's edge. Their preferred nest sites are on small [islands](#), which are less likely to have populations of mammal predators as compared to shoreline sites. They tend to nest on the lee side of these islands, which protects their nests from being flooded by natural wave action. In the absence of suitable island sites,

loons may also nest on hummocks in marshy areas, or on the mainland shoreline in protected coves. Research has indicated that [male loons play a larger role than females in choosing the location of the nest.](#)



Loons most often have a two egg clutch, but sometimes they will lay just one egg and on **extremely rare** occasion may lay as many as three. Eggs are typically laid 1–3 days apart. After the first egg is laid, the loons incubate it only sporadically. The first egg often goes unattended for long stretches of time until the second egg has been laid. Once the second egg is laid, the loons begin incubating nearly constantly. They achieve this by sharing incubation duties—the male and female of the pair will take turns incubating, which allows the eggs to be consistently attended while also allowing each parent enough time in the water to forage, preen, and keep themselves in good condition.





Photo courtesy of Brian Reilly.

While incubating, loons will periodically turn their eggs. This helps to facilitate gas exchange and also prevents the contents of the egg from getting stuck to the inside of the shell. Egg turning often happens just before or just after a nest exchange—the parent getting off of the nest may give the eggs a final roll before leaving, or the parent getting on the nest may roll the eggs as they get settled in for their incubation shift.



An incubating loon flees into the water to escape a swarm of black flies. Photo courtesy of Libby Libbey/Team Mooseman.

The incubation period, from the laying of the first egg to the hatch of the second chick, takes approximately 28 days. During this time, loons deal with a number of challenges that can threaten their nesting success. Those loons that begin nesting earlier in May (the heart of black fly season here in New Hampshire) may find themselves swarmed by black flies, and some may end up abandoning their nests as a result. Unfortunately for loons, there is a black fly species, *Simulium annulus*, that [preferentially feeds on them](#). Thankfully, most of our loon pairs in NH do not nest early enough to be seriously bothered by black flies, and as a result, nest failures due to black flies have been much more rare in New Hampshire than in other parts of the loons' breeding range.



Inundation of nests due to rising water levels has been documented in New Hampshire, particularly in very rainy years such as 2023.

Threats to nesting success that have been documented more frequently in New Hampshire include water level fluctuations (which can flood nests

or leave them stranded), predation, disturbance caused by intruding loons, and human disturbance. If you are out and about on lakes this summer, please keep an eye out for loon nests, and if you find one, please give it a wide berth (150 feet at minimum, and more if loons display [signs of distress](#)). It is not just motorboats that need to keep their distance from loons—self-powered vessels like canoes, kayaks, and stand up paddleboards can be equally disruptive and should also stay 150 feet or more from loons and loon nests. If driving a motorboat, please make sure to drive at headway speed in areas near loon nests in order to avoid flooding the nest with a wake.



Reducing human disturbance at nest sites can lead to more outcomes like this—a successful hatch. Photo courtesy of Kittie Wilson.

You can get a front row seat to the Common Loon nesting process via our Live Loon Cam! While the cam is not yet running, we plan to be live by mid-May. You can keep up with things at loon.org/looncam.

Shop with Purpose:

You can help loons with
purchases from the online
store!

MAY
ITEM OF THE MONTH



Single Loon Orange Border
Art Tile

15% OFF

Made in New Hampshire, this hand painted 6"x6" tile is finished with a secure hanger and protective backing. Great as a decorative wall plaque or a trivet. Enjoy 15% off when you buy this month. [Shop online](#) or visit us in person at The Loon Center to take advantage of this deal! All proceeds from our store are used to fund our important work for loons in New Hampshire. Thank you for your support!

We're rated by Charity Navigator! You can give with confidence knowing that we have been independently evaluated for effectively stewarding donations.



Loon Preservation Committee | 603-476-LOON (5666) | www.loon.org

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The Loon Preservation Committee is dedicated to restoring and maintaining a healthy population of loons throughout New Hampshire; monitoring the health and productivity of loon populations as sentinels of environmental quality; and promoting a greater understanding of loons and the natural world.

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