

## What to Look For

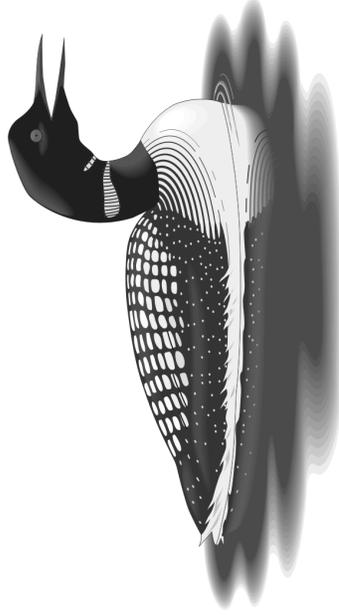
Be aware of loons - be aware that if you see a loon from late June to September, chances are that one or two chicks will be close by. **Keep your distance.**

**Listen to loons** - if you approach a loon and hear it start to call, this means you are too close. **Move away.**

**Watch what loons do** - if you see a loon “dancing” straight up out of the water and slapping with its wings, it is alarmed by your presence. **Move away.**

## What Everyone Can Do

View loons from a distance. Enjoy their lovely haunting calls. Give loons their space - they need solitude to breed and raise their young.



## Report Harassment

Harassment of wildlife is against the law. If you see loons being harassed, report this to your local MNR office, local police or OPP, or call Crime Stoppers at 1-800-222-TIPS. Videotaping the event and/or recording the vessel's registration number is helpful.

# FRIENDS OF THE RIDEAU

*Dedicated to preserving and enhancing all those elements that make the Rideau a unique North American waterway!*

Friends of the Rideau is a volunteer, non-profit organization which works in close co-operation with Parks Canada.

- ✓ We work to enhance and preserve the natural and cultural heritage of the Rideau Waterway
- ✓ We work to increase public awareness and enjoyment of the Rideau Waterway
- ✓ We work to develop strong public support for the long-term well being of the Rideau Waterway
- ✓ We promote co-operative Rideau Waterway information distribution
- ✓ We support other Rideau organizations.

### **Help to Support the Rideau**

Consider a membership in Friends of the Rideau  
For information visit us at:  
[www.rideaufriends.com](http://www.rideaufriends.com)

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*This brochure has been adapted from brochures produced by the Michigan Loon Preservation Association, [www.michiganloons.org](http://www.michiganloons.org) and the Montana Loon Society, [www.montanaloons.org](http://www.montanaloons.org). Some illustrations by Donna Love, Montana Loon Society.*

# Be RIDEAU LOON Aware



## Boaters and Loons

A Rideau treasure is the loon with its beautiful plumage and haunting calls. Loons make much of the Rideau their summer home and nesting area.

Loon chicks hatch in late June which coincides with the start of the busy boating season.

Loon awareness and responsible watercraft use will help reduce the conflicts that can occur between boaters and loons.

FRIENDS OF THE  
**RIDEAU**

# The Common Loon

## Ontario's Official Bird

Common loons are large diving birds that spend their summers on open fresh water lakes and their winters on the seacoast. During the summer they sport distinctive black and white breeding plumage. They are 0.6 to 1 metres (2 to 3 ft.) long, weigh 4 to 5 kilograms (10 lbs) and have a wingspan of 1.2 to 1.5 metres (4 to 5 ft.).

## Watercraft and Loons

There are many ways that watercraft can have a negative effect on loons:

- Power boats can send waves crashing into shorelines, drowning nests
- Fishing boats, particularly bass and pike anglers, frequent areas preferred for loon nest sites
- Canoes can slip quietly into loon nesting areas and startle loons off their nests
- Personal Watercraft (PWCs) can speed in shallow water and run over chicks
- Boats pulling water-skiers and tubers may speed near shorelines and run over chicks.

## Get the Lead Out

Loons, like many birds, normally ingest small pebbles (grit) in order to help digest their food. Loons often have as many as 20-30 pebbles in their gizzard at one time. Unfortunately if this material contains lead, which can be in the form of small sinkers, jigs or shotgun shot, poisoning of the loon will occur.

Non-toxic alternatives such as steel and bismuth are now readily available. So - get the lead out!



## Nesting Loons



On the Rideau, most loons start to nest from the middle to the end of May. They generally lay 2 eggs which will hatch 27 to 29 days later (late June). Nests are usually on small islands or the back end of bays and inlets. In several areas, local residents have constructed artificial loon nests, a floating platform, 1.2 to 1.8 metres (4 to 6 feet) square.

Since loons only have one or two chicks per year, every chick counts. The survival of loons on the Rideau depends on these chicks staying healthy until they are strong enough to fly south (late October - November).

## Boat traffic can cause loss of eggs!

Loon parents will leave the nest if a watercraft comes within 150 metres (500 feet) of the nest. This leaves the eggs without warmth or protection.

Loon parents may abandon the nest if disturbed too often. If they try to re-nest later in the season, the likelihood of chicks hatching and surviving is very low.

## Loon Chicks

### Boats can easily kill chicks!

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

Young chick can't dive! Young chicks are very buoyant and can't dive very quickly or very deep. This make them particularly vulnerable to being run over by watercraft, particularly from June to September.

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

Chicks frequent open water! It is the habit of loon parents to move the chicks away from the small bay nesting environment, out into deeper water along more open shorelines, to avoid their natural predators. Unfortunately this puts them into direct conflict with watercraft - particularly PWCs and boats pulling water-skiers, tubers and wake-boarders.

