

### **2021 Vermont Loon Conservation Project (VLCP) Summary**

We identified a record 109 Common Loon nesting pairs in 2021. Seventy-seven pairs successfully hatched 125 chicks with 84 of them surviving through August. The increased nesting rate in 2021 can be explained by six new nesting pairs and a higher percent of known territorial pairs nesting (85%). The chick survival rate was lower than average. More than 350 volunteers helped monitor Vermont’s loons this summer with assistance from Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department game wardens.

<b>Vermont Loon Summary</b>	'05	'06	'07	'08	'09	'10	'11	'12	'13	'14	'15	'16	'17	'18	'19	'20	'21
Nesting pairs	53	58	62	61	66	72	72	70	81	84	87	93	97	91	101	96	109
Successful nests	47	44	47	49	53	57	52	50	62	57	65	65	74	66	75	65	77
Territorial pairs	72	77	83	86	90	92	98	103	106	110	112	117	118	123	129	135	137
Chicks surviving through August	57	56	56	55	74	70	60	66	71	62	69	80	92	73	87	74	84
Chick survival	84%	85%	79%	73%	89%	82%	79%	76%	73%	67%	67%	78%	79%	76%	76%	74%	67%
Loonwatch # adult loons in VT	191	201	218	225	228	210	271	280	297	301	298	301	308	356	339	358	350

Six new nesting pairs were identified, including Clyde River – Buck Flats (1 chick), Glen L. (depredation), Long P. – Sheffield (chicks disappeared), Norton P. - Crescent Isl. (1 chick), Sunset L. –Benson (depredation), and Turtle P. (1 chick). One new pair on Great Averill – South started building a nest but no eggs were confirmed. Eight pairs were downlisted to potential territories or loon active as the pairs have not nested recently and less consistent pair activity was observed (Beecher, Mitchell, Neal, Norford, Peacham-SW, Sugar Hill, Warden, Wolcott,). Volunteers counted a similar number of adult loons on the annual statewide Loonwatch day for the past 4 years.

Nine adult mortalities were documented. The loon on L. Raponda ingested a lead sinker, and the Sunset L. (Marlboro) loon had a sinker in it but it needs to be tested on whether it was lead. A loon on L. Morey died from wounds from a fishhook. Two likely died as a result of attacks by other loons (No. 10, Woodbury). A bald eagle was observed killing an adult loon on Somersset Res. but it is unknown if there were other reasons that made the loon susceptible. A successful rescue and rehabilitation effort was made on a loon from L. Eden entangled in fishing line and hook. Three loons were rescued after crash-landings, and one was rescued after being iced-in last January (Maidstone). Five loons were reportedly entangled in fishing gear, but were not observed during follow-up surveys. Two chicks were retrieved for necropsies (Maidstone-SE – attack by another loon, Greenwood – unknown trauma).

**Nests:** 32 nests were located on artificial nesting rafts (88% successful), 34 were on islands (62% successful), 29 were in marshes (72% successful), and 14 were on shorelines (50% successful). Nests with warning sign buoys (n=56) had an 66% success rate compared to 75% for nests without signs (n=53).

**Nest Failures:** Of 37 pairs whose first nest attempts failed, 10 re-nested, and 5 were successful. Known causes of nest failure included depredation (9 nests), flooded (1 nest), and loon disturbance (3 nests). The remaining failed nests were abandoned for unknown reasons, with depredation and disruption from intruder loons being the most likely causes.

**Chick Loss:** The causes of most chick mortalities were unknown. At least 4 chicks disappeared after interactions with intruder loons, 4 were likely taken by a Bald Eagle (Miller P.) or snapping turtles (Fosters, Parker). One chick died after becoming entangled in fishing line (Lowell L.).

*For more information about the VLCP, volunteering, or to make a donation, please contact Eric Hanson or go to the VCE website: [www.vtecostudies.org/loons](http://www.vtecostudies.org/loons)*