

Focused Loon Surveys - Instructions

Vermont Loon Conservation Project (VLCP) / Vermont Center for Ecostudies (VCE)

Help us fill in the gaps on lakes and ponds where we could use more loon surveys. Is there a pair present this year? has the pair nested yet? are they still on nest? have the chicks hatched out? or did the chicks make it through the summer to fledging age? We also want surveys from lakes where loon activity is not well documented. Do loons even use a specific pond or is a pair possibly forming? Knowing which ponds loons do not use helps us guide our efforts.

These focused loon surveys are ideal for people who like to get out to lakes but may not have the time to consistently observe a lake throughout the summer. **And you can go at any time and report in.** It's a great excuse to explore new areas or visit favorite haunts.

The Focused Loon Survey lists do not include lakes with highly active volunteers. Feel free to survey any lake in the state and report your findings even those not included here. Some of these lakes might have "adopt-a-lake" volunteers, but additional surveys will help us better assess territory status, etc.

Lake Categories

- Priority 1 – territorial and nesting loons
- Priority 2 – potential pairs and recent two-loon sightings
- Priority 3 – tend to be smaller, occasional loon sightings, no breeding history

Priority 1: nesting start dates are super helpful. If it is the middle of June and you want to go visit some lakes in need of a survey, contact Eric Hanson or Eloise Girard at loon@vtecostudies.org and we can let you know where we still don't know what the pair is up to. In addition, we often need some extra surveys to see if nests have been successful (July) and if chick(s) have survived to late August. Any lake on the Focused Loon Survey – lake list are good lakes to go visit.

Instructions and guideline on next page

The Vermont Loon Conservation Project (VLCP) is a program of
the Vermont Center for Ecostudies and
the Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department.

INSTRUCTIONS

- Boat or shorelines surveys: the list includes a column if a boat is necessary or if doable from shore.
- Region: Lists are sorted by region of the state.
- The time-specific lists are focused around territorial loons (nesting, nest success, chicks). Add a priority 3 lake from the “all-season” list if you have time to add a few smaller lakes to your outing. It’s good to obtain surveys from these lakes with histories of less loon activity.
- Conducting Surveys
 1. Surveys can be conducted at any time, all spring and summer.
 2. Calm water is helpful for larger lakes; make a note if choppy water or difficult survey conditions.
 3. Partial vs. entire lake survey
 - a. Priority 1 lakes can focus on the territorial pair (partial survey).
 - b. Priority 2 and 3 lakes – make a note if survey was of entire lake or partial lake survey. E.g., observation from boat access of about 80% of pond, could not see bay to the north.
 4. **READ: Etiquette for confirming nests and checking on nest success.** IF you know where the nest is located, observe from a distance. NEVER approach a known nest closely; always use binoculars. If you do not know where the nest is located, contact Eric for details on the best way to observe it. Only search shorelines by scanning from 50-100 meters out from shore. Nest warning signs are not used at all sites.
 5. **READ: Etiquette for observing nest success and chicks:** Watch from a distance. NEVER pursue a loon family. A loon swimming away from you is a stressed loon.
 6. Note eagle activity, extra loon activity, interactions with other loons, specific locations and landmarks if pertinent (e.g., nest/raft location, where extra loons were)
- Reporting Survey Results

If you survey a priority 1 or 2 lake (very loon active), please report survey results to the VLCP soon after the survey. This helps us target when we need to survey that territory next.

loon@vtcostudies.org or call Eric Hanson 802-586-8065

OR

Enter in VT ebird online and SHARE survey result with loon@vtcostudies.org by entering his email.

VT ebird data input instructions:

- Go to <https://ebird.org/vt/home>
- Register or sign-in, submit observations (you can enter all birds observed or heard), find your lake, etc. Toward the end under review your data, make sure you hit the “share your checklist” box and enter Eric Hanson’s email: loon@vtcostudies.org
- For complete ebird entry instructions, find the pdf or video tutorial on the VCE website: common loon conservation/loonwatch/participate and scroll down to “Focused Loon Surveys”
- NOTES: Whether you send email directly to loon@vtcostudies.org or use VT ebird, there are places to make notes about your observations.

Examples of notes:

* adult on raft, 2nd adult on other side of lake.

* no loons near raft, 2 adults on water.

* 1 adult observed in SW area; did not find the nest site. Entire lake survey.

* 1 chick with 2 adults east end; 2 other adults west end. Not interacting.

* 3 adults swimming together, 0 chicks. I was told there was a successful hatch a week ago. Chick could have been stashed or is lost. I’ll come back next week to check again.

Thank you for making loon conservation happen in Vermont. The network of community science volunteers is key to monitoring how our loons are doing and guiding our management and research efforts.