



ADIRONDACK LOON CONSERVATION PROGRAM

THE ADIRONDACK TREMOLLO



2009 Spring-Summer Newsletter – Volume 8, Issue 1

WCS AND BRI BAND TOGETHER TO CREATE A NEW PARTNERSHIP TO PROTECT ADIRONDACK LOONS

We are pleased to announce that the Wildlife Conservation Society’s Adirondack Program and BioDiversity Research Institute are forming an enhanced collaboration to better protect loons in the Adirondacks. This improved partnership demonstrates a greater commitment by both WCS and BRI to address threats to loons and their habitats, including mercury pollution, shoreline development, human disturbance, and lead toxicity.

BRI is excited to initiate its new Adirondack Center for Loon Conservation as a central part of its International Center for Loon Conservation, which is dedicated to research, monitoring, and education to ensure sustainable populations of all loon species. BRI’s Adirondack Center for Loon Conservation will partner with WCS to perform loon conservation and education efforts in the Adirondack Park, as well as conduct research on the impact of pollutants, particularly mercury emissions and acid deposition, on Adirondack loons and ecosystems.

The Wildlife Conservation Society’s Adirondack Program will draw on its strengths of applied science and community-based conservation to continue protecting loons across the Park. The Common Loon is a one of WCS’ Landscape Species along with the black bear, moose, American marten, and boreal birds. WCS will maintain its role in loon conservation by coordinating the Annual Loon Census in New York, focusing on removing lead from lakes, and conducting other research in collaboration with BRI.

Through this partnership, WCS and BRI will be able to provide greater regional, national, and global exposure for loon conservation, while adding increased capacity in the Adirondacks. As part of this initiative, we are also pleased to announce that Dr. Nina Schoch will be transitioning from WCS to BRI beginning this summer. The excellent and important work Dr. Schoch has dedicated to loon conservation as a scientist with the Wildlife Conservation Society will continue and expand in her new position with BRI, and through this enhanced collaboration.



“The Wildlife Conservation Society has been proud to be part of regional loon conservation since 2001. We view this enhanced partnership with BRI as an exciting opportunity to ensure the protection of Adirondack wildlife,” says Zoë Smith, Director of WCS’ Adirondack Program. “BRI has always been a trusted partner and colleague, and they bring exceptional exposure of such issues as mercury’s effects on wildlife to policy makers and the public. We are delighted to continue to work with Dr. Schoch, and to strengthen our collaboration with BRI to better protect loons in the Northeast.”

FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT
BIO-DIVERSITY RESEARCH INSTITUTE, PLEASE VISIT
WWW.BRILOON.ORG



The Wildlife Conservation Society's Adirondack Loon Conservation Program is dedicated to improving the health of the environment, particularly the protection of air and water quality, through research and education efforts focusing on the Common Loon and regional conservation issues affecting wildlife and their habitats.

The Wildlife Conservation Society's Adirondack Program promotes healthy human communities and wildlife conservation in the Adirondack Park through an information-based, collaborative approach to research, community involvement, and outreach.

The Wildlife Conservation Society is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization that saves wildlife and wildlands worldwide through science, global conservation, education, and management of the world's largest system of urban wildlife parks, led by the flagship Bronx Zoo. Together these activities inspire positive attitudes toward nature and help people imagine wildlife and humans living in harmony. WCS is committed to this mission because it is essential to the integrity of life on Earth.

For more information:

WCS' Adirondack Loon
Conservation Program
7 Brandy Brook Ave., Suite 204
Saranac Lake, NY 12983
(518) 891-8872 x107
adkloon@wcs.org
www.wcs.org/adirondackloons

**To contact the Adirondack Center
for Loon Conservation:**

BRI's Adirondack Center
for Loon Conservation
P.O. Box 195
Ray Brook, NY 12977
888-749-5666 x145
adkloon@briloon.org
www.briloon.org/science-and-
conservation/centers/
adirondackloons.php

LOONS AND PEOPLE: GUIDELINES FOR "NESTING" TOGETHER

We are excited to report that Amanda Marino, one of our summer loon monitoring field staff, received a grant from Wild Gift (www.WildGift.org) for a project titled: *Loons and People: Guidelines for "Nesting" Together*. For this project, Amanda has been collaborating with WCS' Adirondack Loon Conservation Program and the Adirondack Park Agency on the development of guidelines for lakeshore owners to enable them to maintain or enhance quality potential nesting habitat on Adirondack lakes for loons and other wildlife.

Lakeshore development and boating recreational activity have increased substantially on Adirondack lakes over recent decades, which has led to a higher frequency of disturbance of breeding loons by humans. The guidelines that Amanda develops will enhance public understanding of the nesting habitat needs of loons, and inspire sustainable development and human stewardship of Adirondack lakeshores, as well as strengthen the coalition of individuals and organizations dedicated to the conservation of this emblematic species.

Look for more information about Amanda's wildlife conservation guidelines in upcoming brochures, presentations, and on the websites of the partnering organizations. Amanda's work complements WCS' broader efforts to minimize the impacts of backcountry residential development on a number of wildlife species and their habitats. Stay tuned for WCS' newest publication, *Make Room for Wildlife*, a set of guidelines for local planners to minimize the effects of development on wildlife.



ADOPT AN ADIRONDACK LOON!

Help support the Adirondack loon conservation research and outreach efforts! By "adopting" one of our uniquely color-banded study birds, you will participate in our work to better understand the impact of mercury pollution to Adirondack wildlife and their habitats, and to increase public awareness of the conservation threats affecting loon populations.

Follow the life of one of our study birds from year to year! You will receive a description of your loon's personal history (how old it is, its size and weight, what lake it resides on, and how many offspring the loon has parented); a personalized Adopt-A-Loon Certificate; a fact sheet on common loons and how mercury and lead affect loons; a Loon Appreciation poster; and an 8" x 10" color loon photo.

For more information about adopting a loon from one of our study lakes in the Park, please visit:

www.briloon.org/support/adopt-a-loon.php

BOATING THIS SUMMER IN THE ADIRONDACKS? HELP THE LOON PROGRAM FIND BANDED LOONS!

YOUR HELP IS NEEDED!

Please look for banded loons if you're out on the water this summer in the Adirondack Park!

Our field staff monitor more than 60 study lakes for returning banded loons, however, the banded birds occasionally move to other lakes, and returning juveniles may establish a territory on a lake different from where they hatched. Observations of banded loons reported by our volunteers and the public have provided extremely valuable information about the movements of the study birds. For example, a chick that was banded in 1998 was observed 6 years later on a lake ~25 miles away, and the bird subsequently established a nesting territory with an unbanded loon.

To identify bands on a loon:

- ❖ Use binoculars (10x40 works best)
- ❖ Look for color bands on the leg of a loon when it is foot-wagging or preening its belly with one leg in the air.
- ❖ E-mail BRI's Adirondack Center for Loon Conservation at adkloon@briloon.org with the following information:
 - Date
 - Lake where bird was observed
 - Which leg you observed the bands on
 - The color of the bands observed: red, blue, green, orange, yellow, white, and silver (= aluminum U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service band with unique #).
 - The "order" of the bands on the bird's leg - the color closest to the body is "over" the color closest to the foot. For example, in the photo, this bird would be identified as "yellow over silver on the right leg".



MERCURY AND IMMUNE FUNCTION IN ADIRONDACK LOONS

This summer, in collaboration with Dr. Grasman from Calvin College, Dr. David Evers of BioDiversity Research Institute, and Dr. Stephanie James from the Wildlife Conservation Society's Global Health Program, we will conduct our second year of field work to better understand how mercury levels affect the immune system of Adirondack loons. This project is supported in part through the New York State Environmental Research and Development Authority's Environmental Monitoring, Evaluation, and Protection Program (www.nysed.org/programs/environment/EMEP/home.asp).



Dr. Grasman and his crew have developed avian immunological assays that can be conducted on one blood sample, which greatly facilitates the ability to assess the immunological health of wild birds. In the summer of 2008, blood samples were collected for immunological analysis from 13 adult Adirondack loons (8 females and 5 males) and 3 juveniles.

By examining the antibody response of the study birds in relation to the mercury burden in their bodies, this study will provide a direct measure of the impact of mercury pollution to wildlife health.

SIGN UP FOR A 2009 LOON CENSUS LAKE! JOIN US ON SATURDAY, JULY 18, 2009 FROM 8AM-9AM

We request that *all observers contact WCS to sign up for a Census lake* to prevent duplicate observations. If you will be observing the same lake you surveyed in 2008, please confirm this before July 6th.

Sign up for a Census lake by contacting adkloon@wcs.org (or leave a message at 518-891-8872x107).

Please include:

- ❖ Your name, e-mail or phone number and address
- ❖ The name of the lake you want to survey
- ❖ The Township and County where the pond is located.

Census forms will be sent by e-mail and mail to all observers who sign up for a lake by July 6th. A list of assigned lakes will be posted to the Loon Program's websites in early June, and will be updated regularly throughout July. Please check the websites to find out which lakes have already been assigned (*please note - if a lake was surveyed in 2008, it is marked "assigned"*). If a lake is not already assigned, it is available for you to survey.

LEARN MORE AND DOWNLOAD A
2009 CENSUS FORM AT
WWW.WCS.ORG/ADIRONDACKLOONS
AND WWW.BRILLOON.ORG/SCIENCE-AND-CONSERVATION/CENTERS/ADIRONDACKLOONS.PHP

Have an excellent Census day in 2009!

~ RESULTS OF THE 2008 ANNUAL LOON CENSUS ~

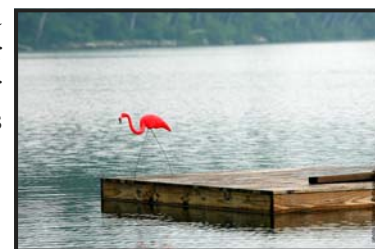
The summer of 2008 proved to be another outstanding year for observing loons! During our Eighth Annual Loon Census on Saturday, July 19, 2008. A record 697 loons were observed on 163 (73%) of the 222 Census lakes! Of the loons observed, 586 (84%) were adults, 94 (15%) were chicks, and 17 (3%) were immatures.

"Seeing them take off was very special. The whole show was most entertaining, but I was surprised that they made no calls. As they flew by quite close, I could hear their wing feathers clatter. That was a first for me."

~ Fawn Lake

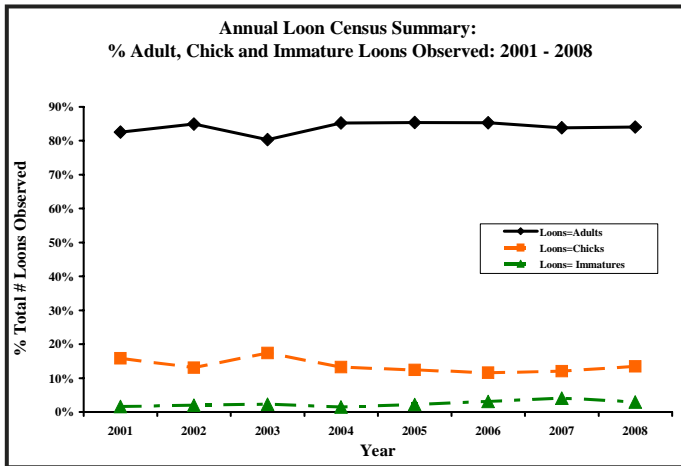
We received 295 census reports. Only six reports were not included in the analysis because they were duplicate reports or the observations were conducted outside the Census hour. We greatly appreciate the help of all 596 dedicated observers who participated in the Census. The loons and their observers all enjoyed another wonderful July morning on their favorite lake or river. We are especially grateful to our coordinators on the larger waterbodies, who did an excellent job organizing volunteers to ensure that observations were not duplicated on these lakes: the Adirondack League Club, Canada Lake, Cayuga Lake, Chazy Lake, Cranberry Lake, Lake George, Lake Placid, Lows Lake, the Northwoods Club, the Old Forge/Inlet Area, Peck Lake, Raquette Lake, the Thousand Islands region of the St. Lawrence River, the St. Regis Canoe Area, the Tawahus Club, and Upper Saranac Lake.

The Annual Loon Census helps to document long-term trends in New York's breeding loon population, enabling NYS DEC to monitor the status of the population, and implement management efforts if indicated. By coordinating with other loon monitoring organizations in the Northeast, we are also able to gain a regional perspective on the Northeastern loon population as a whole. Because loons are such long-lived (20-30 years!) birds, it is important to monitor their populations over a long period of time (a minimum of a decade) to obtain an accurate understanding of trends in their populations. Documenting changes in the population status on a local or regional basis is critical to assessing the impact of threats to loon populations and their aquatic habitats, such as mercury pollution and human disturbance.



"Sighted one pink flamingo, one doe, one fawn, ... zero loons" ~ Connery Pond

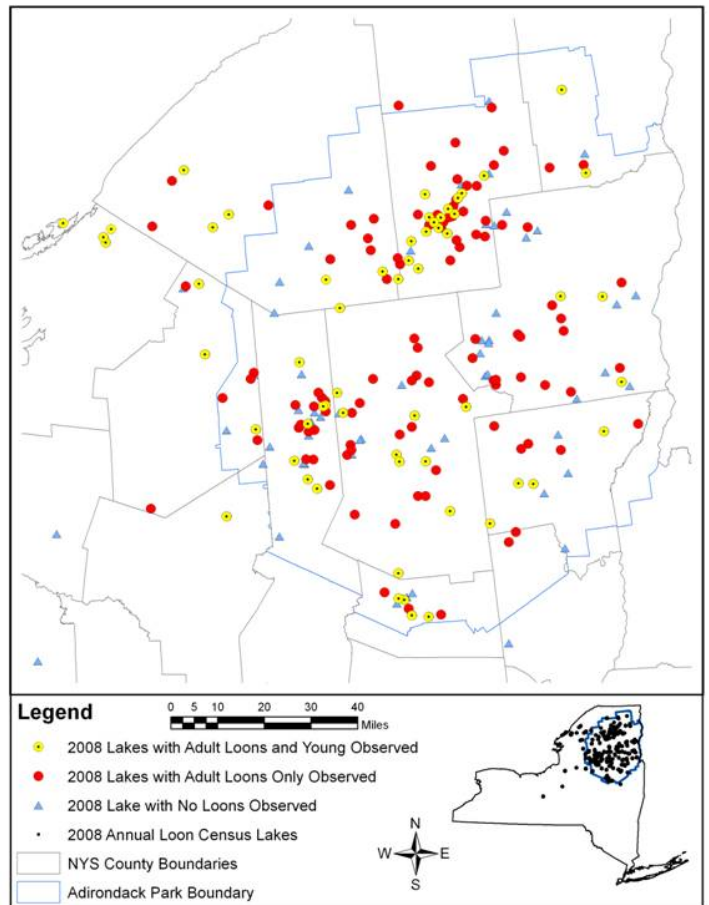
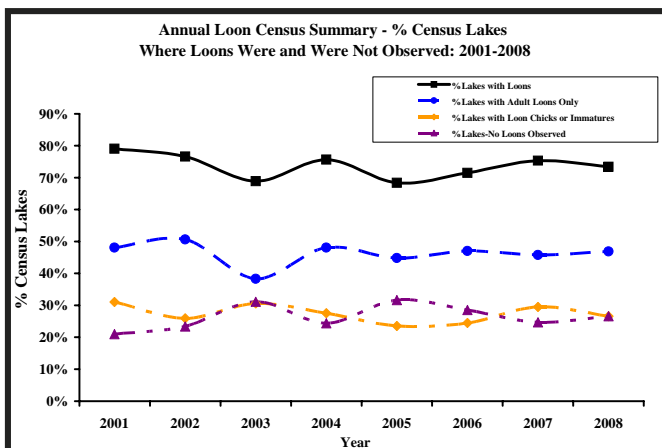
The map at right shows the locations and results for the lakes and ponds surveyed during the 2008 Annual Loon Census. Of the 222 Census waterbodies, 196 (88%) were located within the Adirondack Park.



The graph above indicates that, over the eight years of the Loon Census, the proportion of adult and young loons observed has been quite constant. This indicates that the reproductive rate of the population is stable.

“I grew up on Butterfield and this is the first year I have ever observed loon chicks ... It was very enjoyable to watch how the mother and two chicks interacted.” ~ Butterfield Lake

The graph below shows the percentage of Census lakes where loons were observed from 2001-2008. Loons have been consistently observed on ~75% of the Census lakes, while chicks have been regularly observed on just over 25% of the Census lakes, with slight annual fluctuations. In 2008, loon chicks or immature loons were observed on 59 (27%) of the 222 lakes surveyed, while adults without chicks were observed on 104 (47%) lakes. Although loons were not observed on 59 (27%) of the 2008 Census lakes, these observations are extremely valuable to the Loon Program because they help to document changes in loon habitat use and population trends over time.



“What a treat! We observed a family teaching a chick how to fish and just enjoying a family outing on beautiful Trout Lake.” ~Trout Lake

2008 Random Census Lakes

Of the 222 lakes included in the 2008 Loon Census, 39 (18%) were randomly chosen lakes. Choosing to report observation from random Census lakes allows the Loon Program to get a better estimate of the summering loon population in New York.

~ Future Observers ~

Please select a random lake for the 2009 Loon Census!

SEE MORE ANNUAL LOON CENSUS RESULTS AT:
WWW.WCS.ORG/ADIRONDACKLOONS AND
WWW.BRILLOON.ORG/SCIENCE-AND-CONSERVATION/CENTERS/ADIRONDACKLOONS.PHP

THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT!

We are very grateful for the wonderful generosity of the many people who responded to the winter appeal of the Wildlife Conservation Society's Adirondack Program. More than 100 donors and ten foundations provided contributions to enable us to continue our scientific research and community partnerships in the Adirondack Park.

Through your support, we are able to provide sound scientific information for Adirondack communities and agencies to make informed decisions regarding the protection of the region's wildlife and habitats, including the Common Loon.

Although limited space in this newsletter does not enable us to individually acknowledge all the recent donors to WCS' Adirondack Program and the WCS Loon Conservation Fund at the Adirondack Community Trust, please know that your thoughtful gifts are most appreciated, and are essential in enabling us to continue our loon conservation efforts in the Park.

WITH MUCH GRATITUDE FOR YOUR SUPPORT!

RECEIVE OUR E-NEWSLETTER!

Help us save paper and costs...if you are currently receiving a paper copy of *The Adirondack Tremolo*, please send your email address to adkloon@wcs.org so that you can receive our e-newsletter. As an e-mail recipient of *The Tremolo*, you receive a color version of the newsletter that you can easily share with your friends. **ENJOY!**

Also...if you move or change your e-mail address, please provide us with your new contact information, so that you will continue to receive our newsletter, *The Adirondack Tremolo*.



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