



# *The Adirondack Tremolo*

2001-2002 Winter Newsletter – Vol. 1, Issue 1

## ***The Adirondack Cooperative Loon Program “Hatches”!***

The Adirondack Cooperative Loon Program (ACLP) was initiated in the spring of 2001 to research the natural history of Common Loons (*Gavia immer*) and the effects of contaminants and human interactions on loon populations in the Adirondack Park. The ACLP also provides education programs to the general public and school children within the Park to increase public awareness about Common Loons and their role in Adirondack ecosystems.

The Adirondack Cooperative Loon Program is a partnership of the Natural History Museum of the Adirondacks, Wildlife Conservation Society, New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, BioDiversity Research Institute, and the Audubon Society of New York State, Inc.

### **Outreach Efforts**

Presentations exploring loon natural history, contaminants, and human interactions with loons have been provided to the general public throughout the Park. A citizen science website, [www.adkscience.org/loons](http://www.adkscience.org/loons), has been developed, and discusses Common Loon natural history as well as ACLP projects. The website will be updated regularly as data analysis is completed and ACLP projects progress.

### **“Loon Scientists” Program**

This winter we launched a new program to share the excitement of loon research with school children. The weeklong “Loon Scientists” program is designed for 7<sup>th</sup> grade classes in the

Adirondack Park, and includes two sessions with visiting loon scientists. The activities, which are based on the ACLP’s current research and promote NY learning standards, give students a chance to learn about real-world issues in wildlife conservation. We’ve already reached over a hundred students in Lake Placid and Tupper Lake, and look forward to more programs this winter and spring.

## **Adirondack Cooperative Loon Program**

### **Steering Committee:**

- Rick Godin – Natural History Museum of the Adirondacks
- Heidi Kretser – Wildlife Conservation Society
- Bryan Swift – NYS Department of Environmental Conservation
- David Evers – BioDiversity Research Institute of Falmouth, ME
- Fred Realbutto – Audubon Society of New York State, Inc.

### **Program Coordinator:**

Nina Schoch

### **Education Assistant:**

Stacey Low

### **To Contact the ACLP:**

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# Summer 2001 Loon Census Results

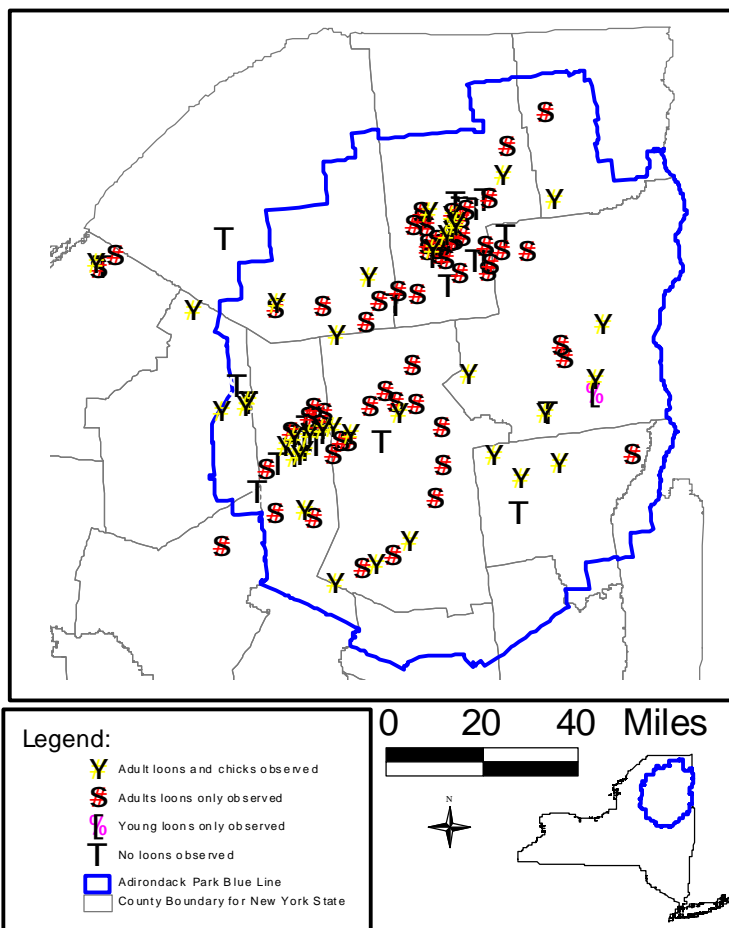
On July 21, 2001, a census was conducted by ACLP and ASNY volunteers to determine the presence/absence of common loons on lakes and ponds throughout the Adirondack Park. Our dedicated volunteers reported observations from 131 lakes and ponds in New York State, 119 of which were in the Adirondack Park. A total of 392 loons were observed on the lakes included in the census. Of these loons, 306 birds were adults, 59 were chicks, and 6 were immature birds. Twenty-one additional adult loons were observed flying overhead.

Adults with chicks were observed on 39 lakes. Adult loons without chicks were observed on an additional 63 lakes. One immature loon was observed by itself on one lake. No loons were observed on 28 of the 131 lakes that were censused.

The map at right depicts the locations of 126 of the lakes included in the census. Five lakes were not included on the map due to lack of information or locations far from the Park.

**Please go to the ACLP website,** [www.adkscience.org/loons](http://www.adkscience.org/loons), to see a color version of the map and to learn more about the results of the 2001 census.

We are extremely grateful to the **more than 200 observers** that spent a beautiful Saturday morning participating in the 2001 census. **We look forward to even greater participation this summer – please check our website for details on joining the 2002 census!**



## **Contaminant Sampling and Banding**

As part of a North American research project, Common Loons are captured throughout Canada and the United States to determine the effects of mercury on wildlife and their habitats. Feather and blood samples are collected to evaluate mercury levels within the birds and to determine the genetics of the populations. The loons are individually marked with color bands and aluminum U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service bands. The long-term reproductive success of the banded loons is determined through regular monitoring programs, such as the Adirondack Cooperative Loon Program.

Contaminant sampling and banding was conducted in the Adirondacks by BioDiversity Research Institute, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and NYS DEC from 1998-2000. The ACLP has continued this effort, and banding of common loons in the Adirondack Park was conducted for a 2-week period in August, 2001. Thirty loons were captured and sampled (15 juveniles and 15 adults) this year on 15 lakes (11 new lakes). Twenty-six of the birds were banded (4 juveniles were too small for the bands). A total of 126 loons have been sampled on 54 Adirondack lakes since 1998.

**Learn how mercury impacts our environment and the wildlife inhabiting it!** A report summarizing the results of the contaminant research will be posted on our website in the near future.

## **Reobservations of Banded Loons**

During the summer of 2001, ACLP field assistants monitored the reproductive success of the individually color-marked loons on Adirondack lakes. Forty-two of the 56 (75%) potentially returning banded loons were confirmed to return to Adirondack waterbodies. Most of the banded birds were observed in the territories where they were originally banded.

Of the 42 banded loons resited:

- 39 (93%) were observed with mates.
- 3 (~1%) were observed as single birds.
- 15 (38%) of the 39 mated birds successfully raised chicks to fledging.
- 17 (44%) of the 39 mated birds nested, but had no young that survived to fledging age.
- 7 (18%) of the 39 mated birds had no confirmed nesting attempt.
- One Adirondack banded bird was recently observed wintering along the North Carolina coast.

## **Want to Volunteer with ACLP?**

- ❖ *Participate in the annual census!*
- ❖ *Help monitor banded loons!*
- ❖ *Present education programs!*
- ❖ *Become a "Loon Ranger" – contact Fred Realbuto at the Audubon Society of New York State, Inc. for more information: (518) 767-9051x15; frealbuto@audubonintl.org.*

## ***Remember to Check Our Website!***

**[www.adkscience.org/loons](http://www.adkscience.org/loons)**

- ◆ *Want to learn more about loon natural history?*
- ◆ *Find out about ACLP's conservation and education efforts!*
- ◆ *Participate in our loon discussions!*
- ◆ *Plan to join us in upcoming events!*

## **Many Thanks!**

We are *extremely grateful* to the many people who have assisted us with the different aspects of the ACLP's efforts. It is through the assistance and generosity of Park residents and visitors, as well as the staff of our partnering organizations, that we have been able to accomplish so many projects in the past year.

In particular, we would especially like to thank the following people and organizations:

- ❖ Connie and Craig Weatherup for their generous contribution to the NHMA to support our "Loon Scientists" education program.
- ❖ Adirondack Lakes and Trails Outfitters, Mac's Outfitters, and St. Regis Canoe Outfitters for assisting us with equipment for our field staff.
- ❖ Our many volunteers who participated in the census and reconnaissance observations.
- ❖ The many private landowners that provided lake access for our staff to conduct fieldwork.
- ❖ Our field assistants and dedicated volunteers who monitored banded loons throughout the breeding season: Dawn Andrews, Holli Howard, Selma Isil, Heidi Kretser, Gary Lee, Stacey Low, Brian McAllister, Grace McDonnell, Laura Salmonsens, and Mary Beth Warburton.
- ❖ Dr. John Cogar and High Peaks Animal Hospital for their continued support.
- ❖ Markertec for their donation of equipment.

## **Support Our Efforts!**

Please consider a tax-deductible donation to the Natural History Museum of the Adirondacks or to the Wildlife Conservation Society for the Adirondack Cooperative Loon Program. Your contributions will enable us to continue this important conservation and education effort.

***To help support the Adirondack Cooperative Loon Program, contact:***

- ◆ **Diana Fortune** at the Natural History Museum of the Adirondacks: (518) 359-2533 or via e-mail: [dfortune@adknature.org](mailto:dfortune@adknature.org).
- ◆ **Ingrid Li** at the Wildlife Conservation Society: (718) 270-1442 or via e-mail: [ili@wcs.org](mailto:ili@wcs.org).

## Upcoming Events:

- ❖ Lead fishing tackle education program – **contact ACLP this spring or summer for information** about obtaining brochures and to find locations where you can exchange your lead fishing tackle for non-toxic alternatives.
- ❖ **Mark your calendars!** The 2002 Loon Census is scheduled for **July 20. Look for details on how to sign up for a lake in the Spring/Summer newsletter and on the website.**

*Please join us – the census provides an excellent opportunity to participate in our research, as well as watch some truly unique birds!*

- ❖ We're planning presentations for the public for this summer. **Please contact ACLP for details or to schedule a presentation in your area.**

### Little Known Loon Facts!

- ❖ Loons live 25-30 years!
- ❖ Loons can dive at least 100 feet deep, with unofficial reports of dives to 200 feet!
- ❖ Loon legs are laterally flattened, reducing friction when moving through the water.
- ❖ Loons do not mate for life – they occasionally switch mates upon returning to their territories or if one partner dies.
- ❖ Loons usually lay one or two eggs. On rare occasions, a pair may lay 3 eggs, and all three chicks may hatch.
- ❖ Loons need a long stretch of water, up to a quarter-mile, to take off and become airborne.
- ❖ Common Loons are listed as a Species of Special Concern by the NYS Dept. of Environmental Conservation.



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