

Kishchinskiy, A.A. 1980. Ptitsy Koryakskogo nagor'ya [Birds of Koryak Upland]. Moscow, Nauka Press. 336 p. In Russian.

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Red-throated Loon – (RTLO) *Gavia stellata stellata* (Pont.)

Distribution and habitat. The breeding range of the RTLO includes the entire Koryak Upland (Plateau). It commonly nests on the plains full of lakes, adjoining the seashore, and in certain sites – in the valleys of large mountain rivers.

The RTLOs occurred everywhere near the shore of Korfa Gulf, were common in the Kultushnaya River mouth and in lower parts of Apuka River, where they yielded in numbers to the Black-throated Loons. Near Apuka they nested in the river valley, and on the lakes amidst sea terraces and open morena-hilly landscape. RTLOs are as common in Lower Lakhtina River. We have seen foraging birds everywhere in the coastal belt of Ugol'naya Buchta (Bay) and in the lagoons of river mouths flowing into it.

We saw particularly many RTLOs in Khatyrka R. valley and adjoining tundra. They were also found on the brackish lakes in the “high” part of delta, on the shallow flow-less lakes of the sea terraces, and on the shallow flow-less (probably filtration) lakes, extended by chain along the base of the foothill slopes, forming the delta's border.

In the mountains the RTLOs gravitate to the valleys of large rivers abundant with fish. For example, they were completely absent in Khatyr depression, but in Rythgylveem River mouth and lower, on the riverbed of proper Kharyrka River in its mountain part, pairs and single birds were sighted every 3-4 km. The loons were foraging in shallow transparent water near banks or on shoals.

As Khatyrka River exits the mountains the RTLOs are sighted more seldom – until the sites, where flow begins; in its lower part in the lagoon they again become very common.

Analogously to that the RTLOs were common in Apuka River valley near Achaivayam, but in the mountains, in the middle and upper stream of Achaivayam River during the entire summer of 1960 we did not see them at all.

During nesting period the RTLOs inhabited shallow lakes with 30 to 150 m diameter with swampy banks, overgrown by sedge, *Arctophila* or *Comarum*. These lakes were situated amidst the plain, but in considerably elevated area, not flooded during spring floods: usually on the river and sea terraces, more seldom – on the periphery of floodplains and deltas. On the delta lakes, where water level is changing due to activity of flows, loons don't settle. Sometimes we observed loons on small, oligotrophic lakes, with rocky bottom located in low watersheds in the foothills.

RTLOs settle on lakes smaller than occupied by Black-throated Loons, often flow-less, shallow and completely fishless.

RTLOs feed on former riverbeds of large rivers, in the coastal belt of the sea, on lagoons and in “(bottle-necks)”, joining with sea. In August they often are seen at sea, carrying fish to the chicks. In contrast to Black-throated Loons, the RTLOs almost never feed on lakes, including nesting lakes. These peculiarities of feeding in considerable extent explain the described general character of the species distribution in the Upland. They allow the RTLO to nest on numerous small out-floodplain lakes. These lakes are absolutely devoid of food, but their level at the beginning of summer stabilizes early, and besides that, larger and stronger Black-throated Loons don't settle on such sites. We observed the same differences in the nature of preferred habitats of the RTLOs and Black-throated Loons in other parts of the North-East Asia.

Biological observations. In 1960 the first RTLOs appeared near Apuka 24 May, and in mass they arrived around 1 June. Until 10-15 June loons stayed mainly on “polynias” near Apuka R. mouth

and in riverbeds of its tributaries, and also in the sea. On the tundra lakes loons for the first time appeared in pairs from 1 June, but still in small numbers they fly to feed from there to the sea. At the beginning of June we saw the courtship displays of the RTLOs; we could also observe elements of courtship behaviour throughout the summer and even on 6 September.

We found a nest with 2 eggs 30 July near Apuka; a nest and two downy chicks – at the middle stream of Khatyrka River: one chick was swimming in the lake on 18 July, and the second was still staying in the nest on 19 July. The nest was located near the bank. Small chick with one adult bird was observed 11 August 1957; loons with downy chicks of ½ the adult size– 30 July (2) and 2 August (1) 1959, and on the same day we saw a pair with two larger, but non-flying young birds. Broods stay only on lakes, and adult birds carry food from the sea, lagoons and rivers. We saw the last RTLOs in 1959 on 13 September.

Specimens: 1) Olyutorskiy Cape, 10.VII 1912, male ad, Arngold; 2) Korfa Gulf, 1929, sex unident., ad, TONIS; 3) Kultushnaya R. mouth, 10.VIII 1957, sex unident. 4) middle stream of Khatyrka R. (62°37' N.L., 175 E.L.), 18.VII 1975, female pull; 5) Buch Geka, 18.VI 1976, female ad, Firsova.

Yellow-billed Loon – *Gavia adamsii* (Gray).

On 7 July 1976 Vronskiy observed near factoria in the middle stream of Rytgylveem River (Khatyrskaya hollow) two skins of dead Yellow-billed Loons, and on 8 August 1976 Flint observed two loons of this species in lower stream of Khatyrka River, at 25 km from its mouth, on the former river-bed of river. To all probability, these birds were non-breeding birds. Lebedev collected the YBLO in autumn in Kultushnaya R. mouth.

Specimen: Kultushnaya R. mouth, October 1973, male ad, Lebedev.