

Krechmar, A.V., Andreev, A.V., Kondrat'yev, A.Ya. 1978. Ekologiya i rasprostranenie ptits na Severo-Vostoke SSSR [Ecology and distribution of birds of the N-E of the USSR]. Moscow, Nauka Press. 196 p. In Russ.

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Part I. Birds of the middle stream of Rivers Kolyma and Omolon.

Red-throated Loon (RTLO) *Gavia stellata* (Pontopp.)

Throughout the study area the RTLO is a common, though not numerous bird, breeding in suitable habitats: near small lakes and pools situated in the vicinity of bigger water bodies that have higher fish densities. It occurs more often on the left bank of Kolyma River, than in the valleys of Omolon or Berezovka.

During spring migration the RTLOs were observed in small numbers in the middle stream of Omolon on 22 May 1973. During nesting season these birds were observed regularly feeding on the former river-beds of Kolyma, Omolon and Berezovka, and also on medium size lakes. Usually the fledging birds were observed flying over rivers and lakes in September. The RTLO leaves simultaneously with other loon species in the second half of September or at the beginning of October, just after lakes freeze.

Part II. Birds of the coastal tundras of Kolyuchinskaya Guba (Bay) and Kolyuchin Island. Pp.113-191.

RTLO – *Gavia stellata* (Pontopp.)

It is the most numerous species of Loons in the coastal tundras in the Kolyuchinskaya Guba region. Prefers to nest on banks and islands of small shallow lakes. The number of RTLOs on Belyakas Spit in 1973 and 1974 was quite great: on each of 10 lakes there were 2-3 pairs. In the southern parts of Guba the nesting density is much lower, probably, because the suitable water bodies are rare. In the coastal tundra the RTLOs appear rather late. In 1972 we registered the first record on 7 June, in 1973 and 1974 – 6 June. By this time open water started to appear on the tundra lakes and “promoiny” (gullies) on Guba, in the mouths of streams and small rivers. Loon arrival is quite extended; the majority of them arrive during two weeks. After arrival single loons or (more often) in pairs feed near shore (“zabereg”) of water bodies, not far from the future nesting sites. RTLOs as well as other loons initiate nest-building after the spring water rise, and after lake water levels stabilize (Krechmar, 1966). In 1973, for example, the RTLOs on Belyaka Spit began egg-laying three weeks after their first appearance – 28 June, and in 1974 – in two weeks, 19 June. The reasons were probably an early spring and low water level in the lakes in 1974.

Loons build their nests near water, or on small islands or tussocks, protruding from water. Often the nest is situated amidst grass thickets and the “path” leads to it from the water. The nest lining is usually very poor and consists of stems of *Carex* sp. and *Arctophila* sp., growing around the nest. Cup, as a rule, is completely wet, 25-40 cm in diameter. Full clutch almost always consists of two eggs (15 out of 16 nests). Only once we found a full clutch of the RTLO that contained one egg, 1 July 1973 on a bank of a small swampy lake on Belyaka Spit. Egg sizes (n=28): length 66.4-73.2, mean=69.8 mm, width 42.0-47.5, mean=45.2 mm.

On many occasions we have recorded the RTLO nesting near the Herring Gull colonies and even right in these colonies. Chicks hatch usually through the second half of July.

Predators of the RTLOs in the study region: Arctic Foxes and to some extent, Skuas. 28 June 1973 we observed attempts by the Parasitic Jaegers to treat themselves to RTLO eggs. After noticing the gliding predator (raptor), the Diver rushed to the nest, though the observer was situated

only 20 m from the nest. In 1974 (the year of high Arctic Fox numbers), on the shores of Chukchi (Chukotskoe) Sea about 80% of RTLO clutches were extirpated by Arctic Foxes. If nest is robbed in the first days of incubation, many loons re-nest. Often the new nest is located on the same water body, near the predated one. 18 July 1974 the Author found a RTLO nest with completely fresh (probably, a re-nest) clutch of two eggs on the sandy island of the shallow lagoon lake. The lining in the nest was practically absent, and eggs were laid directly on the sand. This location and nest construction so unusual for divers, probably, is explained by the mass hatching of invertebrates (especially Notostraca) this year in the similar water bodies. After the mass appearance of Notostraca the RTLOs constantly foraged on the lagoon lakes, where there was no other food available to them.