

Mineev, Yu.N. 1995. Otryad Gaviiformes, gagarobraznye [Order Gaviiformes]. // Fauna evropeiskogo Severo-Vostoka Rossii [Fauna of European North-East of Russia]. Ptitsy [Birds]. Nevorob'inye [Non-Passerines]. St.-Petersburg, 1(1): 7-11. In Russ.

Translated by Jevgeni Shergalin, edited by Oksana Lane

Gavia stellata stellata (Pontoppidan, 1763) – Red-throated Loon.

Status. Breeding migratory species.

Size and weight. Wing length of males (n=2) – 290, 350; females (n=4) – 262 (225-293); tails of males 55,66; females – 56 (51-60); tarsus of males – 50, 81; females – 77 (73-85); bill of males – 50, 80; females – 52,7 (52-53) mm. Weight of males (n=2) – 1700, 1900; females (n=4) – 262 (225-293) g.

Distribution. Nesting range: Arctic Islands Novaya Zemlya (Molchanov, 1908; Gorbunov, 1929; Antipin, 1938), Vaigach (Uspenskiy, 1958b) and Kolguev Island (Tolmachev, 1927). In Kanin-Mezen(skiy) district – from Mezen' R. mouth to Konushenskiy bank to Kanin Nos inclusively (Spangenberg, Leonovich, 1960). The Timanskaya tundra shore (Gladkov, 1951a), but it is rare in its continental part (Semenov, 1939). Malozemel'skaya tundra – in the forest-tundra districts; Pechora R. delta, islands of Pechorskaya Guba. Bolshezemel'skaya tundra – mainly in the coastal districts, sometimes in the south of the shrubby tundra. By Uspenskiy (1965) – whole Yugor Peninsula; according to Karpovich and Kokhanov (1967) – only on shore near Amderma settlement. Mineev (1987) has registered it only on the Barents Sea shore and Kara Sea of Yugor(skiy) Peninsula. To the south of the forest-tundra belt it breeds on lakes of Nizhnyaya [Lower] and Srednyaya [Middle] Pechora (Dmokhovskiy, 1933). South of 64 N.L, sometimes it is observed on migration (Teplova, 1957a).

Wintering. Probably in the coastal waters of North Sea near shores of the Scandinavian countries, Germany, Denmark and the Netherlands (Flint, 1982).

Region of passage. White Sea – Baltic Sea way.

Migrations. On Lower Pechora (near Ust'-Tsil'ma) the migration takes place at the end of May. Arrival of the first birds in Bolshezemel'skaya tundra – in the first half of June, in some years – by 1 June (Mineev, 1987), in surroundings of Vorkuta town – 24 June (Uspenskiy, 1965). In Yugor Peninsula they appear in the second – beginning of the third decade of June, and on the islands of Novaya Zemlya – 8 June (Antipin, 1938).

Departure from tundra occurs in September-October. On islands of Novaya Zemlya the birds are observed leaving at the beginning of October (Gorbunov, 1929; Antipin, 1938). On the White Sea shore the intensive passage is observed at the middle of October (Bianki et al., 1975).

Natural habitats. During nesting period the RTLO inhabits territories mainly with presence of shallow lakes adjoining the sea. In the forest-tundra the RTLO is common on the plain swampy plots with developed network of small and large lakes, rivers and channels. In the shrubby tundra the RTLO occurs sometimes on large lakes with shrubby vegetation along the banks. In the coastal tundra the RTLO constantly feeds in the coastal area of sea, in river mouths, more seldom on lakes and channels, does not form the great concentrations on lakes (Mineev, 1987). In autumn birds occur mainly near the coast on the sea.

Number. Population density is patchy in the tundra. On Kanin Peninsula on the shore between Chizhei and Kiei Rivers the density is high (Spangenberg, Leonovich, 1960), in Timan(skaya) tundra it is low (Semenov, 1939). In Malozemel'skaya tundra it is numerous in the region of Urdyuzhskoe Lake (0.42 birds per 1 sq km), in Pechora R. delta, islands of Pechorskaya Guba and on Russkiy Zavorot Peninsula. On islands of Pechorskaya Guba quite often breeds by rarefied colonies up to 30 pairs (Bianki, Krasnov, 1987). In Bolshezemel'skaya tundra the population density in lower stream of More-Yu R. in 1974 and 1976 was 0.6 birds, in 1977 – 0.4 birds/ sq km. It is higher on the shallow Khaipudyr Guba – 1 spec., and at the middle stream of More-Yu R. is 0.03 spec./sq km (Mineev, 1987). On Yugor Peninsula the number of loons is insignificant, as well as on Vaigach Island (Karpovich, Kokhanov, 1967).

Breeding. Egg-laying is initiated in the beginning of June. On Kanin Peninsula the fresh and incubated clutches are found between 11 and 21 June (Spangenberg, Leonovich, 1960). On Korovinskaya Guba the fresh clutches are found 6 June, and on Chaichiy (Pechorskaya Guba) the slightly-incubated eggs – 28 June (Bianki, Krasnov, 1987). In Bolshezemel'skaya tundra on the shore of Khaipudyrskaya Guba the fresh clutches are found at the end of June, and on islands of Novaya Zemlya – between 5 and 26 July (Molchanov, 1908; Gorbunov, 1929; Antipin, 1938).

Nesting density of the RTLO is quite high on Konushebskiy coast of Kanin Peninsula (Spangenberg, Leonovich, 1960), islands of Pechorskaya Guba (Bianki, Krasnov, 1987), in the region of Urdyuzhskoe – 0.2 pairs, and on the shore of Khaipudyrskaya Guba – 1 pair / sq km (Mineev, 1987).

Nesting habitat – small lakes or large pools-lakes. In contrast to the Black-throated Loon, RTLO breeds almost always on fishless water bodies. Nest is placed on a bank of lakes amidst rare sedge area or in the moss turf near water. It prefers to nest on small islands and in peninsulas of lakes. Diameter of nest 31-35, cup 20-22 and cup depth 2-3 cm. Nest material is aquatic moss, aquatic and other plants mixed with silt. Nest is located on the moistened site, and therefore the cup is wet. The nesting plot is used for a long time, but the old nest is not reused. New nest is built at the distance 0.5-4.0 m from the previous year's nest. Clutches contain 1-2, very seldom 3 eggs, egg sizes (n=7): 71-75 x 42.5-54.0 mm, weight = 68.2-72.7 g. Chick hatching is registered: on Korovinskaya Guba and Pechorskaya Guba – 18-22 July (Bianki, Krasnov, 1987), in lower parts of Vel't River – 22 July (Gladkov, 1951a), in Bolshezemel'skaya tundra – 26 July (Mineev, 1987), on islands of Novaya Zemlya – first-second decade of August (Gorbunov, 1929; Antipin, 1938). On Kolguev Island on 22 August the downy chicks were found. On dorsal side of their body the contour feather penetrated (come out), and primaries have only begun to emerge (Tolmachev, 1927). Broods consist of 1-2 chicks.

Foraging. RTLOs forage alone or in groups of 3-5 specimens, and are the most active in evening and morning time. From the continental tundra birds fly to feed on large lakes and rivers, from the seashore – to the sea. Food consists of young fish, minnow (*Proximus proximus*), molluscs and other invertebrates.