

Division of Ecological & Water Resources Nongame  
Wildlife Program  
1601 Minnesota Drive  
Brainerd, MN 56401

Hello Loon Watchers!

I want to extend my immense appreciation and thanks to the dedicated volunteers who have helped with the Loon Watcher Survey relaunch these past three years. This past summer marked the 42<sup>nd</sup> year of monitoring loons across Minnesota. Your passion and dedication for Minnesota's loons have provided essential insights into Minnesota loon biology, behavior and population dynamics. During these first 42 years, volunteers have "loon watched" 1,567 lakes, completing 10,922 surveys across 46 counties in Minnesota. Without you, this program and quantity of data collected would not be possible.

During 2022, 133 volunteers completed surveys on 157 lakes across 25 counties, contributing more than 2,000 hours of survey time. Volunteers observed 1,234 resident adult loons, found 175 active nests, and observed 339 loon chicks hatch with 242 of these chicks surviving until fledging. On average, observed loon pairs fledged 0.39 chicks per pair in 2022. Comparatively, loon pairs fledged 0.26 chicks per pair in 2021 and 0.4 chicks per pair in 2020. We continued to receive increased observations of insect harassment as well as nest predation, which lead to many reports of nest abandonment and re-nesting attempts by loon pairs in 2022. These observations highlight the power of the data collected by Loon Watcher Survey volunteers. These data allow us to track changes over time in phenology, nesting success, and chick survival of loons in Minnesota.

I want to share my appreciation for the highly organized and detailed data volunteers provided to the Loon Watcher Survey in 2022. We are incredibly thankful for the volunteer enthusiasm, expertise, and commitment to our Loon Watcher Survey over these 42 years.

Now entering our 43<sup>rd</sup> year of monitoring loons, there is still growing interest in protecting our state bird. Your enthusiasm for this important work is greatly appreciated. The goal of the Loon Watcher Survey is to capture valuable information on loon phenology, nesting behavior, breeding productivity, and unique behavior occurrences. To better answer these questions, we ask that Loon Watcher volunteers please attempt to observe their lake at least once per month from May to August. Less frequent observations limit the utility of the data. Please note that there is another Minnesota DNR loon project that utilizes citizen science: The Minnesota Loon Monitoring Program (MLMP). Please be cautious to not confuse the two surveys. Survey requirements for the MLMP differ from that of the Loon Watcher Survey. More specifically, the Loon Watcher Survey requires more frequent observations on the lake of your choosing throughout the summer; whereas, the MLMP requires only one observation on a predetermined lake during a 10-day time window generally in early July. Enclosed is your Volunteer Loon Watcher Survey packet for 2023.

**In this year's packet you will find the following:**

- Survey forms for your lake – to summarize your observations throughout the season
- Map of your lake – to record nesting locations
- A filled-out example of the survey form and map
- Survey instructions and tips – to assist you with your observations
- Loon nesting platform tips – to help you with the decision of whether or not a loon platform is needed
- Volunteer Agreement – one time form to be signed by new volunteers

**Please note:** Electronic survey forms and lake maps can be provided upon request. Please reach out to the Loon Watcher Coordinator via the contact information below to request electronic forms. If you have interest in “Loon Watching” multiple lakes, a survey form and map will need to be completed for each lake surveyed. We encourage you to coordinate efforts with other residents and your lake association.

Don't forget to “**Look for the Loon**” on your Minnesota income and property tax forms. It's your opportunity to make a tax-deductible donation to help loons and other wildlife. Or donate online at the website listed below.

Sincerely,



Andrew Herberg  
Nongame Wildlife Specialist  
Email: [LoonWatcherSurvey.DNR@state.mn.us](mailto:LoonWatcherSurvey.DNR@state.mn.us)  
Website: <https://www.dnr.state.mn.us/eco/nongame/index.html>  
Phone: (218) 203-4371

