

**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 two years. This past summer marked the 41st 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 41 years, volunteers have "loon watched" 1,556 lakes, completing 10,757 surveys across 46 counties in Minnesota. Without you, this program and amount of data collected would not be possible.

During 2021, volunteers "loon watched" 128 lakes across 22 counties. Volunteers observed 905 resident adult loons, found 127 active nests, and observed 207 loon chicks hatch with 116 of these chicks surviving until fledging. On average, observed loon pairs fledged 0.26 chicks per pair in 2021, down from 0.4 chicks per pair in 2020. This past summer was a trying time for loon pairs in Minnesota. Drought conditions, increased observations of insect harassment as well as nest predation, lead to many reports of nest abandonment and re-nesting attempts by loon pairs in 2021. 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 2021. We are incredibly thankful for the volunteer enthusiasm, expertise, and commitment to our Loon Watcher Survey over the first 41 years.

Now entering our 42nd 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. Enclosed is your Volunteer Loon Watcher Survey packet for 2022.

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

Website: <https://www.dnr.state.mn.us/eco/nongame/index.html>

Phone: (218) 203-4371

