

For the Loons and For Our Lakes

For many of us living on Michigan's beautiful lakes, the first call of a loon stirs our hearts and tells us that spring is at last here and that there is a bright summer ahead with the promise of a new loon family.

The Michigan Loon Preservation Association's Michigan Loonwatch Program has more than 200 Loon Rangers who provide for the day-to-day monitoring of loons statewide, protect the birds and their young, their habitat on their lakes, and also provide education to riparian owners and lake users. This network gathers yearly data and information to help us to better know and understand how to direct our efforts for the benefit of our precious loons and Michigan's natural resources.

Many Michigan Lake and Stream Associations' members are already Loon Rangers. For them, spring begins the time of special efforts to protect these beautiful birds. When need indicates, Rangers place floating artificial nesting islands (ANI) away from shorelines and boat traffic. These islands deter predators and lessen the effects

of water level fluctuations. Informational buoys near the nest site warn boaters not to approach too closely. Loon Alert signs educate people about loons and how to give them some space. Michigan Loon Protection Association encourages lake associations to schedule a loon educational program at their first meeting and to include information in their newsletters. MLPA educational brochures about safe boating and the threats of lead to waterbirds and wildlife can be made available to lake residents, marinas, and tackle shops.

Lakes are busy places, and the Memorial Day weekend often coincides with the chick hatch or the stage where the chicks are still covered with down. This is a critical time for the chicks because they are dependent on their parents for food and protection. The loons' lake neighbors keep watch on the loons during the busy summer days as the chicks move out into the lake and encounter increased boating activity. This watch continues until the chicks learn to fish and fly and finally leave the lake for their wintering grounds.

When the season is over, Loon Rangers report the loons' summer production success and begin preparing for the next year, when we will once again hear the call of the loon over our northern waters.

Over the years, MLPA-MLW has enjoyed a close working relationship with Michigan Lake and Stream Associations. We provide information to riparian owners and suggest that the most effective way to address concerns of any kind on their lake is to join MLSA, to form a lake association, and to have their lake association become a member of MLSA and MLPA.

For more information about MLPA-MLW, please visit our website: www.michiganloons.org or contact our state coordinator, Joanne Williams at michiganloons@yahoo.com.

Joanne C. Williams, State Coordinator MLPA-MLW

Photo credit Joel Bull.



"Testing my Wings" This downy chick is less than 2 weeks old and will spend the rest of its life on the water, going on land only to breed and nest.

**HELP SAVE OUR LOONS -
THE PRESENCE OF LOONS
INDICATES EXCELLENT
AQUATIC HABITAT**



"Gimme Fish!" Young loons ride on the adult's back to stay warm, dry and safe from predators such as snapping turtles. This chick is getting wingside service.