



## Loon and Lake Conservation Tips from the Canadian Lakes Loon Survey



The **Canadian Lakes Loon Survey (CLLS)** delivered by Birds Canada monitors the health of Common Loons and the lakes they depend on. Participants spend time observing loons at their favourite lake throughout the summer. For more information visit [birdscanada.org/loons](http://birdscanada.org/loons) or call 1-888-448-2473 ext. 124.

**Why Loons?** Loons are excellent indicators of the environmental conditions in a lake. Survival of loon chicks is influenced by lake acidification, mercury contamination, and other factors. In addition, nearly all of the world's Common Loons nest in Canada and over half breed in Ontario and Quebec, making the Common Loon a big responsibility for us to conserve.

### Help Create a Loon-Friendly Lake

- **Keep it calm but boat on:** Slow down near wetlands and shorelines and keep your wake to a minimum. Wakes can wash out nests or separate young loons from their parents, which makes chicks easy pickings for predators.
- **Play smart:** Operate play / wake boats only in water that is at least 8 m (24 feet) deep, which helps prevent sedimentation, protects wildlife, and makes for a better wake.
- **Steer clear:** Steer clear of loons, waterbirds, and other wildlife. They may not be able to escape your path. Adults can't protect their young if they are separated. Remember that paddlers and anglers can also panic loon parents.
- **Keep it wild:** Let native wetland plants grow along your shore. Natural shorelines provide shelter and food for both fish and loons while protecting your property from erosion.
- **Be lead-free:** Loons usually ingest lead fishing gear by eating a fish that has swallowed a jig or sinker or has broken the line, or by striking at tackle or fish being retrieved by an angler. Lead poisoning and death typically result. Request lead-free alternatives at your local tackle shop.
- **Don't discard:** Loons and other wildlife can die from starvation when they become entangled in fishing line. Return plastics, metals, fishing line, tackle and other refuse to shore and dispose of it in appropriate containers.
- **Don't mess with the food chain:** Don't feed nest predators such as raccoons or gulls. Dispose of your waste properly.
- **Be level-headed:** Work to reduce large water level changes during the loon breeding season (May - July). High water floods eggs; low water prevents adults from returning; both result in nests failing to hatch. Talk to your local officials.
- **Lobby for loons and lakes:** Get involved in preventing air pollution and water quality issues.
- **Spread the word:** Place loon and lake conservation messages on websites and in papers and newsletters.

### Simple Actions to Ensure You Have a Wildlife-Friendly Waterfront

- Evaluate your shoreline using resources such as Love Your Lake (<https://loveyourlake.ca/about/>).
- Keep the lot well-treed: never clear-cut. Start a buffer strip by leaving some grass uncut near the water.
- Keep a natural edge: replant areas lacking shrubs and trees with native species ([naturaledge.watersheds.ca/](http://naturaledge.watersheds.ca/)); leave a buffer strip near the water.
- Build at least 30 m (100 feet) away from the shore.
- Give clear instructions to your contractors and monitor their work.
- Avoid spilling fuels, antifreeze, paint thinner, or other chemicals on land or water; clean up fast!
- Don't use fertilizers, pesticides, or herbicides near the water.
- Use environmentally friendly soaps, detergents, and cleaners in your home.
- Pump out your septic tank regularly, every two to three years.
- Extend the life of your septic system by avoiding tank additives and minimizing water consumption.
- Refuel your boat with care: don't spill a drop.
- Watch your boat's wake: it causes erosion

### Are you causing harm?

- ☛ You can harass and stress loons without even being aware you are doing so. While on the lake or shoreline, keep an eye out for the following and, if seen, move away:
  - A loon splashing across the water, appearing to stand up. The loon is alarmed and probably defending its chicks.
  - A loon vocalizing near you. The loon may be concerned about you being too close.
  - A loon lying very flat on the shoreline with its head down. The loon is hiding on its nest, and if approached, may slide into the water, leaving the eggs exposed to predators.
- ☛ Watch your pets; please keep them away from wildlife.