

How to Participate in the Adirondack Annual Loon Census

The Adirondack Annual Loon Census is conducted on the **third Saturday in July** each year. This citizen-science project is coordinated by the Wildlife Conservation Society's Adirondack Program in collaboration with BioDiversity Research Institute. The Adirondack Annual Loon Census was initiated in 2001 to obtain a better understanding of the status and trends in the Adirondack summering loon population. It is conducted on the same day as similar loon counts throughout the Northeast to provide a regional assessment of the status of the Northeastern Common Loon population.

CENSUS OBSERVERS FROM THE PREVIOUS YEAR:

The Census Lake Selection Table assigns lakes based on your participation in the previous year's Loon Census. Thus, we will assume you will conduct your observations on the same lake as last summer, unless we hear from you. **If you participated last year, and...**

1. You would like to observe on the **SAME lake as last summer**, you **do NOT need to do anything**. The lake is already assigned to you.
2. If you would like to observe on a **DIFFERENT lake from last summer**, please **contact the Wildlife Conservation Society's Adirondack Program at adkloon@wcs.org or leave a message at 518-891-8872x107**, with the following information:
 - **Your name, address, e-mail, and phone number**
 - **The name of the lake** where you would like to conduct your observations
 - **The county name and township of the lake** you have chosen.

NEW CENSUS OBSERVERS:

1. **How to Select a Lake:**

View the Census Lake Selection Table ([click here](#)) choose the lake or pond where you would like to survey for the Loon Census. To prevent duplicate observations, lakes are assigned to census observers on a first-come, first-serve basis.

- ***Assigned Lakes:*** Lakes and ponds that are already assigned to a census observer are marked with an "X" in the "Assigned Lakes" column. Any water body that is not checked in the "Assigned Lakes" column is available for you to choose for your survey. If a lake is not on this list, it is not yet assigned, and you can choose that lake by contacting the Loon Program.
- ***Random Lakes:*** These lakes are randomly chosen to enable the Adirondack loon population to be statistically estimated. If a lake is checked with an "X" in the "Random Lakes" column, but not in the "Assigned Lakes" column, it is available for you to choose for your survey. By choosing a Random Lake, you will greatly assist our research!
- ***Note:*** *If the lake is privately owned, please obtain landowner permission before selecting the lake!*

2. **Contact the Wildlife Conservation Society's Adirondack Program at adkloon@wcs.org or leave a message at 518-891-8872x107 with your Lake Selection:**

Please provide us with the following information:

- **Your name, address, e-mail, and phone number**
- **The name of the lake** where you would like to conduct your observations
- **The county name and township of the lake** you have chosen.

ALL CENSUS OBSERVERS:

- **A Loon Census Form will be Sent or E-Mailed to You in Early July.** Census forms will also be available to download from our website.
- **Please return the form to the Wildlife Conservation Society's Adirondack Program by August 1st to:**

WCS' Adirondack Program
7 Brandy Brook Ave., Suite 204
Saranac Lake, NY 12983

- **Please see the "Helpful Hints for Participating in the Annual Loon Census"** for suggestions on how to fill in the Census form correctly.

Helpful Hints for Participating in the Adirondack Annual Loon Census

1. **Conduct your observations for the entire hour of the Census.**
2. **Note that observations conducted before or after the Census hour (8-9a.m.) will not be included in the final census results.** For us to get a coordinated “snap-shot” of how many loons are present and where they are, everyone needs to conduct their observations at the same time. If you send in observations from a different day or time, we will not be able to incorporate them into census results (however, they will be added to our long-term Presence/Absence database).
3. **Help with Aging Loons:**
 - a. **Adult Loons:** Fully feathered with black and white feathers and full size. Note that some adults are much larger (usually males) than others (usually females). Please identify adult loons carefully – they can occasionally be confused with mergansers (*male mergansers are also black and white in the breeding season*) or cormorants!
 - b. **Immature Loons:** Fully feathered with **light and dark gray feathers**. They are **2/3** adult size or larger. *If a loon has black and white feathers, it is an ADULT, even if it is a small bird. Also...if a bird can fly in July, it is highly likely it is an adult loon, as immature loons cannot fly until the fall.*
 - c. **Loon Chicks:** They have either **black or brown DOWN** (no feathers). They are **less than 2/3 the size of an adult bird**. *Note that loons are only capable of hatching 1-3 chicks. If you see more than 3 chicks with a pair of waterbirds, check to see if they are mergansers, which often have many chicks (5-30) swimming with them.*
4. Record only the **first** sighting of each loon or group of loons. **Please do not count loons twice.**
5. **Do not count loons flying overhead.** They should only be counted if they land on the lake or were on the water originally and then took off.
6. **Remember to report “zero”** when you do not observe loons, as well as the positive observations. A report of “zero” loons is just as important for census validity as multiple loons (over time, these “zero” observations will enable us to determine if loons are using more or fewer lakes).
7. **Please do NOT disturb the birds you are observing!** It is very important to learn to recognize normal and upset loon behavior, so you know if a bird is feeling disturbed by your presence, and you should move away. If a loon is tremoloing or yodeling, penguin dancing, or continuously swimming away from you, that is an indication that you should withdraw and make your observations from further away. If a loon is feeding, hooting, resting, preening, ignoring your presence, or swimming lazily nearby, that means you are not disturbing the bird, and can continue watching.

When Filling in the Annual Loon Census Form:

1. Remember to use a separate form for each lake on which you conduct observations.

2. Note the location on the lake/pond and the direction in which the loons move or fly. Please note if you conducted observations on the entire lake or on a portion of the lake.
3. **Please include a sketch map** on the back of the Annual Loon Census form indicating where birds were observed and location of the observer. These maps are **very** helpful to us in learning what parts of the lake loons use.
4. **Your comments on the form are also important to us!** Please feel free to add any information that you feel is not adequately covered in the data portion of the form. **You are also welcome to submit photos** from your census observations.