



Know Your Water Birds



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◀ LOON

A goose-sized, heavy, long-bodied bird with a thick, pointed, black bill. In summer, head and neck are black with a white collar; back is black with white spots. Breast and underbody are white. In the winter, upper body is a more gray color.

Loons sit low in the water when swimming. Legs are very far back on the body which makes movement very difficult on land. Seen in pairs or by themselves.

CORMORANT ▶

Similar in size to the loon. A slender-bodied, dark bird with a longer neck and a slender, hooked bill that is usually tilted upward when swimming. Throat is orange. Tufts on the crown of the head are sometimes visible. Will stand upright out of the water and spread its wings to dry. Roosts on rocks, or logs.



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◀ MERGANSER

A diving duck which is much lighter in color than the loon or cormorant. Common merganser males have bright white sides, green heads and red bills. Females are mostly gray with brown heads and bright white throats.



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The Loon Preservation Committee's mission is to restore and maintain a healthy population of loons throughout New Hampshire; to monitor the health and productivity of loon populations as sentinels of environmental quality; and to promote a greater understanding of loons and the natural world.

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Some loon pairs will begin to nest in mid May, but late starters, or birds that have renested after a nest failure, might still be incubating eggs in late July.

Loons have a maximum of two chicks. Chicks hatch from mid June to late July. Newly hatched chicks (1-2 weeks old) have a black downy coat and will sometimes ride on the back of a parent.



Older chicks have a coat of light brown down. Expect to see chicks in this plumage in late July or early August.



At ten weeks of age, loons are growing their basic grey plumage. Expect to see chicks like this one in late August through December when they leave for the ocean.



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For more information about loons and the Loon Preservation Committee, please visit our website at www.loon.org, or call The Loon Center at (603)-476-LOON.