



Annual Loon Census Instructions

The NY Annual Loon Census takes place on the 3rd Saturday in July, from 8:00-9:00 a.m. The 2017 Census will take place on Saturday, July 15.

How to Participate:

1. **Select a lake using the lake selection table available on the Annual Loon Census page of www.wcsadirondacks.org.**
2. **Contact us to let us know which lake you have selected.**
Please email wcsaccp@gmail.com or call (518) 891-8874 ext. 102, to let us know you would like to be a census observer. **Please provide us with the lake name, county, and township, and your contact information.**
3. **Prepare for Census Day**
 - o Review Loon Census Observation Hints, on page 2.
 - o Review Tips for Filling in Loon Census Form, on page 3.
 - o Make arrangements to be at your lake from 8:00 – 9:00 AM on Census Day.
 - o Having a boat, canoe, or kayak is not mandatory for participation in the census, but you may prefer to have one.
 - o Having binoculars or a spotting scope will also enhance your experience on Census Day, and improve the information that you provide.
4. **Take the census form with you to your lake.** Download one of two versions of the census form on our website, www.wcsadirondacks.org:
5. **To complete the data form electronically and email it back to us,** download the Microsoft Word version, fill in the gray boxes and double-click on the appropriate check boxes. Please also include a map of the lake where you conducted your survey as a separate attachment to your email. Then save the document, and add your lake name to the file name, and email it to wcsaccp@gmail.com by Aug. 1st.
6. **Or, you can print the PDF form from our website,** fill in all the fields on Census Day, and mail back to us by Aug. 1st.
7. **Help us with collecting some additional data this year!** As part of a separate and new study we are starting this year, we are particularly interested in the amount and type of recreational activities you observe while conducting your census, not just for how loons may interact with recreational activity but other species as well. If you're interested, please fill out page 3 and 4 of the census form to provide us with information that we can use to help understand recreational activities on Adirondack lakes. Thank you!
8. **Observe for loons at your chosen lake from 8:00 – 9:00 AM on Census Day**
 - o **Fill out the census form.**
Please return the form **by August 1** to:
WCS Adirondack Program
132 Bloomingdale Ave., Suite 2
Saranac Lake, NY 12983
 - o **Email by August 1** to:
wcsaccp@gmail.com

Thank you for your time! Your contribution helps conserve and protect loons in the Adirondacks. The Annual Loon Census is a project of the Wildlife Conservation Society Adirondack Program and is conducted in partnership with Biodiversity Research Institute's Adirondack Center for Loon Conservation.



Loon Census Observation Hints

1. Conduct your observations for the **entire hour** of the census (from 8:00 – 9:00 am on census day, always the third Saturday in July.)
2. Note that **observations conducted before or after the census hour will not be included in the final census results.** For us to get a coordinated snapshot of how many loons are present and where they are, everyone needs to conduct their observations at the same time.
3. **Do not disturb birds during your observations.** If the loons are constantly moving away from you, or tremoloing, yodeling, or penguin dancing, you should move away to avoid upsetting and accidentally stressing the birds.



Adult loon



Immature loon



Adult with chick

4. To determine the age of the loons you observe:
 - Adult Loons:** Completely black and white, with a white checker-boarded back. Note that adults can range in size considerably. Please identify adult loons carefully—they can occasionally be confused with mergansers or cormorants! (See below)
 - Immature Loons:** Fully covered with light and dark gray feathers. They are 2/3 adult size or larger. Immature loons are not black and white; only adults are. If you are seeing a black and white loon, it is an adult, even if it is small.
 - Loon Chicks:** They have either black or brown DOWN (no feathers). They are less than 2/3 the size of an adult bird.

5. Check your field guide to ensure that you are seeing a loon! Mergansers and cormorants can be confused with loons.

Mergansers: Male mergansers can be black and white early in the breeding season. Female mergansers can also carry chicks on their backs like loons. **Unlike loons, mergansers often have many chicks.** If you are seeing a waterbird with more than two chicks, it is probably a merganser. Loons are only capable of hatching two (or, on very rare occasions, three) chicks.

Cormorants: Capable of swimming underwater like a loon, cormorants can be mistaken for loons when only their head is visible above water. However, they do have a different shape to the head and beak. Cormorants and mergansers are both capable of standing on land, while loons are not.

6. Record only the first sighting of each loon or group of loons. **Please take care not to count any bird twice.**

7. **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.

8. **Remember to report “zero” when you do not observe loons.** A report of “zero” loons is an important observation (over time, these “zero” observations will enable us to determine if loons are using more or fewer lakes).



(continued on next page)

Tips for Filling in 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. **If you covered only a portion of the lake, please note it on your map or detailed description of the area observed.**
3. Include a sketch or digital map on the back of the form **indicating where you stood, and where the birds were observed.** These maps help us learn what parts of the lake loons use.
4. Your comments on the form are also very helpful! Please feel free to add any information that you feel is not adequately covered in the data portion of the form. We also welcome photos from your census observations.