



ANNUAL LOON CENSUS INSTRUCTIONS

The 2010 census takes place Saturday, July 17, from 8:00–9:00 a.m.

How to Participate:

1. **Select a lake using the lake selection table available on the Annual Loon Census page of www.wcsadironacks.org.**
2. **Contact us to let us know which lake you have selected.**
Please email adkloon@wcs.org or call (518) 891-8872, to let us know you would like to be a census observer.
3. **Prepare for Census Day**
 - Review Loon Census Observation Hints, on page 2.
 - Review Tips for Filling in Loon Census Form, on page 2.
 - Make arrangements to be at your lake from 8:00 – 9:00 AM on Census Day.
 - Having a boat, canoe, or kayak is not mandatory for participation in the census, but you may prefer to have one.
 - Having binoculars or a spotting scope will also enhance your experience on Census Day, and improve the information that you provide.
 - Take the census form with you to your lake. The form will be sent to you via mail or email in early July. You can also download it from the Annual Loon Census page of www.wcsadironacks.org.
4. **Observe for loons at your chosen lake from 8:00 – 9:00 AM on Census Day**
5. **Fill out the census form.**
Please return the form **by August 1** to:
WCS Adirondack Program
7 Brandy Brook Ave., Suite 204
Saranac Lake, NY 12983

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 the BioDiversity Research Institute.



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.
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).



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.
3. Include a sketch 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.