

**Making Nova Scotia's Lakes Loon Friendly
2004-2005 Annual Report (4th year of 4 year project)**

**A project of Bird Studies Canada
With funding from the Nova Scotia Habitat Conservation Fund**




NOVA SCOTIA HABITAT
CONSERVATION
Natural Resources FUND
Contributions from Hunters and Trappers

**Becky Whittam, Atlantic Canada Program Manager
April 2005**

Background

The goal of this project is to educate lake users and other Nova Scotians about how their actions affect loon breeding and foraging habitat through BSC's *Canadian Lakes Loon Survey (CCLS)* and a four-year Loon Ambassadors Program. In the first three years of this project, thousands of *Loon-Friendly Lakes* brochures were distributed by ambassadors around the province, and annual press releases also promoted the CLLS program and loon conservation. A slide presentation and information kits were developed and produced for use in classrooms and community groups. Volunteers were selected for the Ambassador program and presentations began in the spring of 2002. *The State of Nova Scotia's Loons* was published in May 2002, and was promoted by Loon Ambassadors and through the media.

Our main objective for 2004-05 was to promote loon education in Nova Scotia through two means: 1) Increased awareness amongst anglers on the impacts of lead fishing tackle, and the availability of non-toxic alternatives; and 2) the development and distribution of a Middle School curriculum on loon biology and conservation.

Results

This marked the fourth year of the four-year *Make Nova Scotia's Lakes Loon Friendly* Ambassador program. While ambassador activities tailed off this year, all ambassadors received a copy of a loon video with footage of breeding behaviour for use in presentations, as well as 100 copies each of the CLLS brochure, the shoreline stewardship brochure, and lead awareness brochure. Ambassadors distributed these brochures across the province. Becky Whittam, BSC's Atlantic Canada Program Manager, conducted media interviews with Allison Finnamore for the NS Business Journal August edition (see attached), and Yvonne Leblanc-Smith of CBC Sydney (Main Street radio program) on July 6. Ramsey Hart, a new loon ambassador in Summer 2004, gave a presentation on loon biology and conservation to 15 children and 2 adults at Red Tail camp on 22 July. (This camp has no electricity and thus Ramsey's presentation was very hands on, and involved games, role playing and stories).

Becky Whittam coordinated the distribution of NS DNR loon nesting signs through Reg Newell to the following new loon ambassadors:

- Jill Comolli requested signs to put up on Minamkeak Lake, Lunenburg County.
- Glenn MacKay of the Pictou County Paddle & Oar Club requested signs to put up at Middle River Pond and Lochaber Lake in Pictou County.

Through distributing brochures, giving presentations and contacting the media, loon ambassadors and BSC staff have been promoting the CLLS in Nova Scotia for the entire span of this project. The number of participants in the CLLS in Nova Scotia has remained steady at around 50 since the ambassador project began (50 in 2001, 52 in 2004), but the proportion of national participants who are from Nova Scotia has risen slightly, from

6.6% in 2001 to 7.3% in 2004, suggesting that Nova Scotians are more aware of the program than they were four years ago.

Bird Studies Canada staff actively pursued loon education activities in Nova Scotia, particularly with respect to educating anglers about the dangers of lead sinkers and jigs. We contacted all angling clubs in Nova Scotia and sent brochures to the clubs for distribution at summer fishing tournaments. We distributed over 1000 brochures to 6 angling clubs in the province (see Table 1).

Table 1. Distribution of brochures to Nova Scotia Angling Clubs, Summer 2004

Angling Club	City	Number of Brochures					
		Loon Friendly Lakes	Fish Lead Free	Shoreline Stewardship	Lead Sinker/Jigs	20 year CLLS Report	State of Nova Scotia's Loons
South Shore Bassmasters	Liverpool	100	100	0	2	5	5
Annapolis Valley Bass Club	Middleton	100	100	70	2	5	5
Canadian Association of Smallmouth Anglers (CASA)	Middle Sackville	100	100	0	2	5	5
Smallmouth Bass Club	Yarmouth County	80	80	0	2	5	5
Nova Bassmasters	Lawrencetown	80	80	0	2	5	5
Sea Side Bassmasters	Yarmouth	100	100	0	2	5	5
TOTAL BROCHURES		560	560	70	12	30	30

Nova Scotia Loon Education Curriculum

BSC recently completed a Teacher's Guide entitled "A Loonie For Your Thoughts: Learning about Nova Scotia's Lakes and Loons" (see attached) which will be distributed this spring to all middle schools across Nova Scotia in CD ROM format (with accompanying fact sheets printed in hard copy). The Teacher's Guide will also be made available as a PDF on BSC's website. BSC contract staff Susan Bowes has already made presentations to 10 Grade 4 and 5 classrooms in Amherst and Springhill, and will be making additional presentations throughout Cumberland County until the end of May 2005. Loon Ambassadors are also being contacted to determine their interest in giving presentations to several Halifax-based Middle Schools in May.

Conclusion

Through this four-year project, the public (especially cottagers, anglers, other lake-users, and school children) have had increased opportunity to develop an appreciation and understanding of loon habitat conservation issues. Anglers have been encouraged to take action to minimize damage to loon habitat by switching to non-lead sinkers and jigs. Data have been collected on lake use and loon productivity through the ongoing work of the Canadian Lakes Loon Survey, and a report specific to results in Nova Scotia has been produced and widely distributed. Middle schools throughout Nova Scotia have received materials on loon conservation and biology to enhance their science curriculum. Bird Studies Canada thanks the Nova Scotia Habitat Conservation Fund for their four years of support for this project.

Attachments

1. Canada Day (July 1, 2004) Press Release
2. Media Clipping – NS Business Journal August 2004
3. Example of letter sent to six NS Angling Clubs in Summer 2004
4. A Loonie For Your Thoughts: Learning about Nova Scotia's Loons and Lakes (A Teacher's Guide)

MEDIA RELEASE
BOATERS, ANGLERS CAN SAVE LOON CHICKS!

June 30, 2004 - Bird Studies Canada (BSC) and the Nova Scotia Habitat Conservation Fund are asking summer recreationists to use sensitive boating and fishing practices when they visit their favourite lakes. "The time leading up to the Canada Day weekend is extremely important for the survival of Common Loon chicks," says Kathy Jones, BSC's Canadian Lakes Loon Survey co-ordinator. "It's a time when human activity on lakes is highest and when people have the greatest potential to adversely affect loons who are raising recently hatched chicks."

Loon chicks begin to hatch in late June with the majority hatching right around 1 July. During the first week, the small chicks are extremely vulnerable to separation from their parents. Fast moving watercraft and their wakes easily separate parents from their young. This can happen so quickly that the adults may have difficulty finding their young, especially if large wakes cause both adults and young to become disoriented. Boaters should be aware of loons and reduce their wake when driving in small bays that harbour loon families.

Anglers can help make Nova Scotia's waters safer for loons by using non-toxic alternatives to lead sinkers and jigs. Lead sinkers are the same size as the grit (small stones) that loons and other water birds swallow to help them digest their food. Swallowing a lead sinker or jig leads to lead poisoning and ultimately death. Lead poisoning can seriously impact a loon's ability to care for its young.

By choosing non-toxic alternatives such as bismuth, tin, antimony, steel, rubber or clay, anglers can create safer foraging habitat for the next generation of loons. Ask your local sporting goods store or your favourite marina to stock lead-free fishing tackle. For sources of lead-free sinkers visit http://www.cws-scf.ec.gc.ca/fishing/alter_e.cfm.

For 20 years, BSC's Canadian Lakes Loon Survey has involved lake residents (summer or full-time) and lake visitors who collect information about breeding success of loons on their favourite lake. There's still time to join in the 2004 survey to help scientists collect these important data. BSC's annual membership fee of \$35 helps to offset the costs of this program and other regional, nation-wide, and international scientific studies. Call 1-888-448-2473 for more information, or visit www.bsc-eoc.org.

- 30 -

Bird Studies Canada is recognized nation-wide as a leading and respected, not-for-profit, conservation organization dedicated to the study and understanding of wild birds and their habitats. Each year, more than 20,000 volunteers from across Canada actively participate in BSC research and education activities.

BSC thanks the Nova Scotia Habitat Conservation Fund for its support of the Canadian Lakes Loon Survey.

For further information contact:
Becky Whittam, BSC Atlantic Region, 506-364-5047
Becky.whittam@ec.gc.ca

Digital photos available upon request

Focusing on conservation

Thirteen wildlife conservation projects have received \$114,645 in funding from the Nova Scotia Department of Natural Resources through the Habitat Conservation Fund.

Hugh Broders of the Department of Biology at St. Mary's University will use his funding to study the ecology of bats at Kejimikujik National Park.

"We're trying to get an understanding of which species there are and where they exist," he says.

There's only been one study on the province's bat population, also done by Broders, in 2001. One species he's particularly interested in is the eastern pipistrelle. Getting an idea of the distribution of the bat and its ecological requirements is also of interest to Broders.

Why should the public care about bats? "It's quite possible the way we manage our forests and landscape is having a detrimental effect on this species," Broders says.

Some research has already shown the bats travel up to eight kilometers each night and the same individual bats gather to roost in trees during the day.

"We can relate that to the potential impacts forestry is having. What happens if you clear cut that area? What happens to the bats? Where do they go? Are they OK?"

Becky Whitman of Bird Studies Canada echoes Broders' thoughts. Her group will continue its provincial Loon Ambassador Program with the funding it's receiving.

The ambassadors help gather data about loon populations and educate the public about loons and habitat protection.

Whitman pointed out that loons are a national symbol and an animal Canadians should care about.

"By promoting loon-friendly lakes, we're not only making it healthier for loons, but protecting other species too," she says.

This summer, the loon ambassadors will focus on encouraging fishing enthusiasts to stop using lead sinkers and jigs.

The primary goal of the Habitat Conservation Fund, which was started in 2001, is to assist with projects that protect and enhance wildlife habitats. They may be funded up to 75 per cent or \$25,000 on a cost-shared basis.

The tiny bits of metal are the same size as the small stones loons and other water birds swallow to help digest their food. Whitman says swallowing the lead results in lead poisoning and death. Lead poisoning can also seriously impact a loon's ability to care for its young. She suggests alternatives like bismuth, tin, antimony, steel, rubber or clay.

The money for the Habitat Conservation Fund is generated through the required purchase of a \$2 wildlife habitat stamp on all hunting licenses in Nova Scotia. The program was started in 2001, and almost half a million dollars has been directed to wildlife conservation.

Project applications are reviewed and recommendations made by an independent board of directors representing hunting, naturalist and academic associations.

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Some of the other wildlife conservation projects receiving funding this year are:

- Benefits and Risks of Agro-Ecosystem Management to Grassland Birds in Nova Scotia
- Coastlines Natural History Column
- Small Marsh Restoration in the Agricultural/Urban Landscape
- Adopt-A-Wetland Education Program
- King's County Riparian Fencing Project
- Microhabitat Selection of Northern and Southern Flying Squirrels in Nova Scotia
- Conservation of Critical Lakeshore Habitat in the Tusket River Watershed
- Mercury in River Otter
- An Examination of the Ecological Effects of Porcupine Feeding on Acadian Forests
- Securement and Stewardship of the Atlantic Coastal Plain Flora in Southwest Nova Scotia
- Conservation of Critical Wood Turtle Habitats Through Community Stewardship.

By Allison Finnamore
Natural Resources Reporter
finnamor@nbnet.nb.ca



Metro Creative Graphics

This summer, the Loon Ambassador Program is encouraging fishing enthusiasts to stop using lead sinkers and jigs.

LIMITED TIME OFFER!

First day of the NHL draft
Page 10, 11, 12

10 pages of election coverage and opinion
Page 10

Britney to say 'I do'
Page 10

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Gary Josey
P.O. Box 1205
Middleton, NS B0S 1P0

6 July 2004

Dear Gary,

Thanks a lot for offering to distribute these brochures to the Annapolis Valley Bass Club. This package contains the following:

100 Loon Friendly Lakes brochures. This brochure outlines steps that people can take to make their lake friendly for loons, including safe boating and angling practices. It also describes how people can become involved in the Canadian Lakes Loon Survey (CLLS), should they be interested in counting loons for Bird Studies Canada.

100 Fish Lead Free brochures. This brochure was produced by Environment Canada and contains information on non-toxic, lead-free alternatives. It's possible that many of your members have already seen this brochure; I'm not certain how widely it was distributed.

70 Shoreline Stewardship brochures. This brochure, produced in NB by the Shediac Bay Watershed Association, is aimed more at landowners than anglers; however, it's likely that many of your members own a cottage or home on a lake. This brochure outlines ways to maintain natural shorelines that benefit loons and other wildlife.

2 Lead Sinkers and Jigs brochures/samples. This flyer, produced by the Nova Scotia Dept. of Agriculture and Fisheries (Inland Fisheries Division), contains information on non-toxic, lead-free alternatives, including some free samples. I think this flyer might have been distributed with fishing licences so your members have probably already seen it. We only have a limited number of these (they are out of print) so we could only send two. Perhaps you could display them at the tournaments on a registration desk (if you use one).

5 "20 years of the Canadian Lakes Loon Survey" reports. This report outlines results from 20 years of the CLLS across Canada. Perhaps you could save this report for your next meeting, and give it to members who are particularly interested in loons. Should you require more copies, simply contact me and I'll send them right away.

5 "The State of Nova Scotia's Loons" reports. This report outlines results from 10 years of the CLLS in Nova Scotia. As with the above report, perhaps you could save this report for your next meeting, and give it to members who are particularly interested in loons. Should you require more copies, simply contact me and I'll send them right away. This report is also available on our website at <http://www.bsc-eoc.org/download/NSLoons.pdf>.

Please don't hesitate to contact me should you require additional copies or further information about the Canadian Lakes Loon Survey.

Sincerely,

Becky Whittam

Atlantic Canada Program Manager (506-364-5047; becky.whittam@ec.gc.ca)