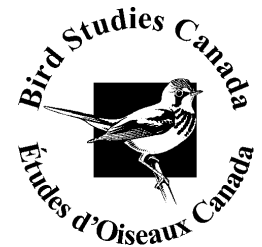




MEDIA RELEASE — FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE — July 2002



Please contact Becky Whittam, Atlantic Canada Program Manager for Bird Studies Canada (506-364-5047, becky.whittam@ec.gc.ca) if you have any questions or would like additional materials (e.g. graphics, fact sheets, photos). Further information on threats to loons and lakes and possible solutions is available upon request. **If you modify this release, please do not leave out the contact information for the Canadian Lakes Loon Survey or the fact that a \$25.00 participant fee applies.**

Nova Scotia's Loons Doing OK: 10-year study

Ten years of data from the volunteer-based Canadian Lakes Loon Survey show that Nova Scotia's loons are doing okay.

"Data collected by volunteer loon surveyors from 1990-2000 have shown that loon breeding success is stable or even increasing slightly in Nova Scotia," said Steve Timmermans, who coordinates the survey for Bird Studies Canada. "In 2000, nearly 60% of loon pairs being watched raised at least one chick." And of those pairs that raised one chick, nearly two-thirds raised a second chick. Results are based on over 680 observations from several hundred lakes across the province. The report, entitled *The State of Nova Scotia's Loons: a decade-long view from the Canadian Lakes Loon Survey*, is available online (www.bsc-eoc.org/cllsmain.html) or by contacting Bird Studies Canada (see below).

Timmermans explains that while loon breeding success in Nova Scotia has been showing a steady increase since 1990, loons in Atlantic Canada are still not as successful as their counterparts in the west. Loons in British Columbia, the Yukon, and the Prairie provinces consistently show higher breeding success than loons in Atlantic Canada, to the extent that close to 70% of pairs were able to raise at least one chick between 1998 and 2000.

"Throughout Canada, loon breeding lakes are being impacted by acid rain, shoreline development, and the use of lead sinkers and shot," said Becky Whittam, Atlantic Canada Program Manager for Bird Studies Canada. "Acid rain, in particular, is a serious issue in eastern Canada, and may partly explain why loons in Atlantic Canada aren't doing as well as loons in the west." However, the results of the 10-year study do not show a clear relationship between lake acidity and loon breeding success. "We need to keep working on this," said Whittam. "In Ontario, higher lake acidity is clearly linked to lower loon breeding success, but the pattern is opposite here," she said, adding, "there must be some other factor involved."

The study, which was funded by the Nova Scotia Habitat Conservation Fund and the Canadian Wildlife Service, also examined the impacts of human activity (boating, water skiing, jet skiing) and shoreline development on loon breeding success. "We found that human activity on Nova Scotia's lakes may be limiting loons in their ability to raise two chicks," said Timmermans. The effects of shoreline development were mixed.

Participants in the Canadian Lakes Loon Survey have collected information on nesting loons since 1981. By keeping track of the number of chicks raised by loon pairs each year, and entering their data online or on paper data forms, volunteers allow scientists to examine long-term trends in loon breeding success. There are currently over 50 volunteers in Nova Scotia, which Whittam says is "great, but not enough. There are hundreds of lakes in Nova Scotia that aren't being monitored. We can always use more loon surveyors." In addition, five Loon Ambassadors in Nova Scotia, sponsored by the Nova Scotia Habitat Conservation Fund, are attempting to educate lake users about problems facing loons and what people can do to help. To have an Ambassador visit your school, community group or club, contact Becky Whittam at 506-364-5047.

The Canadian Lakes Loon Survey is a project of Bird Studies Canada (BSC), a non-profit research organization dedicated to the study and conservation of wild birds and their habitats. An important portion of the survey's support comes from annual membership fees (\$25). These tax creditable contributions entitle CLLS participants to full BSC membership, which includes a year's subscription to BSC's newsletter, *BirdWatch Canada* and the ability to participate in other BSC programs including Project FeederWatch and Christmas Bird Counts. Fees are also necessary to offset the costs of producing and distributing survey materials, managing data, and analysing and disseminating results.

There is still time to sign up for 2002! To participate in the CLLS, send your name & address, along with the \$25.00 (tax creditable) membership fee to: The Canadian Lakes Loon Survey, Bird Studies Canada, P.O. Box 160, Port Rowan, ON N0E 1M0, E-mail: aqsurvey@bsc-eoc.org; Toll-free phone: 888-448-2473; Web Page: www.bsc-eoc.org/cllsmain.html. Please indicate whether you would like to receive a CLLS reporting booklet. All CLLS supporters receive annual updates on the survey's results. *The State of Nova Scotia's Loons* can be downloaded from the webpage or ordered by mail at no charge.