

Moose Lake News

About a week ago I was on Moose Lake playing with my new electronics on my boat. I purchased a new fish finder and a new trolling motor recently. The side imaging Helix Hummingbird is a fantastic piece of equipment. I was checking out the new fish cribs that the MLIA put in Moose Lake about 2 years ago. There was a lot of detail that was showing up on the screen. I could even count the number of pallets that we used to build the crib. It also was showing several fish on the side and top of the cribs. I was happy to see this because the purpose of putting the cribs in the lake was to attract smaller fish so they would have a place of protection from the predator fish. It appears that these cribs are doing their job.

I have an underwater camera that I use to see a variety of things under the water & especially on clear water lakes. Moose Lake is too stained to see any distance under water, so one day last week I took a trip to the Chippewa Flowage. I found some fish cribs in about 20 feet of water. I locked in with my trolling motor right on top of a fish crib that appeared to have fish around it. The fish finder was showing fish on the side and on top of the crib. First I thought I would try to see if I could catch some of these fish. I used a 1/32nd ounce jig with a piece of plastic. No luck. I went to a piece of night crawler after moving around in a 6-foot circle I did catch one bluegill. It was slow fishing or should I say catching these little guys. The depth finder could not be wrong, could it? I had my underwater camera so I will see how it works in 20 feet of water. It was a bright sunny day so that will help. I got down to 15 feet and wow there they were. Fish all over There must have been 25 or 30 fish within my cameras view. This was impressive. I was fishing below the fish that is why I was not getting any bites. Fish do not like to go down after a bait. It is easier for them to go up because of the location of their eyes. Some of these fish were in a negative mood but they were there. I saw them down there. One exceptionally large bluegill came right up to my camera and looked me right in my eye. He was curious about my camera. I did catch about ten fish before I left this spot once I knew how to fish for them. While I was on the water I saw 3 Common Loons nearby boat. I noticed that the loons are starting to molt. Which means, shed their feathers to another color. They are getting ready for their long flight to the Gulf of Mexico. I said to myself that I would have to research the molting of the Common Loon and write about it in the ML News. I had a very educational day on the water.

Here is my research story about the Common Loon. A good share of my research comes from a book called all about birds. Loons begin a full body molt (minus their wings) in the late summer and early fall, prior to migration. The black and white breeding plumage of adult loons in the summer is replaced by the gray brown of winter. This process typically begins at the base of the bill and spreads across the head and over the upper back. This is what I noticed with the loons on the Flowage. The process of molting can extend through migration on into December. If you have ever seen a Loon in the Gulf or in the Atlantic near Florida they look extremely different from what we see up here.

My research tells me that their bird feathers get worn out from daily wear and tear. Most birds replace all their feathers at least once a year. This process is called molting. Some birds, like Loons, molt twice a year and grow a very different looking set of feathers for the breeding season. Loons start molting into non-breeding plumage in late summer.

The eerie calls of Common Loons echo across clear lakes of the northern Wisconsin and Minnesota & Canadian wilderness during the summer months. It is what I think is the coolest sound. One of my favorites. Summer adults are regally patterned in black and white. In winter, they are plain gray above and white below, and you will find them close to shore on most seacoasts and a good many inland

reservoirs and lakes. Loons are one of a few birds that can live in salt water and fresh water. They adapt to both types of water. Common Loons are powerful, agile divers that catch small fish in fast underwater chases. They are less suited to land, and typically come ashore only to nest.

On a North Woods Lake in summer, loons stick out conspicuously as large, tuxedoed birds swimming about in the middle of the lake. They can be very vocal and easy to locate, as the yodeling of one loon will often elicit a chorus response from other loons in the area. In winter, loons adopt a much quieter profile along coastal waters, wearing drab, gray plumage. They typically stay close to shore, though, so a scan out to sea with your binoculars will often reveal loons hidden among the waves.

The oldest recorded Common Loon was a female, and at least 29 years old, 10 months old when she was spotted in Michigan in 2016 and identified by her band. She had been banded in the same state in 1989.

Next week I will conclude my article with some cool Loon facts that I know you will enjoy.

Birthday greetings this week go out to Larry Briggs & Dan Rozanski on the 23rd, Tom Koehler and Vieve Henkel both on the 26th of Sept. Ray Whaley & Ruth Briggs on the 27th. Kayla Fullington & Megan Steinmetz have birthday on Sept. 28th. There are no anniversarys this week.

Have a great week, and enjoy the cooler temperatures. Stay Safe! If you have any Moose Lake News please send it my way. jonarheim@centurytel.net or call 715-462-4448.