



## SUPPORT FOR OUR LOONS

Common Loons (*Gavia immer*) choose healthy lakes for their habitats. Common Loons have been reproducing on Malcolm Lake for years; although a pair of loons has been observed on Ardoch Lake for many years, young chicks have not been recorded until recently. To help maintain an environment where loons can breed successfully, MALLA is asking for lake users support.

### How you can help our loons

- Prevent pollution which can lead to the accumulation of toxins in eggs and the young. Pollution may cause the loss of food source for chicks and adults. Nesting generally happens in late May and early June and is a vulnerable time.
- Reduce loud noises such as music and **especially fireworks** which cause distress.
- Restore damaged shorelines to increase nesting areas and safe habitats.
- Use considerate boating practices. If disturbed often during nesting periods, loons may abandon their nest even with eggs in it. **Wakes from boats can flood nests.** Chicks are vulnerable to predators if their parents leave the nest to defend their territory. Without the parents' backs, they cannot stay warm and dry and chicks tire easily.
- **Enjoy loons from a distance. Respect and recognize their signs.** A loon with its head craned forward senses a threat. If a loon is very agitated it may rear up and dance out of the water. If a loon gives an alarm call, it may sound like crazy laughter. Enjoy the haunting calls in the night time.
- Participate in our Loon Watch Program to report sightings of nests, hatched chicks, and adults. Young Common Loons (chicks) look similar to adults, but with white on their head and backs through their first summer. With a chick on their back, an adult loon can provide better protection from predators both above and beneath the water. It is an opportunity for the young to conserve energy and body heat. Report Malcolm Lake sightings to Mary Graham [rkolig@yahoo.com](mailto:rkolig@yahoo.com) ; Ardoch Lake sightings to Ruth Cooper [recooper424@gmail.com](mailto:recooper424@gmail.com) Maps and reporting sheets are available at the boat launch as well as on [www.malla.ca](http://www.malla.ca)

Sources: Loon Preservation Committee, [www.loon.org](http://www.loon.org), loon-brochure-2014

The Lake Plan: Malcolm and Ardoch Lakes Background Document

[www.birdscanada.org/volunteer/cls](http://www.birdscanada.org/volunteer/cls)

Nesting Loon photo courtesy of Marlene Gray; Parent & Baby Loon courtesy of Richard Walclawik

## Relaxed loons



*A relaxed loon (holding its head up while on the nest) is able to incubate and hatch its eggs successfully.*

*This loon is calm and able to carry out normal behaviors to care for itself and its family.*



*Enjoy watching loons in these positions!*



*Flapping their wings is a normal part of preening and bathing for loons.*

*Loons also flap their wings to send warning signals to an approaching threat.*

*Boaters who see this behavior not associated with preening or bathing should back away from the loon.*

## Concerned loons

*Loons may show stress in subtle ways. Be alert for changes in head and neck posture that may tell you a loon is feeling threatened.*



*A nervous loon will often raise the feathers on its forehead to give this "squared-off" look.*

*This loon is aware of a potential threat and is stretching its neck to evaluate the situation.*



*This loon is watching a possible threat while trying to appear inconspicuous.*

*If you see a loon in these positions, please back away and allow the loon to resume its normal behavior.*

## Stressed loons



*When loons feel threatened while on the nest, they will put their heads down. This position indicates the loon may flush from the*

*nest and leave the eggs to overheat, chill, or be taken by a predator.*

*If you see a loon on a nest with its head down, please back away!*



*If a boat is too close, a loon may call and/or perform a distraction display called a "penguin dance"—rearing*

*up in the water with its wings either spread out or clasped against its body and rapidly paddling its feet in the water.*

*If you see this display, please leave the area!*

*Any vocalization given when you are close to or approaching a loon can indicate distress. Please back away!*