



# THE COMMON LOON IN OREGON AND WASHINGTON

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Nuptial plumage of males and females is identical.



The plumage of immature loons is very similar to the basic plumage of adults in winter.



Ideal loon nesting habitat is on lakes of more than 30 acres, with both deep water and extensive shallows with emergent vegetation, abundant small fish, and nest sites on islands, peninsulas, or half-submerged logs.



The courtship of loons on their nesting territory is subtle. Pair formation is still largely unknown.

Bull Run Watershed  
Mt. Hood National Forest, Oregon

1973 or 1979 - Possible nesting  
1980 to 1985 - Pair observed  
Study started  
1986 - Possible nesting attempt  
1987 - Male only, courtship with immature  
1988 - Tentative pair  
1989 - Tentative pair, inadvertent harassment  
1990 - Pair, inadvertent harassment  
1991 - Male only

## LEGAL STATUS OF THE COMMON LOON

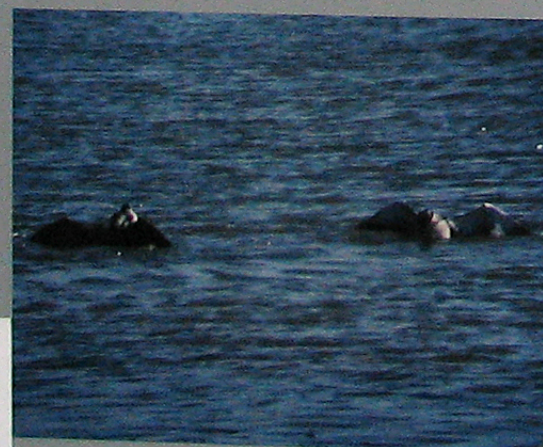
U. S. Department of Interior Fish and Wildlife Service Bureau of Land Management	- no status - no status
U. S. Department of Agriculture Forest Service Region 6 Washington Oregon	- Sensitive - no status
State of Washington Department of Wildlife	- Sensitive
State of Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife	- extirpated



The circle dance is performed whenever two or more loons meet. Circling and quick diving, the loons make appeasement gestures by keeping bills tilted down and white breasts underwater.



During spring migration on the Oregon coast, confrontations occur now and then. Male loons in the "vulture posture" maximize the aggressive exhibition of white breasts and wing linings, while giving the "yodel" calls that are characteristic of the defense of nesting territories. However, they carefully position themselves to avoid directly facing their opponents, perhaps thereby preventing physical battles and potential injuries.



Heavily built for deep diving, the loon requires a long stretch of water for takeoff, and an airspeed of over 60 mph. to remain airborne.



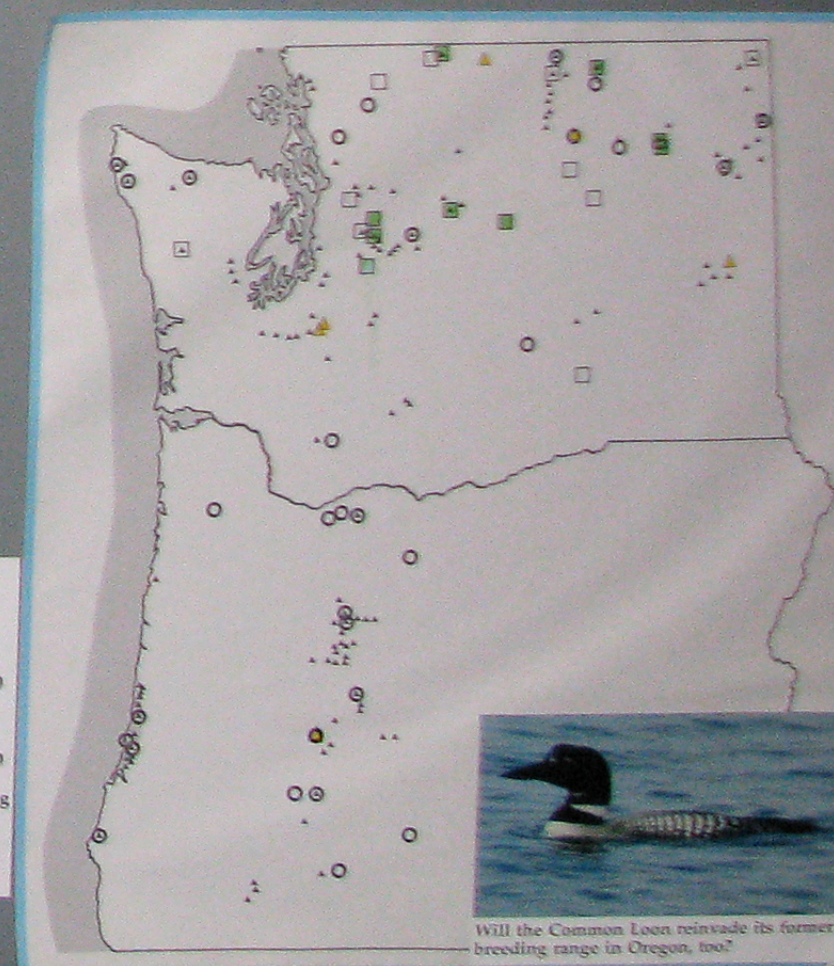
Occasionally, in spring, loons take turns performing fantastic individual displays of strength and fighting prowess by shadow boxing, rushing across the water, splash diving, and breaching like miniature whales. Are these confrontations and displays actually the testing of male loons travelling together to the same nesting lakes? Do they avoid conflicts over the boundaries of breeding territories by arriving together and already knowing each others' mettle?

## MAP SYMBOLS

- - winter range
- - confirmed nesting since 1980
- - possible nesting since 1980
- - summer occurrence since 1980
- ▲ - confirmed or reported nesting before 1950
- ▲ - possible nesting before 1950



Reservoirs have created new habitat for loons, but fluctuating water levels may strand or flood nests. Floating platforms anchored in protected locations have been accepted by some loons that have failed in previous nesting attempts.



Will the Common Loon reinstate its former breeding range in Oregon, too?

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