For Creative Minds

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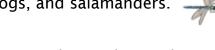
Loon Fun Facts

A loon is a large water bird that looks something like a duck, but is not related to a duck at all. Loons belong to a family of ancient birds, at least 20 million years old. The best-known species is the common loon (*Gavia immer*). The common loon is the state bird of Minnesota.

Loons spend almost all of their lives on water, and come on land only to mate, build their nest, and to incubate their eggs.



Loons eat small fish, insects, snails, crayfish, frogs, and salamanders.





Underwater, loons almost always use their feet to move, not their wings. What parts of your body do you use to swim?

Loons' webbed feet (adapted for swimming) are set so far back on their bodies that it is difficult for them to walk on land.



Loon Life Cycle

Put the common loon lifecycle events in order to spell the scrambled word.

Loon pairs are territorial during the breeding season which means they defend an area around their nest and young, chasing other loons away if they come too close. Sometimes these chases lead to intense fights between the birds. Loons usually pair off with the same partner each year, but not always.

Common loons spend summers on lakes in the Northern United States and Canada. Loons migrate each season, flying back from their winter, ocean homes usually to the same lake.

They build their nests right at the shoreline because they need to slip on and off the nest without being seen by predators. Sometimes people will float an artificial nesting platform for a loon to nest on, which is especially useful on lakes where dams artificially raise or lower the water level each year.

Loon parents keep their chicks in a sheltered "nursery" area of the lake until they are three to four weeks old. Their feathers turn from downy brown to gray, and gradually the young loons swim in a larger part of the lake.

In winter, they live on the ocean along the Pacific coast, all the way to Mexico, and along the Atlantic coast, south to Florida and the Gulf of Mexico. Look at a map and identify where Loons spend the summer and winter. Do they live in your area?



Answer: Incubates

Thanks to "Birds of North America Online" http://bna.birds.cornell.edu/bna, maintained by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, for the use of their loon map.