



Loon Preservation Committee **NEWSLETTER**

P.O. Box 604, Lee's Mill Road, Moultonborough, NH 03254; www.loon.org

FALL 2010



DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

Reflections on LPC's 35th Anniversary

The Loon Preservation Committee

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The Loon Preservation Committee (LPC) is a non-profit, self-directed and self-funded constituent organization of the Audubon Society of New Hampshire (ASNH). Autonomous in membership and fundraising, LPC works to preserve loons and their habitats in New Hampshire through monitoring, research, management and education.

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Nineteen seventy-five was a good year for loons. Not because loon populations were healthy or thriving; in fact, numbers of loons in New Hampshire were abysmally low, and declining. Our nights had become eerily quiet by the 1970s, with the lonely call of a loon heard on only a few lakes. No, it was a good year because Rawson Wood, LPC's founder, and a man of vision and action, had come to a decision: He missed hearing that call, and he was ready to work to bring loons back to our lakes. And so Rawson hired a small staff, and with a budget of \$5,000, most of it from his own pocket (he was LPC's Major Donor in those days) he formed the Loon Preservation Committee.

The things we didn't know about loons in those days could fill a book – they still could today – but with many missteps and setbacks, LPC's stubbornly persistent staff and a growing corps of dedicated members and volunteers began to make a dent in the issues facing loons. Those were simpler times in some ways, with simpler problems; climate change, flame retardants, and stain-repellant chemicals still lay far in our future.

It's a rule of thumb among wildlife biologists that you need to study a population for at least the lifespan of the animal before you can really begin to understand the way things work in that population. No one knows exactly what that magic number is for loons; our best guess is maybe 30 years, which means we might have just recently achieved that milestone. Of course, a great many things in a loon's world have changed in that time. New Hampshire's human population has almost doubled; old problems like lead sinkers have become known, but not yet solved; and a multitude of new dangers face our loons.

We have plenty of loons in our freezers or under glass at The Loon Center as testament to our failures to save them from their various and increasing trials. But we also have a lot of loons on our lakes – more than three times as many as when we started – as evidence of our successes. We floated nesting rafts made of wood and mud to mimic a loon's island nesting habitat, and loons took to our rickety rafts and began to hatch chicks from them. We put signs up to protect nesting loons from the close approach of people; researched threats and ways to counter them; and talked to everyone who would listen about loons and their challenges. Over the years we lost good friends of loons and LPC, but we carried on to honor their care and commitment to a worthy cause.

The unlikely but welcome result is that, despite seemingly insurmountable obstacles to success, our loons are persisting, with the chance to thrive. Which way will the balance finally tip, and when? The future is still uncertain, but it certainly depends on our will to save these birds. I am confident that we will meet the growing challenges facing loons with the same spirit of purpose and resolve that has served us so well over the past 35 years.



New Hampshire Loons Make Gains in Nesting Success

Like a good baseball season, each New Hampshire loon season produces its own organic collection of dramatic moments, record-breaking performances, and underdogs who come out on top. Winning a World Series or fledging a loon chick both require, in their own ways, an essential mix of heated endeavor, mad skills, teamwork, and blind luck. By the end of the season the stories and statistics attached to each player and team, or each lake and its loons, have combined to spell success or failure. Thus our fall loon report, like ESPN commentary, provides the numerical results – what was the score? – and the compelling narratives that defined the season – the loon equivalent of Babe Ruth pointing to the stands, or Buckner’s infamous error.

One such story this year came from Leavitt Bay in Freedom where, at the start of the season, the loons were squarely in the underdog position, after four years of failed nests. Their first try, in 2006, was flooded out. The following season, it looked like a picnicker’s dog had sent them packing. And two years ago we actually found someone’s flip-flop in the failed nest, with no sign of the flip-flop’s mate or its owner, and no loons. Last year, determined to break the streak of bad luck, intrepid field biologist Tori Kentner arrived at the island on July 3rd armed with metal garden stakes and a kayak full of nest signs, only to find huge boat wakes and a rising lake level soaking the eggs in the nest as she watched, with the loons wailing nearby. (To her credit, Tori conceded defeat for the season at Leavitt but held out hope for the long run, and made the island



Photo Courtesy of Joe Snow Photography

nest her rallying cry, sort of a loon Alamo. At the bottom of the Leavitt page in her final data reports, an underlined and emphatically punctuated “Save Leavitt!!!” handed down this mandate to the 2010 crew.)

With recent history in mind, we were amazed this May to see the Leavitt pair persisting for a fifth year at the same spot, where the odds seemed so steep. Why hadn’t they thrown in the towel and looked for a better site? Once again, we floated a nest sign, made common cause with local residents who could help watch the nest, and waited, without a lot of hope. But fortune smiled on this fifth try. In late June we got a flurry of emails and calls that two chicks were hatched. This was the first successful nest here that anyone could remember, and word traveled fast. Within a few weeks I even heard from former LPC Director Jeff Fair in Palmer, Alaska, whose correspondence from a New Hampshire friend, a loon field biologist under Jeff in the early 1980s, included a scribbled note in the margin: “Chicks hatched on Leavitt Bay where

my family has a camp, first in 40 years!”

The hatch, of course, was the end of one saga and the start of another. As the two loon chicks and their parents threaded their way through summer weekend boat traffic on the Ossipee bays, interested photographers and concerned fans kept a close watch. David Smith and Susan Marks of the Ossipee Lake Alliance posted key information and guidance for boaters online, and we soon found we could rely on their Facebook postings and e-forums to glean almost daily reports on the status and well-being of the chicks from a growing number of fans. By August, the success of the chicks was assured. The loons had defied long odds, and to borrow Tori’s slogan, at least for this season, Leavitt was saved. A memorable success, since it so clearly signals that the population is headed in the right direction with our help, reoccupying and succeeding at sites that had been deserted by loons, perhaps, for a half-century or more.

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THE NUMBERS

Nesting success at Leavitt was emblematic of an upward bounce in productivity this year across the state. Drier weather meant fewer flooded nests, and we saw 170 chicks hatched from close to 120 successful nesting territories, a healthy 10% gain over last year. In addition to better weather, there were fewer unpaired adult loons, reducing the number of rogue intrusions on some lakes. Increased nesting success and higher chick survivorship brought overall breeding success to 0.47 chicks surviving per territorial pair (cs/tp), higher than the 0.41 cs/tp in 2009 and much closer to the estimated long-term level needed for a sustainable population (approximately 0.48 cs/tp) (see Table 1).

Leading the charge in this rebound were the Seacoast, North Country, and Lake Umbagog regions, while Lakes Region and western New Hampshire lakes saw slight gains. As usual, a scattering of normally productive pairs were off-kilter this year, at, for example, the Lakes Region’s Bearcamp Pond, Winnepesaukee’s Salmon Meadow Cove, Lake

Winnisquam, Onway Lake in Raymond, or the Greenough Ponds in Errol. These empty nest sites were offset by territories where success was less expected, like Webster Lake in Franklin, Kanasatka Lake in Center Harbor, Paugus Bay in Laconia, French Pond in the North Country, Orange Pond in Andover, and little Iona Lake in Albany. These all joined Leavitt Bay as successful 2010 territories where loon chicks have rarely been fledged in recent decades, if not in recent memory. The increase in these newly successful territories is auspicious, too, because initial success is often followed by a steady series of productive years. These new territories may be just beginning to contribute to their full potential.

Unfortunately, of the state’s biggest lakes, Umbagog was the only one to participate in the 2010 nesting rebound. The rest scraped the bottom of the barrel, with only one chick surviving on Lake Massabesic, two on Squam Lake, and three on Winnepesaukee. On these lakes some chick mortalities and nest failures in 2010 could be attributed to rogue loons, drawing a sharp contrast between the lakes like Winnepesaukee and Massabesic with

growing adult populations and poor productivity, and Umbagog, where a slight decrease in adult loons in 2010 coincided with more chicks. On Winnepesaukee, for example, the adult population increased by 10% in 2010 and the number of surviving chicks dropped from six in 2009 to just three this year. Umbagog’s adult population dropped by about the same amount (11%) as Winnepesaukee gained, and chick numbers jumped from two in 2009 to seven this year. Other factors besides population density are clearly at play, since part of Umbagog’s success this year was related to fewer scavenged or predated nests. And on Squam, where the total adult population was nearly the same as last year, we saw continued low success, with only two chicks surviving to fledge on the big lake. As the recovering population absorbs the wave of new loons produced during good nesting in the early 2000s, it looks like these biggest lakes are still waiting for the dust to settle. Since they are the most intensively managed and monitored territories, our hopes are high that the next few seasons will find them more on par with the rest of the population, returning to the

Table 1: 2010 New Hampshire Loon Breeding Season Results Versus 2009 and 2006-2010 Average

	2009	2010	% Diff from 5 yr. average	2010 Rank in 35 yr. monitoring period
Breeding (territorial) pairs (TP)	264	275	12%	1st
Nesting Pairs (NP)	184	184	14%	1st (tie with 2009)
Chicks Hatched (CH)	161	170	18%	2nd
Chicks Surviving to mid-August (CS)	109	128	18%	2nd
Nest Failures (NF)	94	87	8%	4th
Nesting Pairs/Territorial Pair	0.70	0.67	2%	18th
Chicks Hatched/Nesting Pair	0.88	0.92	4%	27th
Chicks Surviving/Chicks Hatched	0.68	0.75	0%	25th
Nest Failures/Nesting Pair	0.51	0.47	-4%	13th
Chicks Surviving/Territorial Pair	0.41	0.47	5%	25th

kind of success rates experienced 8-10 years ago, when surviving chicks on Winnepesaukee, Squam, and Massabesic numbered in the dozens in some years.

THE NEST FAILURES

Several 2010 nests illustrate the string of circumstances that can conspire to cause nest failure. These cases may help explain this year's difference in productivity between places like Leavitt Bay and the big lakes. One such nest was at Massabesic's Grape Islands, where field biologist Sam Merker described a poor site and multiple challenges: "The nest was very exposed.... easy to see by people kayaking close to it....a combo of people, predators, and other loons kept them off the nest frequently." By early July, two weeks into the nest attempt, loon photographer John Rockwood emailed this report: "The Lake Massabesic Grape Island eggs were abandoned Friday or Saturday. The eggs were unattended for the five hours I was on the lake. Seeing only one egg today, I had hoped one had hatched. I got out to check after seeing both Grape Island mates and no little one. Found the 2nd egg about two feet from the nest with the end removed and empty. The



Loon Raising from Heat; Photo Courtesy of John Rockwood

eggs may have died in all the heat. Had seen the male leave the eggs unattended when the transient loons came into his territory. He would follow them around, sometimes joining the group, herding them away as they approached the nesting island, sometimes leaving the nest for two hours or more in the direct sunlight at 90+ degrees. The Grape Island pair were cruising around as if looking for another nest site when I left at 10:00 a.m. The water level also dropped more than a foot since nesting began."

John attached to his email a video clip of the female loon's laborious shuffle to reach the nest, across rocky ground exposed by the reservoir's dropping summer water level. The final outcome—a nest site where a neatly opened egg suggested a mammalian predator—was thus the result of several factors. Our best estimate of the

ultimate cause, judging by John's video, was the receding waterline, but we could have almost as easily settled on disturbance by intruding loons, kayakers, or predators. In the absence of these disturbances, or perhaps, with cooler weather, the loons might have succeeded in hatching viable eggs.

Field biologist Tiffany Grade's data entry in August chronicled a similar scene at a failed nest near Mooney Point on Squam Lake. She wrote, "Midway through incubation, the loons were disturbed by last year's female (identified by leg bands) intruding on the territory. They spent a good deal of time off the nest, and it was rather hot during this time. In the last few days of incubation, it was very hot and the loons were unable to sustain an extended incubation bout, frequently getting off the nest to cool down. The eggs were predated 4 days after the expected hatch date." Tiffany's field notes included this entry on July 7th, as the hatch date passed: "pair switching off on nest frequently due to heat; eggs not pipped. Heron landed by nest once while male off nest—male chased it off." Here again,

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Grape Island Egg; Photo Courtesy of John Rockwood

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heat, intruding loons and the minor distraction of the heron to boot, all led to a scavenged or predated nest. In this case, it wasn't possible to untangle their linked roles and we listed the failure cause as unknown.

To top it off, Winnepesaukee field biologist Vince Spagnuolo caught competing nest failure agents red-handed as he put out signs at Robert's Cove in early June. As he arrived, "A juvenile eagle approached area. The adult loon tremoloed at it and approached. Second adult showed up. Pair patrolled around island and encountered 3rd adult loon by markers out in broads/beginning of cove. Circle fought/peer/dive/tremoloed for 10 minutes. Drove off intruding bird. Pair headed back towards nest after 3rd adult dove. As pair approached nest, crow flew in and landed next to egg ready to eat. Small bird mobbed crow, distracting it while adult loon noticed and flew/wing-rowed/ran across water towards crow, scaring it off. Loon patrolled in front of nest for a minute and got on. Only was able to put out sign (and not rope lines, risking even more disruption)."

By the end of this captivating half hour, Vince had watched the pair fend off three different species (eagle, crow, and fellow loon). Unfortunately, this nest was also a few feet from an active campsite on a beach exposed to big waves, and by the third week of nesting the eggs had disappeared. Hard work, this loon nesting!

We tend to focus on the dramatic failures and overlook the near-misses, since evidence of a narrow escape is usually glossed over by the successful hatch. But we did get a closer glimpse of a nest that squeaked by in North-

field, where John Rockwood and Sam Merker teamed up again, this time with volunteer Mark Chaffee. Besides the intruding loons that Mark noticed throughout the season, Rockwood's visit to the pond in June was interrupted by the sound of distressed loons. When he investigated, he was surprised to find fishing tackle and a kayak float at the nest site (see photo below) that had been litter-free when he paddled by an hour before. In the week that followed, the loon nesting sign that Mark and Sam put up to prevent further disturbance went missing for several days and then, amazingly, reappeared. It had apparently been swiped by the original troublemakers, only to be restored after a stern lecture from a family member. We usually only see the end result of human disturbance—a failed nest—but in this case the coincidental presence of John Rockwood and the regular monitoring of Mark Chaffee let us in on the nitty-gritty details. After all was said and done, a loon chick hatched on the pond a few weeks later.

THE MANAGEMENT

The 2010 season saw another increase in the number of nest rafts floated around the state. LPC volunteers and staff provided 66 rafts this year, 7 more than in 2009, in addition to 11 rafts floated on Lake Umbagog by US Fish and Wildlife Service staff. The main challenge continues to be convincing loons to use the rafts once they are in place. The number of rafts used for nesting this year was essentially unchanged (29 in 2010 versus 28 in 2009), less than half of all the rafts floated. Raft nests accounted for 27 chicks, or 16% of all chicks hatched. Signs or signs and ropes were used at 78 territories. Together ropes, signs, and raft nests accounted for approximately 46% of all nesting pairs and 47% of all chicks hatched. Field biologists Tiffany Grade and Vince Spagnuolo may have set informal records this year, vying with each other to use the highest number of nest and chick signs on a single territory, with four or five separate floating signs in some brooding areas. We appreciated all the



Photo Courtesy of John Rockwood

help received from volunteers on many lakes in transporting, storing, floating, and maintaining these signs. Hauling algae-coated cinder blocks and waterlogged foam and plywood contraptions out of the water at the end of the season is messy work, best endured in good company. Thanks to all of you for that!

CAPTURE AND BANDING

Three rounds of night-time capture and banding work on seven lakes resulted in the capture of 12 previously banded and 14 newly banded adult loons, and netted some surprises. On Squam Lake, for example, we recaptured an adult loon that was missing all but a single aluminum band of the usual four. Without the other bands we hadn't been able to identify it from afar, but in hand we could read the stamped band number. The band revealed that this loon was hatched and banded as a juvenile in 1999 at The Loon Center's home territory on Winnepesaukee, just off Hemlock Point. Surprising and important results also came from the supporting work of two veterinary students from Tufts, Michelle Kneeland and Heather Crispell. Equipped with a portable device to check blood lead levels, Heather was able to flag a blood sample from the Great Island male on Squam Lake that indicated lead poisoning within twelve hours of capturing the bird (see Rescue/Mortalities below for details). Heather's support this summer may help pave the way for this kind of valuable, real-time lead testing of rescued and captured loons in the future. Preliminary results from Heather's other project, an investigation of loon blood parasites and lake temperature, should be available in our next newsletter. For her part, Michelle Kneeland carried on work she

Table 2: Volunteer Census Results, 2006-2010

	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
ADULT LOONS	386	356	401	418	465
CHICKS	52	57	45	59	78
IMMATURES	12	8	6	9	5
TOTAL LOONS	450	421	452	486	548
LAKES CENSUSED	114	110	122	116	132
OBSERVERS	512	513	549	524	546

started in 2008 under the Squam Lake Loon Initiative to assess the health of captured loons through blood chemistry profiles. This year, Michelle found that most sampled loons appeared healthy, although a few cases of anemia, liver dysfunction, and elevated bile acids pointed to unknown injuries or infections. She was interested to find an apparent shift in the immune response of sampled loons between 2008 and 2010. The ratio of two white blood cell components, heterophils and lymphocytes, was markedly higher in loons sampled this year compared to 2008. Although loons captured in New York state in 2004 showed a similar range of H/L values to our 2010 set, differences in 2008 could reflect changes in chronic stress from environmental factors like temperature, human disturbance or competition with other loons. The heterophil-lymphocyte ratio is recognized as a useful index for avian health and immune response and has been used, for example, to measure heat stress in domestic fowl. Michelle and Heather's work this summer used our existing capture and banding program to great advantage, providing a much deeper look into the underlying health of our loons and establishing an essential baseline for future work.

JULY LOON CENSUS

We are delighted to report that the July 17th loon census featured increases on all fronts: a bigger turnout covered more lakes and counted more loons than in 2009, continuing a promising trend (see Table 2). Experienced coordinators and participants on the biggest lakes produced results that we could reliably integrate into our season-long monitoring data. Census reports often provide both the one-hour snapshot view of the loon activity on the lake and a commentary on the season to date. The various notes we receive on nesting outcomes, unusual loon behavior, and other happenings on each lake help us keep our ear to the ground (or water?) as we monitor. LPC field biologists also fanned out on lakes around The Loon Center to support the census before staffing Loon Festival events later in the day.

RESCUES AND MORTALITIES

We rescued and released two adult loons and one chick this summer. One loon was retrieved by Sarah DeLong and John Cooly from a beach on Merrymeeting Lake after Merrymeeting volunteer Lou McGrew discovered it, apparently recovering from

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a fight with another loon the day before. After a successful stint with rehabilitator Kappy Sprenger it was released on Danforth Pond in Freedom. Thanks, Kappy!

We recovered four other live loons that had to be euthanized, or died before they could be rehabilitated, and six adult loons and eight chicks were recovered dead. In addition to a boat strike mortality on Squam Lake, radiographs of three of the rescued loons and at least two of the dead loons showed metal fishing tackle. The cause of death or illness was presumed to be lead poisoning, pending confirmation through tissue tests.

These lead mortalities show that the epidemic of lead poisoning in New Hampshire loons continued unabated this year, and there were three compelling examples of how far-reaching the effects can be. At Granite Lake in Nelson in mid-June, Fish and Game biologist Ted Walski, on his day off, discovered a lethargic loon that proved to have lead poisoning. This female loon was banded in 2009 as part of the first successful nesting pair on Granite in decades. Her pair status this year was unconfirmed, but a chick had already been hatched by the time she was rescued and euthanized. Within a few weeks of the removal of the banded female, rogue loons killed the chick.

This scene was repeated a few weeks later in mid-July on Lake



Photo Courtesy of Mark Wilson

Umbagog. There, a male loon banded in 1994 at Potter Cove succumbed to lead poisoning shortly after hatching two chicks. Only one chick survived during the following weeks while the remaining adult brooded the young. Based on the band year, this male was at least 19 years old.

Finally, on Squam Lake, routine blood tests after capture and banding showed that the Great Island male loon had high lead levels. It wasn't possible to recapture him until almost a week later, when an intruding loon drove the loon onto shore and killed his chick. Subsequent necropsy at Tufts showed that the lead object at fault was a *legal* fishing jig, large enough to have sidestepped

the existing ban on small lead sinkers and jigheads (see picture above).

In all three of these cases lead poisoning robbed the recovering population of key adult players and probably contributed to the immediate loss of the young chicks they were raising, not to mention the chicks they might have produced in future seasons. Lead poisoning strikes down healthy loons indiscriminately, regardless of age, fitness, or locale, and this is part of the reason why each instance casts such a long shadow on the viability of the whole population.

~John H. Cooley, Jr.

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~John H. Cooley, Jr.

Loons, Weather, and Climate in 2010

This season offered a welcome reprieve from the rain that has dogged loon nests (and soggy biologists) in the last several years, but there was still strong evidence that loons in New Hampshire are sensitive to the climate trends that govern daily local weather patterns, and not just rainstorms.

According to the National Climate Data Center (www.ncdc.noaa.gov) the 2010 May-July loon nesting period was the warmest on record, and the abnormally dry conditions translated into rain totals that were half the 35-year average and about a third of the summer precipitation amount in 2009. As the main article describes, the hot dry weather stranded some nests and made incubation duties more demanding, likely causing some nests to fail. We also collected a higher number of inviable eggs this year at successful nests where one egg

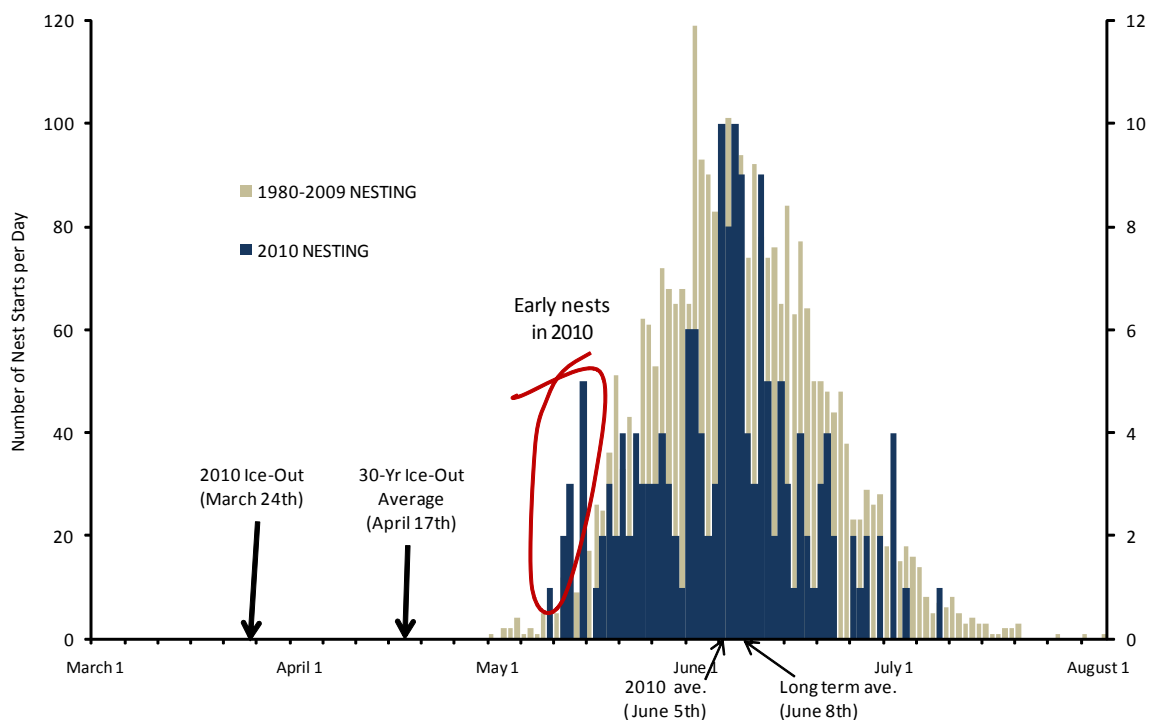
was viable and hatched, and at failed nests where there was no clear failure cause. The record heat may have added these unhatched eggs, and it seems likely that data on egg viability and nest failures may hold part of the key to explaining how loons and climate interact here, at the southern edge of the species' range. If hot summers produce more inviable eggs and nest failures, it may be one more reason, along with the increased frequency of intense rain events, why loons will be challenged to persist as a viable population in the Northeast under a warmer (and wetter) changing climate.

Record warmth during the summer breeding season was preceded by a warm winter and spring, too, bringing the earliest ice-out on record for Lake Winnepesaukee. In the summer *LPC Newsletter* we reported an up-tick

in early nesting at the start of the season, tracking the earlier ice out date. In the final analysis, however, nesting dates for the season as a whole tended to dilute this trend. Although the 2010 ice-out was over three weeks earlier than the thirty-year average (see Figure 1), the average nest start date for loons was only three days earlier than usual, about half the advance in timing that we would have expected if the usual correlation between ice-out and nest timing held true each year. Other factors, either instinctual or environmental, seem to dominate the timing of nest initiation. For most loons these factors must override any tendency to seize the opportunity for an earlier nest, even in years when an extremely early ice-out allows it.

~John H. Cooley, Jr.

Figure 1: Lake ice-out and loon nest initiation dates for 2010 and the last 30 years (1980-2009) in New Hampshire.



Like Clockwork—A Loon Rescue on Pawtuckaway

Sam Merker, LPC Seacoast Field Biologist 2009-2010

It is late evening on a Tuesday in mid-July and I've just finished paddling the western side of Massabesic Lake in Manchester, NH. Surveys of four territories and many loons on that side of the lake made for an exhausting trip, but it had to be done. After securing my kayak to the top of my car I flop down in the driver's seat only to find a missed call from John Cooley at The Loon Center, relaying the news that there is a loon in distress on Pawtuckaway Lake, back on the eastern side of my region. A NH Fish and Game Conservation Officer is on the scene and apparently attempting to capture the loon. My mission: join the capture effort and get the rescued loon to a vet.

I am afraid this is easier said than done. I have no net, no box, one towel (which I would like to keep clean), and likely only me and my kayak. Loons prove to be some of the most difficult birds to catch as they spend a great deal of time underwater and even when they are tangled in fishing line can often still dive and swim rather far. I call John and remind him of all this, and then call the Conservation Officer who informs me that they have a boat, net and team and are already on the water. Yikes! I hit the road and drive as fast as I can legally muster to Nottingham town beach where, apparently, this is all taking place.

Upon my arrival I find the CO and a handful of onlookers clustered around a covered basket, containing the loon. Phew. Caught already. How nice! With little hassle or contention I load the basket into my backseat and hit the road for Arbor Veterinary Clinic, a small clinic only five minutes away. Although they are not a wildlife center or rehabilitator they do take my call—my roommate works there. And let's face it, who doesn't want to see a loon up close and personal?

When I arrive, an examining room is ready and the doctor is in. Myself, the doctor, and 4 vet techs carefully wrangle the loon out of the basket and begin our inspection. The loon was initially reported to be so tangled in fishing line that it could not open its wings or dive, but oddly, we find no line on it at all. And the Conservation Officer said he did not remove any. Strange. However, the biggest treble hook I have ever seen is sticking out of this loon's throat! Upon further inspection we find that it is only pinching the skin and not deeply embedded. Dr. Williams takes his tool kit, cuts the hook, and pulls it from the bird's neck. The next step is to feel the wings, the legs, open the mouth, feel the breast and stomach, and inspect the feces for lead symptoms. All clear. We soak the bird with some cold water and re-basket. My next stop is at nearby Wheelwright Pond where I release the loon to rehabilitate itself with some fresh fish and a fresh drink of water. When I check the pond in the next few weeks there's no sign of the loon and I assume it has found its way back to normal hook-free living. Not all loon rescues are this easy or have such a brilliant ending. As I leave Wheelwright after the drop-off and head home, a few hours later than anticipated, I'm tired but satisfied: all in a day's work, and another loon saved!

Editor's note: This was Sam's third loon rescue and release in two seasons. Special thanks to NH Fish and Game and the Arbor Veterinary Clinic for assistance with this rescue and with Sam's other rescues in 2009.

The LPC field program is grateful for the help received from the following supporters during the 2010 field season:

Collaborators and General Support

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NH Marine Patrol
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New England Field Office and Umbagog National Wildlife Refuge
US Forest Service, White Mountain National Forest
(Kathy Starke, Clara Weloth)

Veterinarians and Rehabilitators

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Cheshire Animal Hospital, Keene, NH
Cathie Gregg and Bethani Garland,
Elaine Connors Center for Wildlife, Madison, NH
North Country Animal Hospital, Dr. Famiglietti and staff
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Kappy Sprenger, Bridgeton, ME
Maria Colby, Wings of Dawn, Henniker, NH
Winter Harbor Veterinary Hospital, Wolfeboro, NH

Many thanks!



Photo Courtesy of Nordel Gagnon

LPC Honors Jeannie Lewis and Carl Johnson at Annual Meeting

The Loon Preservation Committee held its fourth Annual Meeting at The Loon Center on Thursday, August 26th, as required by the By-laws that accompanied LPC's incorporation as an independent 501(c)(3) organization in 2006.

The meeting opened with a slide presentation by New Hampshire wildlife photographer and LPC member John Rockwood, featuring loons on Lake Massabesic and other lakes in southern New Hampshire. Harry Vogel followed up with preliminary results of the Loon Preservation Committee's monitoring, research, management and educational programs and commented on some of the recent trends in New Hampshire's loon population (please see a full report on pages 3 to 8 of this *LPC Newsletter*).

The in-coming Chair of the Loon Preservation Committee Board, Bill Crangle, presented the slate of LPC officers for the coming year: Chair: William R. Crangle; Vice Chair: Peter C. Sorlien; Secretary: Lydia M. Torr; and Treasurer: Eric A. Taussig. This slate was voted in unanimously. Bill Crangle reported that the audit for the fiscal year ended March 31st 2010 was complete and that LPC had ended the year with a loss of \$28,000, a result that was not unexpected given the continued economic climate. The Board's priority continues to be to maintain staff and programs in these difficult times.

JEANNIE LEWIS HONORED WITH 2010 "SPIRIT OF THE LOON" AWARD

Jeannie Lewis was honored with the third annual "Spirit of the Loon" Award, created to hon-



Photo Courtesy of Jeannie Lewis

Jeannie Lewis is honored by Harry Vogel and Bill Crangle with the 2010 "Spirit of the Loon" Award at LPC's Annual Meeting

or LPC's founder Rawson Wood, at the Annual Meeting. Jeannie first experienced loons when she was six years old at her Aunt and Uncle's cabin in the Adirondacks. As a third grade teacher in Ohio she developed a teaching unit on ecology, and as part of this unit taught her students about loons, and the interrelationships between loons and people and the environment. She quickly became known as "The Loon Lady" to her students.

Jeannie and husband Duff bought a cabin in Alton near Robert's Cove, one of the furthest active Lake Winnepesaukee loon territories from LPC's headquarters, and moved to New Hampshire year-round in 2004. Jeannie has continued to be an avid loon-watcher and has assisted LPC in many ways on Lake Winnepesaukee. The southern Lake Winnepesaukee territories require a long boat ride in LPC's small Boston Whaler, including traversing the treacherous Broads. Jeannie's meticulous notes and photographs have been an invaluable help in

monitoring these distant loons. Jeannie has also helped LPC biologists determine whether loon eggs were abandoned to allow LPC to retrieve inviable eggs, and has harbored our Winnepesaukee Biologist when storms preventing him from returning to LPC. Jeannie has brought the passion for loons that she shared with her students to the Big Lake. She has used her knowledge and enthusiasm to educate lake users about loons and their needs in the best tradition of LPC's founder, Rawson Wood.

HONORS FOR CARL JOHNSON

The Honorable Carl Johnson, a member of the Loon Preservation Committee Board beginning in 1998 and Chair of the Board from 2007 until the Annual Meeting, was honored for his many years of service to loons and LPC at the meeting. Carl served in the state legislature as a Representative and then Senator from 1990 to 2006, and was a tireless advocate for New Hampshire's environment and quality of life

in New Hampshire. He Chaired the Senate Environment Committee and served on the Energy and Economic Development, Banking, and Education Committees. He was asked to serve on the LPC Board by then-Chair Jordan Prouty, who recognized Carl's involvement in environmental issues and hoped that Carl might bring his knowledge and experience to LPC. Carl knew of LPC's work and felt that he could contribute to LPC's efforts to address the decline of loons and the factors contributing to that decline.

While serving on the LPC Board, Carl co-sponsored the first-in-the-nation lead fishing tackle bill and the New Hampshire clean power bill, and was the prime sponsor of several shoreland protection bills including the Comprehensive Shoreland Protection Act. In this time he also continued as a trustee of the Lakes Region Conservation Trust, a member of the Inter-Lakes School Board, and a member of the American Legion.

In addition to his work to protect New Hampshire's wildlife and environment in the Senate, Carl tirelessly spearheaded LPC's corporate membership campaign,



The Honorable Carl Johnson (left), with Councilor Ray Burton, is honored for his many efforts on behalf of loons and the Loon Preservation Committee.

secured environmentally friendly four-stroke motors for LPC's boats and a much-needed field truck, and began an annual golf tournament to raise funds and awareness of LPC's work to preserve loons. His inspired efforts on behalf of LPC helped to ensure our continued success in carrying out LPC's important mission.

Carl was presented with a plaque in honor of his many years of dedicated service to loons and

LPC, and Bill Crangle announced that a special fund for LPC's Loon Recovery Plan was created in his honor. Sadly, Carl passed away in September, shortly after he was honored with this award (please see the "In Memorium" article on page 14). We were happy to be able to recognize the outstanding efforts of this great man before his passing.

~Harry Vogel



Photo Courtesy of Kevin Warren

Photo Courtesy of Erin Plummer, Meredith News

In Memorium

It has been a sad autumn for the Loon Preservation Committee. On September 18th, Senator Carl Johnson, an active LPC Board member since 1998, and Chair of the Board from 2007 until his recent retirement from that position in August of this year, passed away at his home. Senator Johnson was a great champion of many worthy causes, including the environment and loons (please see article on pages 12 and 13 detailing his many accomplishments on behalf of loons, the environment, and LPC). His wife of 67 years, Jeannette, passed away just five days later. Both Carl and Jeannette were regular volunteers at LPC's Loon Festivals and Holiday Open Houses, and you could often find them seated together at LPC's membership/raffle table at these events. There is a picture in The Loon Center foyer of Carl and Jeannette at the membership table at one of LPC's Holiday Open Houses, and it is how we at LPC will remember them - always together, and always helping LPC.

We were happy to have the chance to acknowledge Carl's work at LPC's Annual Meeting, shortly before his passing. The Johnson family asked for donations to a newly-created fund, the Honorable Carl and Jeannette Johnson Memorial Fund, to support the Loon Recovery Plan and honor their long and devoted service to loons and LPC.

On October 10th, long-time LPC Board member Joe Kabat passed away at his home on Little Squam Lake. Joe was involved with LPC as a member and active volunteer since first buying his camp on Little Squam 16 years ago. Joe joined LPC's Board in 2004, and served as Co-Chair of LPC's Technical Committee beginning in 2006, and on LPC's Executive Committee beginning this year. Joe introduced many people to loons on the Squam Lakes from his boat, the "Be Prepared," and was involved in many facets of protecting loons, eagles and other wildlife on the Squam Lakes and statewide. He also volunteered

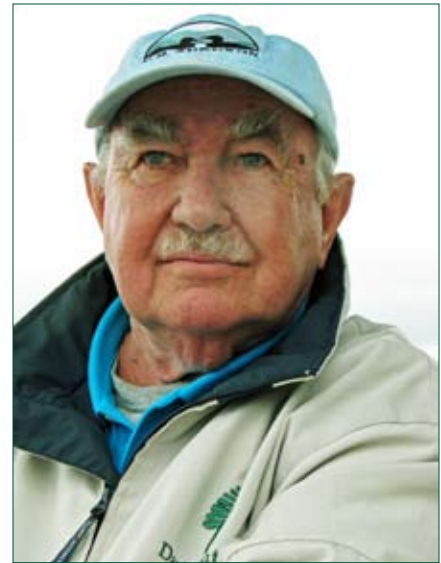


Photo Courtesy of Cynthia Geiger

Joe Kabat

his time for many other organizations including New Hampshire Audubon, the Rivier Institute of Senior Education (RISE) at Rivier College, the Squam Lakes Association, the Daniel Webster Council of Boy Scouts of America, the University of New Hampshire Cooperative Extension, and his alma mater, Dartmouth College. The Loon Preservation Committee was one of several organizations named to receive donations in honor of Joe's exemplary service to all of these causes.

These three exceptional people and dedicated volunteers will be sorely missed by everyone at LPC.

~Harry Vogel

For he who blesses most is blest;
And God and man shall own his worth
Who toils to leave as his bequest
an added beauty to the earth.

~ John Greenleaf Whittier

Photo Courtesy of Jim Wallace



Jeannette and Carl Johnson

LOON PRESERVATION COMMITTEE ACTIVITIES

Summer Gala and Auction “Bids” Well for Loons

Once again, Church Landing served as the perfect venue for LPC’s annual Summer Gala and Auction. The festivities were held on June 27th, welcoming a full house of loon supporters to a delectable meal as well as a silent and live auction—all to benefit New Hampshire’s loons!

Guests were welcomed by Executive Director, Harry Vogel, who spoke on the state of the loons in our 35th year of monitoring. We were delighted to welcome back Pat Kelly as Master of Ceremonies and Auctioneer. A Lakes Region radio personality, Pat does an amazing job of keeping the audience entertained and encouraging high bidding to help the cause. And help it did! Thanks to the generosity of our guests the event raised over \$16,000 towards LPC’s work to preserve loons in the state.

This gathering would not have been possible without the tireless work of the Gala and Auction Committee. A heartfelt thanks to Renee Speltz (Chair), Liz Gabel, Barbara Putnam, Kim Beardwood Smith, Lydia Torr and Terry Wetzler-Finn for organizing this entertaining and successful event!

We would also like to recognize the overwhelming generosity of the following individuals and businesses that made both auctions possible: Kirsten Clermont, John Curran, Liz and Bob Gabel, Tiffany Grade, Janice Jenket, Mary Knowles, Janet Levetin, John and Anne Lorch, Karin Nelson, Robert Phillips, Brian Reilly, Mary Rice, Mr. & Mrs. Robert Ridgely, Mike and Muriel Robinette, John Schoenbauer, Vincent Spagnuolo, David Speltz, Eric and Marlene Taussig, Dave Thompson, Lydia Torr, Terry Wetzler-Finn, Laurie and Doug Whitley, Dr. & Mrs.



Photo Courtesy of Mark Wilson

John B. Wilson, Chuck Yaeger, Marci Yerkes, Bayswater Book Company, Bella Beads, Canoe, Capelli Hair and Body Salon, College for Pets/Ebony Kennel, Corner House, Decorative Interiors, Dion’s Plant Place and Landscape, EM Heath Hardware, Fashion Forward, Hannaford, Harley Davidson, Holland Hill, Home Comfort, Inns and Spa at Mill Falls, Jazzercise, Jo Jo’s Country Store, Joel Tree Farm, Keepsake Quilting, Latitude 43 Private Charters, Lemongrass, Long Haul

Farm, Lydia’s Café, Meadow Pond Animal Hospital, Moulton Farm, Moultonborough Fire Department, New Hampshire Boat Museum, New Hampshire Music Festival, Oglethorpe’s, Pet Parade, Ridgewood Country Club, Sartori Tea Garden, Spider Web Gardens, Tecplicity, Village Kitchen, Walter’s Basin, Waukegan Golf Club, Wild Meadow Canoe, Winnepesaukee Belle Steamboat, Winnepesaukee Chocolates, Winnepesaukee Playhouse, Woodshed, and YIKES!

The Lodge at Belmont Helps Fund Loon Preservation

The Loon Preservation Committee sponsored gaming at the Lodge at Belmont from June 25th to July 5th this summer to raise funds for its efforts to preserve loons. LPC Board member Bill Irwin sits on the board of the Easter Seals who have benefitted from the same opportunity and made LPC aware of this prospect to raise much-needed funds for its monitoring, management and outreach activities. Gaming Manager Kory Kamke, a fan of loons, was happy to help LPC raise over \$11,000 to further its important work. Many thanks to the Lodge at Belmont for helping the Loon Preservation Committee preserve loons in New Hampshire.

“Fun in the Hot Sun” at 2010 Loon Festival

The day dawned sunny and the forecast promised unseasonably warm weather for the 33rd Annual Festival – and warm it was! But that didn’t bother the LPC biologists waiting their turn to take a plunge in the “Stump the Biologist” dunk tank!

Once again the Loon Festival was blessed with a beautiful day and an enthusiastic crowd. Highlights of the day included perennial favorite Mr. Phil, working his balloon magic; the always fun and educational Squam Lakes Natural Science Center Discovery Table; Master Storyteller, Paul Tierney; author Ray Carbone, signing his lovely pictorial book: *The Lakes Region of New Hampshire*; and the crowd pleasing “Railroad Express” band.

The Meredith Rotary Club has become a permanent and much welcomed fixture at the Loon Festival, supplying guests with a satisfying lunch of hotdogs, chips and a cold beverage; and who can forget the Ben & Jerry’s ice cream courtesy of the Meredith Ben & Jerry’s store!

There were plenty of fun and informative activities for all ages to enjoy: arts and crafts, slide shows, games and more; all made possible thanks to the generosity of our sponsors and volunteers.

Thanks to all who volunteered to make this another fun and successful Festival: Chuck Brox, Jacquie Colburn, John Eaton, Bob and Marilyn Coppo, Bill Crangle, Dick Gerkin, Angus Gill, Dean Gulezian, Cydonia Hubicki, Bonnie Hunt, Carl and Tim Johnson, Bob LeCount, Ken Mahl, Jim Matthews, Anne McLean, Sheila Robusto, John and Sue Scudder, Lydia and Nate Torr, Quinlan Trexler, Donna Ulbricht, and Laurie Whitley.



August 21st was a banner day for LPC donations. No sooner had Claire and Evan Weiss stopped by The Loon Center to present donations from their lemonade stand when Jennifer and Rachel Bindman showed up with proceeds from their lemonade sales! Claire and Evan were stationed in Sturtevant Cove on Squam Lake while Jennifer and Rachel conducted their sales on Lake Wentworth, raising a combined total of \$108.00 for loon preservation! Needless to say, the hot dry weather made it a perfect year for selling “lemonade with a cause!” Pictured above: Claire, Jennifer, Rachel and Evan.

MANY THANKS TO OUR LOON FESTIVAL SPONSORS!

Meta Packard Barton
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Barbara T. Ridgely
Joni Stover
John Tomb
Virginia Welles



In Memory of Kenneth E. Sorlien
from the Sorlien Family

The Squam Swim 2010: The Squam Lake Sisters and “Bro”

On August 19th at 6:30 a.m. a team of five swimmers, known as “The Squam Lake Swimming Sisters and Bro” began a length-long swim of Squam Lake, from the Squam Channel outlet in Holderness to the Sandwich Town Beach. The Squam Swim has become a much-anticipated yearly event in the Lakes Region; since 2005, first Wendy Van de Poll and then a team of swimmers, known informally as the Squam Swimming Sisters (and Bro) swam the length of the lake four times. Three of those swims raised funds to support the Loon Preservation Committee’s work to recover the loon population on Squam Lake. The 2010 team included Wendy, Rose de Mars, Blair Newcomb, Nancy Hansen and Rick Van de Poll (the “Bro”). They were accompanied by spotters Dale Lary & Nancy McDonald and boat captain (and LPC Board member) Ralph Kirshner.

The team of tired but jubilant swimmers touched land at 11:30 after a journey of close to five hours. They were greeted by an enthusiastic crowd of supporters and a well-earned lunch donated by the Corner House, Squam Lake Inn, Holderness General Store, Moulton Farm, Mitchell’s Fresh Salsa, Stonyfield Farm, Heath’s, Hannaford’s, and Walter’s Basin Restaurant. Our thanks to these local businesses for donating food for hungry swimmers and supporters of this tremendous effort to help our loons!

Donations raised through the Squam Swim help fund LPC’s Squam Lake Loon Initiative, an ongoing effort to increase monitoring, research, management and outreach on the lake to benefit its loons. Squam’s loons have had a hard time in recent years. LPC’s



Photo Courtesy of Mark Wilson

Swimmers Blair Newcomb, Rick Van de Poll, Wendy Van de Poll, Rose de Mars and Nancy Hansen conclude their journey at The Sandwich Town Beach on Squam Lake.

ongoing research suggests that contaminants including flame retardants, stain repellants, and PCBs; increased rainfall and temperature extremes; increased recreational use of the lake; and changes in fish populations might all have played a role in their decline.

In addition to monitoring and research (please see LPC’s website, www.loon.org, for a detailed report on findings to date), donations to the Squam Swim help fund LPC’s work to recover Squam’s loon population. This year, LPC floated eight loon nesting rafts, placed protective signs and floatlines around nine nesting pairs of loons on Squam, and floated “Caution – Loon Chicks” signs for every pair that hatched chicks. We also continued our educational “Squam Lake Loon Tours” with the Squam Lakes Natural Science Center, and greatly increased our educational presentations at venues around Squam Lake.

Despite these extraordinary efforts, loons on Squam continue to struggle. This year Squam lost loons to boat collisions and lead-headed jigs, and the father of one of only two surviving chicks remains entangled in monofilament fishing line, despite many attempts to rescue this bird. We are confident that LPC’s increased efforts, and the continued support of friends of Squam loons, will recover a healthy population of loons on Squam. The Squam Lakes Loon Initiative will also help identify more systemic problems that could be affecting other wildlife on Squam and on other lakes in New Hampshire, and inform LPC’s state-wide Loon Recovery Plan.

To date, LPC has received 117 donations totaling over \$17,000 for The Swim – a fitting tribute to the tremendous feat of the swimmers. These funds will allow for more testing of eggs and other samples (it costs over \$2,000 to

continued on page 18

continued from page 17

test a single loon egg); help LPC track changes in contaminant levels over time; educate lake users; and manage Squam's loons to recover a healthy population on the lake. Thank you to the Squam Swimming Sisters (and Bro), and to all who supported this important work by sponsoring the Squam Swim 2010!

-Harry Vogel

We also wish to extend our thanks to Rockywold Deephaven Camps for donating use of their boat for the day of The Swim!



Photo Courtesy of Mark Wilson

Loon Center Manager, Nancy McDonald, spots swimmer Wendy Van de Poll from her kayak on Squam.

LPC Says Farewell to Kim Beardwood Smith and Rachel Williams...

Kim Beardwood Smith left LPC this summer after more than three years of dedicated service to accept a newly-created position at the Plymouth Chamber of Commerce. Kim began her work as LPC's Loon Center and Membership Assistant, and became LPC's Acting Membership Coordinator in the fall of 2009. She was a creative and enthusiastic addition to LPC's small staff, and she is missed at The Loon Center. The good news is that Kim has stayed in touch, and LPC has gained a friend at the Plymouth Chamber to help spread the word about loons in the northern lakes region.

In early summer, Rachel Williams announced that she was engaged to be married! This happy news was tempered by the realization among the staff that it would also entail a move to Vermont to be with her significant other, Ken. Rachel was the public face of The Loon Center for nine years, and in that time she enthusiastically greeted countless visitors. Everyone who encountered her knew that she loved to meet kids of all ages (5 to 95) and leave

them with a better understanding of loons and their challenges in a fun and engaging way.

LPC has a small and close staff, and it is a sad time any time we lose a member of "the family." But we sent both of these valued staff members and friends off in good style, and we look forward to staying in touch with both of them. No one ever truly leaves LPC; Rachel has volunteered to reprise her role as "Mrs. Claus" at LPC's Holiday Open House on November 27th, and Kim is already working to extend LPC's contacts in the Plymouth area. We look forward to staying in touch with both of them!

... And Welcomes Lin O'Bara and Nancy McDonald!

The flip side of having to say goodbye to old friends is that we at the Loon Preservation Committee can welcome new staff into the family, and LPC has had the very good fortune to attract two worthy successors to our departing staff members.

Lin O'Bara, LPC's new Devel

opment Coordinator, might be a familiar name to some of our long-time members. Lin was Executive Director of the North American Loon Fund (NALF), an organization that grew out of LPC's success to help replicate its model of a state-wide loon preservation organization in other states and in Canada. NALF also served as an umbrella organization to help coordinate state affiliates' actions in support of loons, a vehicle to fund worthy loon research, and an information clearing house. For a time, before The Loon Center was built in 1993, Lin and LPC staff were neighbors, all working in the old Humiston Building in Meredith. Lin steered the North American Loon Fund ably and well until she left in 1998 to accept a position at the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals. Lin has extensive experience with loons as well as with membership and development, and will be an invaluable addition to LPC's team.

Nancy McDonald, LPC's new Loon Center Manager, may be a name that is familiar to some in a

more recent way. Nancy was one of the volunteers for The Squam Swim this year (see article on pages 17 and 18), and impressed us with her passion for conservation, enthusiasm, and willingness to approach local businesses for donations. Her formal training is in architecture (!) so she knows quite a bit about building maintenance. Her love of loons is matched by her passion for organization, and she is an avowed multi-tasker – two notable skills for LPC staff to possess!

LPC welcomes both of these new staff members, and we look forward to working with them to further our mission.

~Harry Vogel



Lin O'Bara and Nancy McDonald



The Loon' Feather Gift Shop was a brighter place this summer thanks to the volunteer efforts of Cydonia Hubicki, an eighth grade student from Hopkinton, NH. Cydonia was our "Tuesday" volunteer in the gift shop where she greeted guests, conducted sales and kept the Center tidy for visitors. She also volunteered her time at the Loon Festival in July, and will be returning for a second year at our Holiday Open House assisting with arts and crafts projects. We are most grateful for the enthusiasm and generosity of this lovely young woman!

LPC has joined the social network!

Please visit www.loon.org to sign-up for the e-newsletter or send an email to volunteers@loon.org to be added to the e-mailing list.

You can also become a fan of LPC on Facebook!* Click the "Find us on Facebook" tab on our home page and hit the "Like" button.

**Please note: you must have an existing Facebook account to become a fan.*

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*In loving memory of our parents, grandparents, and great-grandparents,
Jeannette and Carl Johnson.*

~the Johnson Family