

# LoonMonitor Instructions

## (formerly Adopt-a-Lake)

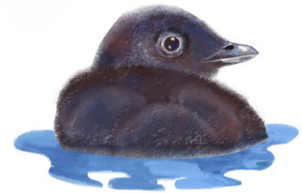
**LoonMonitors (LM)** visit a lake or pond frequently to observe a loon pair's activity throughout the season including observing pairs, nesting, chicks, and interactions with other loons and other animals (e.g., eagles). LoonMonitor is also for people reporting any loon survey from any lake in Vermont all year long.

This year, we are gathering the same information about loons as before, but instead of emailing your observations to the loon biologists or entering observations on eBird, you will now add those observations to **LoonWeb**.

Find it at [vt.loonweb.org](http://vt.loonweb.org).

Full instructions for how to use LoonWeb [here](#).

Email Dana with issues or questions. ([dwilliams@vtcostudies.org](mailto:dwilliams@vtcostudies.org))



## What to Know About Large Lakes and Zones

Smaller lakes that can only host one loon pair are generally under 200 acres. There can be non-breeding loons present; we also call the extra loons floaters and intruders.

Large lakes over 200-250 acres can host several different pairs of loons plus non-breeding loons.

We've split large lakes into clearly-delineated **zones** that often correspond with loon pair territories on lakes with more than one pair. For example, Harveys Lake has two territorial pairs, north and south, thus there are north and south zones. On some lakes, these zones don't necessarily correspond with the current territory of a loon pair. For example, Berlin Pond is divided into north and south with a territorial pair currently only in the north end.

### Quick tips for Choosing and Adopting a Lake to Monitor

You don't have to adopt a lake or zone to survey there. You can enter a survey for any lake in the state. However, you can help us keep track of which lakes are covered by adopting lakes or zones that you visit frequently.

1. Find a lake to survey. You can commit to surveying a place you visit often or a lake that is a high priority for the VLCP.
2. Decide whether you will be surveying the whole lake or one or more zones if the lake has them.
3. Sign in or sign up for LoonWeb (instructions [here](#)).
  - a. In LoonWeb signup explorer-double check that you've clicked the box in the upper left corner for **LM** on the signup page. (LC is for LoonCount, the annual one-day survey in July.)

# The Ideal Survey Schedule If You Are Monitoring a Territorial Pair

By May 25	Have your first survey done to help catch early nesters.
Between May and June	<p><b>This is when most nesting starts.</b> For lakes with breeding pairs, please conduct a survey every 2 to 4 weeks (or weekly if you have time) so we can accurately determine new pair formation and nest start dates.</p> <p>Tips on following loon pair activity:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>1. Seeing only one loon of a pair:</b> Could the other loon be nesting? Or are they off on another part of the lake? Start looking for that nest but ALWAYS CHECK FROM A DISTANCE! Look at past nest sites first then move on to marshes and islands. Not sure whether you've seen a nest? Use the comment box to describe what you've seen.</li> <li><b>2. Possible failed nests:</b> If a loon was on a nest during prior surveys, and now there are no loons sitting there, there could be several different reasons:             <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. The loons are switching off nesting duties ("nest exchange"), or the loons are off dealing with an intruder</li> <li>b. The eggs could have hatched</li> <li>c. The nest was abandoned and failed. Check again the next day. Send the loon biologists an email at <a href="mailto:loon@vtecostudies.org">loon@vtecostudies.org</a> for further instructions.</li> </ol> </li> <li><b>3. Re-nests:</b> Look for a re-nest 10 to 30 days after a failed nest—it might be in a different location.</li> <li><b>4. Hatched chicks:</b> Are there one or two? When chicks are young, they can be tucked under a parent's wing and difficult to see. As they get older, chicks may start spending some time away from the adults. If intruder loons are present, parents often "stash" the chick(s) near shore, and you might not see them. Wait awhile or return later.</li> </ol>
Late June and July	You can start surveying less frequently if the pair has had chicks, had a failed nest after late June, or has not nested as of early July.
Late July/early August	Conduct at least one survey during this period
Last two weeks of August	If chicks are present, conduct one final chick survey.

*\*\*If you are not able to perform the ideal survey schedule, that's okay! Just let us know your planned schedule, so we can perform the other surveys. When you submit data through LoonWeb's survey feature, we can track when your last survey was completed.*

# Enter your observations in LoonWeb's survey

Start a survey in LoonWeb and enter your loon observations. **Full instructions on how to create and fill out a survey [here](#). Email Dana ([dwilliams@vtecostudies.org](mailto:dwilliams@vtecostudies.org)) with issues or questions.**

- If you are following a specific territory, choose the corresponding zone to enter your observations. You will need to submit a separate survey on LoonWeb for each zone.
- Don't know what zone you are in on a larger lake? Enter your data on the entire lake. We will figure out your zone from the observation locations.

## What the survey will ask you for:

### Required

- Date and time of day
- How many loons you saw and where you saw loons. If you see separate loons at different times, you will add loons to the survey.

### Optional

- Was a loon on a nest? Were the loons in a pair?
- Wave conditions, extra or intruder loon activity, loon behaviors, other animal activity such as eagles or beavers, and details about the nest site.
- Something else? A crazy story? Add a comment.

**Partial Surveys:** You do not necessarily need to do a complete survey of the entire lake or zone. For volunteers only checking a past nest location, or scanning a part of the lake from a road or boat launch, list the survey as a "partial" survey. If you see zero loons, skip over adding observations and click End Survey. Knowing the loons were not seen and that it was a partial survey is helpful.

For anything really odd or that needs immediate attention, email the VCE loon biologists at [loon@vtecostudies.org](mailto:loon@vtecostudies.org) with your observations and phone number.

## You can monitor a lake that's been adopted by someone else!

The more surveys, the better! We want to know: is a new loon pair forming, or is the lake still empty? Has the pair nested yet? Are they still on the nest? What's the outcome of the nest? When did the pair lose a chick? Are there extra loons around often? With more surveys, we can ascertain timing and causes of these events. VCE Loon Biologists Eric Hanson and Eloise Girard also use surveys submitted on LoonWeb to track which pairs need more monitoring visits. And all this information helps guide loon conservation efforts.

- We encourage multiple volunteers to adopt and monitor lakes and zones for LoonMonitor (LM).
- If you often visit a lake: Adopt the lake in LoonWeb so it is listed in "My Lake Adoptions" tab for easy data submission.
- If you occasionally visit a lake: you do not need to adopt a lake to submit loon sightings on LoonWeb.
- Please consider surveying loon lakes and zones without known territorial pairs, too.

# Reporting volunteer hours to VFWD online

It is important that you log your hours and mileage with Vermont Fish & Wildlife so we can match the grant that we receive from VFWD.

- EACH DAY OF OBSERVATION NEEDS TO BE LISTED SEPARATELY whether done online or on paper copy.
- Each person enters his/her own report.

**Online volunteer hours:** Our preferred method. Log in or create an account at [the VFWD website](#). See instructions [here](#) (also in the Volunteer Materials section of Vermont Loon Conservation Project page at [vtecostudies.org](http://vtecostudies.org)). If adding multiple dates at one time, use the "+" button at the top of the volunteer details page before hitting the submit button. Project is "loons."

**Paper forms:** Please print TWO copies or ask us to mail you two. You will need to submit one form through June 30 and a second form for hours after July 1. Please scan mail or take a picture of the signed form and email it back by July 15 and August 30, even if you will still be monitoring chicks later. One form per person.

**Have a fun season on the water, and thank you for making this program such a success. We could not do it without you!**

The majority of funding for the VLCP comes from individual donations, with a portion provided by the VFWD Nongame Wildlife Program.

**Donations to support loon conservation in Vermont can be sent to:**

Vermont Center for Ecostudies  
VCE, PO Box 420, Norwich, VT 05055

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VLCP is a program of the Vermont Center for Ecostudies and the Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department

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