



TAKE A SECOND LOOK

42 Baker Ave

Lexington, MA 02173

Next TASL Harbor Censuses: November 24, January 19, February 2, March 29

LOONS

Of all the wild creatures that persist in this region, the loon seems best to typify the stark wildness of primeval nature.

Edward Howe Forbush

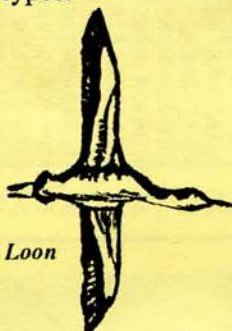
They come though at this time of year. Gaze up from time to time; you can see them in migration over Boston: long stiffly held bodies, long thin stiffly beating wings -- flying crosses. That it is a flying loon you can tell at practically any distance. Whether it is a Common or a Red-throated you have to tell by the thickness of the head relative to the neck: the fat-headed ones are Commons.

Red-throated Loons fly through here in the largest numbers in October, but the flight continues well into November. Both regular loon species will hang around here in very small numbers throughout the winter, but if you want to see really good numbers of wintering loons you must go south. Try Cap Cod or Nantucket around Christmas time. One Nantucket Christmas Count in the early Eighties tallied over three hundred Common Loons!

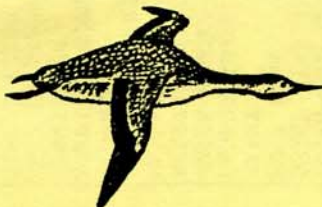
Jane Cumming's Guide to Red-throated Loons: At least three plumages can be distinguished in a collection of early November Red-throats:

1. Crisply speckled grey on the back, white on the bottom and on the front; these are molted adults.
2. Fuzzy greyish brown and white; these are this year's young.
3. Molting from the summer's grey face and striped hind-neck to the winter's speckles; molting adults.

Can you pick out such a clean assortment? Red-throats molt at this time, so there are actually many different plumages. I'm not sure I can pick out just these three types.



Common Loon



Red-throated Loon



Arctic/Pacific Loon

Is that loon you're looking at really a Common? Are you sure that other one is a Red-throat?

Every winter, it seems, at least one Arctic/Pacific Loon is identified along the Massachusetts coast. In winter plumage they are not easy to tell apart from our two regular loons. It is quite possible for one or more to slip through without anyone noticing.

The Arctic/Pacific Loon complex is still being sorted out by taxonomists. But regardless of whether there are two species or one, the general type should be separable from Common Loon by the following characteristics:

- Lacks eye-ring. Common Loon has a big eye-ring.
- Lacks bump on the forehead. Common Loon has a big one.
- Darker back and silvery neck, versus dark back and darker hind-neck on Common Loon.
- A straight dark line down the neck of the Arctic/Pacific separates the silver of the hind-neck from the white fore-neck. Common has an uneven S-shaped border down the neck separating the very dark hind-neck from the white fore-neck.

To separate Arctic/Pacific from Red-throated, look for:

- Straight, dagger-shaped bill for the Arctic/Pacific. Red-throated has thin bill that seems to curve upward.
- Arctic/Pacific has very dark back. Red-throated has a speckled grey back.

Get out there and Loon!

Loons often sing in the winter. You'll hear an eerie yodelling while standing by the ocean and realize there is a Common Loon around; you have to look around and find it. Standing at the edge of Boston Harbor listening to this creature of the dark brooding north woods brings you a chill of estrangement.

Soheil Zendeh

BOSTON HARBOR TASL CENSUSES: WINTER OF 1990-1991

ANOTHER WINTER OF TASL CENSUSES

For 1991-1992 we have scheduled four harbor censuses. The dates are as follows:

Sunday, November 24
Sunday, January 19
Sunday, February 2
Sunday, March 29

All but the March date have been chosen because the tide will be either high or incoming during the morning. All areas will be censused during the morning, starting about 8:30 and lasting until early afternoon. No decision has been made about scheduling compilation meetings due to the fact that it seems to take much longer to cover certain areas than others. As a result it seems almost impossible to gather all or even a majority of censusers in one place at one time. We will just have to keep threatening to have a TASL party!

Please call Maury Hall (268-7571) or Soheil Zende (863-2392H, 923-0941W) to volunteer for any area that strikes your fancy. You should be aware that in the interests of speeding up the census Winthrop, Quincy, and Hingham have each been split into two areas.

Please mail census results to Maury Hall, 25 Swallow Street, South Boston, 02127.

TASL (Take a Second Look) is organized and staffed entirely by volunteers. TASL data is compiled by Maury Hall. This newsletter is produced by Soheil Zende.

SPECIES	TOTALS			SPECIES	TOTALS		
	11/18/90	1/20/91	2/17/91		11/18/90	1/20/91	2/17/91
1 RED-THROATED LOON	1	2	1	41 BLACK-BELLIED PLOVER	47		
2 COMMON LOON	10	5	2	42 GREATER YELLOWLEGS	12	1	
3 PIED-BILLED GREBE	1			43 RUDDY TURNSTONE	4		
4 HORNED GREBE	64	115	31	44 SANDERLING	206	87	19
5 RED-NECKED GREBE	1	13	1	45 PURPLE SANDPIPER	1	47	10
6 NORTHERN GANNET	6		2	46 DUNLIN	95	15	7
7 GREAT CORMORANT	37	13	46	47 LAUGHING GULL	30		
8 DOUBLE-CRESTED CORMORANT	120	65	22	48 COMMON BLACK-HEADED GULL	15	15	8
9 CORMORANT (SP.)	49	11		49 BONAPARTE'S GULL	859	3	11
10 GREAT BLUE HERON	20	26	2	50 MEW GULL			2
11 MUTE SWAN		3		51 GLAUCOUS GULL		1	
12 BRANT	1387	2126	2816	52 THICK-BILLED MURRE			1
13 CANADA GOOSE	1	121	289	53 SMALL ALCID (SP)	1		
14 GREEN-WINGED TEAL	3			54 SHORT-EARED OWL			2
15 AMERICAN BLACK DUCK	1502	3394	1990	55 SNOWY OWL	1		
16 MALLARD	103	324	367	56 HARBOR SEAL	4	19	5
17 NORTHERN PINTAIL		2	1				
18 GADWALL		4		WEATHER	CLOUDY	CDY/CLR	CLOUDY
19 AMERICAN WIGEON		4		WIND	NE20-35	WSW15	SW15
20 CANVASBACK		8		TEMP	5C, 40F	1C, 50F	2C, 35F
21 GREATER SCAUP	176	960	1087	HI TIDE	11:30AM	2:00PM	1:00PM
22 COMMON EIDER	2419	7027	4994				
23 OLDSQUAW	35						
24 BLACK SCOTER	6						
25 SURF SCOTER	2	16	14				
26 WHITE-WINGED SCOTER	389	349	242				
27 COMMON GOLDENEYE	317	1654	1050				
28 BARROW'S GOLDENEYE		1					
29 BUFFLEHEAD	2924	2231	1677				
30 HOODED MERGANSER	16	2	1				
31 COMMON MERGANSER		40	6				
32 RED-BREASTED MERGANSER	2634	1467	779				
33 NORTHERN HARRIER		5	3				
34 SHARP-SHINNED HAWK		1					
35 COOPER'S HAWK			1				
36 RED-TAILED HAWK		12	3				
37 ROUGH-LEGGED HAWK	1						
38 AMERICAN KESTREL	2	3	2				
39 MERLIN		1					
40 PEREGRINE FALCON			2				

Thanks to the following participants in the TASL Censuses:

Nahant: Toby and Mike Gooley, Kenton Griffis, Elizabeth Sims.

Winthrop: Wayne Barron, Robert Buchsbaum, Katy Durham, Jane Nalwalk, Betsy Peterson, Barbara Przblska, Pat Randall, Robin Snyder.

Central: Susan Abbott, Scott Bickerton, Michael Fager, Kathy Foley, Cheri Sebring, Norm Smith, Mike Rezendes, Soheil Zende.

Quincy: Dave Desmond, Ron Donovan, Steve Ells, Bob Lohmar, Mike McInnis, Betsy and Fred Peterson.

Hingham: Maury Hall, Betsy Peterson, Syd and Barbara Smith, Polly Stevens.