



Photo by Wayne Kohnen

TO: THE MEMBERS OF THE BAY LAKE IMPROVEMENT ASSOCIATION

FROM: JON WEFALD, A BAY LAKE CABIN OWNER

RE: THE LOON POPULATION ON BAY LAKE FOR THE SUMMER OF 2016

Ruth Ann and I got up to Bay Lake late this year. For 2 weeks in June, we were visiting the Dalmatian Coast and Croatia. Croatia is a truly beautiful country and I found out that Croatia is arguably the cleanest country I have ever seen.

In any event, I got behind. I really did not get out to count loons until July. When we go out to watch and count loons, it takes at least two to three hours to get to every bay. Still, I know that every time we go out we do miss at least 8 to 10 loons--or more. The count is not scientific. Still, my count while it is pretty accurate, it is never 100%.

With that in mind, Ruth Ann and I counted 22 loons in our trip around the lake on July 5, 2016. On July 28, we counted 28 loons. On August 17, we saw 22 loons.

On June 11, 2015, we counted 19 loons. Over the years, say from 2008 to 2016, I got my highest count on June 17 with 38 loons. This time, led by my son, Andy, with 4 other people spotting the loons, we counted a record total of 38 loons. On that night, however, I think we had some loons that had flown into Bay Lake for what some loon experts call: "The loon circle dance."

My rough guess of how many loons we have on the various bays on Bay Lake over the years would be somewhere between 28 and 30. When you realize that our lake is only about 2400 acres, we have to realize how special it is to have 28 to 30 special, beautiful, and extraordinary loons.

Keep in mind, that the entire state of Minnesota has roughly 12,000 loons compared to hundreds of thousands of ducks and geese. Thus, with 10,000 plus lakes, Bay Lake has more than its fair share for many reasons: it is a clean lake with enough fish and a Monday through Friday when it is a very, very quiet lake with few jet skis and speedboats.

The total population of loons in the lower 48 states is 24,000 loons. These 24,000 loons are mainly in central and northeastern Minnesota, northern Wisconsin, northern Michigan, and, then, to see them again, you have to jump over the lower Great Lakes until you get to upstate New York, New Hampshire, Vermont, and Maine. For this geographic part of America, again, the loon population is about 24,000 loons. Keep in mind there are about 5 million geese in the entire nation. (With its cold, deep, and fish-filled lakes, Canada has roughly 500,000 pairs of loons.)

There are times when I think that too many lake Minnesotans often take our loons for granted. On our lakes in central and northeastern Minnesota, we only have a total of 12,000 loons. I hope that our friends on Bay Lake and the other lakes of Minnesota never take loons for granted.

I think we can all imagine what Bay Lake, Gull, Pelican, and our other Crow Wing lakes would be like WITHOUT OUR BELOVED LOONS. The answer is that if we ever wake up and the loons are not on Bay Lake and Gull anymore, our beloved lakes would never be the same.

Nobody knows for sure. But if the earth is slowly but surely warming up due to cycles in the history of earth or due to the industrial Revolution from the 1880's forward, it is possible that by 2100 there will be very few, if any, loons left in Minnesota.

No one can predict history or predict changes taking place in the weather over decades, we have to hope and pray that our beloved loons will be us for decades and decades to come.

Before September of 2016 is over, the adult loons will start gathering in large migration groups. There are 3 lakes in this part of Minnesota that are staging lakes for the loons to gather, rest, and eat enough for their flight to the Gulf of Mexico. Those 3 lakes are Mille Lacs Lake, Lake Winnibigoshish, and Lake Superior. Many of these loons fly to the south of Lake Michigan, and, then, head for the Gulf.

Stan Tekiela, in his book, FASCINATING LOONS, writes about the loons this way: "Their calls have become a calling card for true wilderness. They are an endearing bird that has captured the hearts of people at their lakes, fascinating us now as they have for thousands of years."

Our great Minnesota poet, Sigurd Olson, wrote a poem for the ages about our beloved loons: "Each night we sat there looking down the waterway, listening to the loons filling the darkening narrows with wild reverberating music but it was when they stopped that the quiet descended. . .No one spoke. We sat there so removed from the rest of the world and with a sense of complete remoteness that any sound would have been sacrilege." SIGURD OLSON!

For all of us on Bay Lake, we truly love and respect our loons and we hope and pray they will be here forever.

From one of your Bay Lake friends,

Jon Wefald



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To see more great loon pictures, go to the What All BayLakers Should Know Section on the BayLake.org home page or [click here](#).