

## Four-year-old Madeline Crusades for Loons

Story and photos courtesy of Julie, Madeline's mother

Once in a while, a young child discovers an interest in something that takes hold and grows beyond the expectations of those around



Madeline in her Halloween loon costume.

her. When she was three years old, Madeline of Okanogan County became fascinated by the beauty of the common loon and struck by the threat of a single lead fishing sinker. Loons sometimes mistake sinkers for pebbles, which they require to digest food. Once ingested, the lead sinker causes fatal lead poisoning.

Madeline learned about this peril facing the loon populations and became determined to do her part to try and save them. Learning that a Lost Lake loon had once met the fate of lead toxicosis brought one of those moments that we all experience at some point, a feeling of helplessness and injustice followed by determination. Madeline turned her sadness into action. She

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## Restrictions of Lead Fishing Tackle

The Washington Fish and Wildlife Commission (WDFW) approved restrictions on the use of lead fishing tackle at 13 lakes with nesting common loons during its December meeting in Olympia.

The commission, a nine-member citizen panel appointed by the governor to set policy for WDFW, adopted a proposal that prohibits the use of lead weights and jigs that measure one and one half inches or less along the longest axis at 12 lakes.

Those 12 lakes include Ferry and Swan lakes in Ferry County; Calligan and Hancock lakes in King County; Bonaparte, Blue and Lost lakes in Okanogan County; Big Meadow, South Skookum and Yocum lakes in Pend Oreille County; Pierre Lake in Stevens County; and Hozomeen Lake in Whatcom County.

In addition, the commission banned the use of flies containing lead at Long Lake in Ferry County.

The restrictions, which take effect May 1, are designed to protect loons from being poisoned by ingesting small lead fishing gear lost by anglers.

The commission held a public hearing on the issue in October, when it reviewed the findings of a WDFW advisory group established to assess scientific studies on risks posed to loons that ingest lead fishing tackle and recommend ways to minimize those risks. ■



Madeline's display about loons in the Oroville public library.

## Madeline (continued)

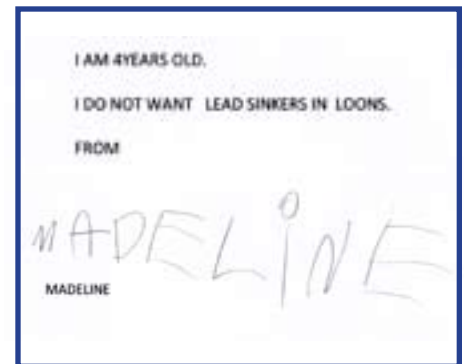
learned as much as she could about loons. She visited stores with her mom and asked the managers to carry lead-free sinkers. She made signs warning of the dangers, and she wrote a letter to the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife in support of the lead ban for loon nesting lakes. She even chose to be a loon for Halloween, learned how to do loon calls and helped prepare newsletters for a mailing that featured loon conservation. This month, Madeline created a display about loons at the public library in Oroville.

Madeline is interested in all facets of nature, from insects to weather to native plants, and was featured in the *Wenatchee World* as part of the Connecting with Nature program offered by the Institute for Rural Innovation and Stewardship. She loves to dance and sing and experience grand adventures of



*"I can fly" — Madeline*

the imagination. However, it is her determination and perseverance about loon conservation that has remained constant as other interests come and go. Should you ever be so lucky to hear the mournful call of the loon one quiet morning, remember Madeline's call for us all to do our part and use lead-free sinkers when we fish. ■



## Adopt-a-Highway Update

by Chuck Schilling

Spring has sprung! Well, maybe, sorta. Thank you to all who participated in the first 2011 Highway 395 cleanup on April 16. You are all appreciated.

I would like to believe the litterbug population is decreasing — we certainly hope so.

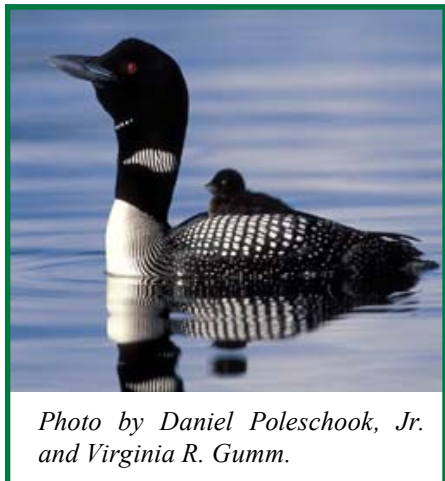
Put July 9 on your calendars for event number two. I will call to confirm date and time two weeks prior. Any and all new volunteers are always welcome. Call me anytime at 509-998-7003. ■

## Loon Health and Mortality

Tufts Cummings School of Veterinary Medicine

The Common Loon is often seen as a symbol of northern wilderness and the beauty and serenity of northern lakes. They winter on estuaries or along the ocean, but move into lakes during the spring to breed very soon after ice-out. They make their nests along the shores of the lakes so that they can easily move in to the water if they are threatened by predators.

While they are excellent divers and can fly at speeds up to 75 miles per hour, loons cannot walk, and move on land with difficulty by pushing their bodies forward. They usually lay two eggs a year. Although loon chicks can swim very soon after hatching, they still



*Photo by Daniel Poleschook, Jr. and Virginia R. Gumm.*

need help and support from their parents. A memorable sight is that of an adult loon swimming along a lakeshore carrying a chick or two on its back. Adults care for the young for the first few weeks of life, but by fall migration time, the immature loons can care for themselves and are prepared to make the journey to the sea.

### What do we like about loons?

Loons are beautiful and distinctive birds with a call that can sound like a haunting wail. Their striking looks during the breeding season — a slick black head, a necklace of white stripes and ruby red eyes — and their threatened status in the Northeast make them popular as models for magazines and brochures of very different groups and organizations. Their fascinating image is often used to adorn catalogues for outdoor sporting equipment as well as for environmental conservation.

Because of their captivating beauty and unforgettable call, loons are popular symbols of natural wilderness. Loons are often emblazoned on coffee mugs, key chains and other tourist souvenirs. They attract public attention and interest because of their unique contribution to the experience of living and vacationing in the northeast. The Royal Canadian Mint has even issued a commemorative Common Loon coin. However the likeness of the loon is portrayed, its appeal is almost certain.

### Is lead really a problem for loons?

Almost half (44 percent) of the dead and dying breeding loons submitted to the Wildlife Clinic at Cummings School of Veterinary Medicine at Tufts University in North Grafton, Massachusetts suffered from lead poisoning. Virtually all of this is from eating lead fishing gear. Loons can come in contact with lead in several ways. Loons pick up small stones and

grit from the bottom of lakes to help them digest their food. Lead sinkers can be about the same size as these stones and so the loons may pick them up as well. In addition, loons eat fish that have ingested lead or even ingest fishing line with lead in it and still attached to a hook and live bait fish.

### How do you know it's lead and not something else?

Lead is a toxic metal that can have a negative affect on many body systems including an animal's nervous system and reproductive system. In people, we have known of the dangers of lead for many years and as a result have seen limits imposed on leaded gasoline, lead in paint and lead in other commonly used consumer products.

A loon suffering from lead poisoning will appear disoriented, and unable to dive or catch fish. It will have a slower reaction time than normal. Often, it can no longer digest its food and will have trouble breathing. Poisoned birds frequently beach themselves. When researchers examined the dead loons, they found levels of lead in blood and body tissues high enough to cause poisoning. Radiographic findings often show the lead inside the digestive system of the dead bird. Of the birds examined at Tufts, every loon that had eaten a piece of lead gear had toxic levels of lead in its body, but the loons without the fishing gear did not. ■

## Loon Association Appeals to Shoreline Hearings Board

Story by Jeanie Wagenman — Photos by Joan Easley

On February 15 and 16, the State Shoreline Hearings Board heard two days of testimony regarding an Shoreline appeal (SHB No. 10-018). A Substantial Development Permit (SDP) was issued by the county to three proponents (Berendes, Howe & McCabe) for a dredging project in Carlson Bay. The board visited the site on the snowy first day of the hearing at Loon Lake. Ice covered the bay so no wetlands were seen.

The proponents have dredged in the past in this bay, but were required this time to obtain a SDP. New to this proposal was the addition of a dock adjacent to the shoreline wetland that the Loon Association leases from the BNSF railroad. Also relatively new (within the last few years) was a dump hole 30 x 40, on Lot E in which the dredging material would be dumped, which was either on the leased property or immediately adjacent to it. The boundary dispute of where the lease property (BNSF) exists is still unresolved.

The Loon Association naturally had concerns about the preservation of wetlands both emergent and shoreline as well as the impact to the wildlife when the resources are destroyed. Once the resources are gone, they cannot be replaced. In addition, the few remaining wetlands on Loon Lake hold a critical function. Our water quality is presently poor and wetlands serve to clean the water.

The Shoreline Board issued a mixed disappointing decision on



April 7, 2011. The Board concluded that the Shoreline Act as required by WAC 173-27-180(9)(d) requires that wetlands would be delineated .... “to ensure that no dredging will occur in a wetland.” (page 15 of the decision). The Board went on to state “the future use of this lot is in question due to a boundary dispute, difficulties with sewer connections and the presence of a wetlands buffer on the lot. Until such time as these matters are resolved and Lot E is actually subject to residential use, there is no need for the dock and access channel...the request to dredge this area should be addressed at that time, and a more specific wetland delineation focused on the aquatic fringe wetlands.” (page 15)

What is difficult to understand, if the Board recognized the need for a wetland delineation for the emergent wetlands adjacent to Lot E, why didn't they apply the law for the rest of the project, namely the dredging around the docks, and dumping on the shoreline for Lot E and Lot A (to the north)? Evidently, as discussed in the decision, the board accepted the proponents'

expert witness, Mr. Gleaton, and Mr. Sikes (Department of Ecology) that they believed no wetlands existed around the dock.

The Loon Association presented a delineation of the emergent wetlands by Mr. Folsom (wetland expert who also testified for the LLLA) to the board that verified there were emergent wetlands in this area. Yet the Board chose to ignore this testimony in favor of Mr. Gleaton, despite the fact that the law still does require a delineation (not opinion) of wetlands. In addition, no delineation of the shoreline wetlands on Lot A were presented, and questionable mapping of the shoreline wetlands on Lot E. Mr. Sikes and Mr. Fulsome testified that the mapping for Lot E's wetlands were not a complete delineation.

The proponents now have a “partial” Substantial Development Permit for their activity but still will need to reapply for a Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife Hydraulic Permit in order to resume their dredging (around docks) and dumping of shoreline material. ■

## Common Loon Killed at Long Lake

In 2009 a pair of common loons produced one chick in their first nesting effort at Long Lake in Ferry County—in the Colville National Forest south of Republic. The female loon was back on a nest at Long Lake incubating two eggs in May 2010 before Fish and Wildlife Department officials reported she had been shot in the neck and killed around May 9. The female loon had been observed sitting on her eggs on May 6. Her male partner has not been sighted since then.

The lake is stocked with cut-throat trout and limited to fly fishing and is one of only 13 lakes in northeast Washington where loons have been known to nest. This loss brings the confirmed nesting loon pairs down to six in northeast Washington and fewer than 14 in the entire state.

The Loon Lake Loon Association offered a \$3000 reward for information leading to the arrest and conviction of the person(s) responsible. The money came from donations by individuals and The Humane Society of the United States. No one has been cited for this killing.

Loons are a protected species, yet shooters have killed three birds when they are vulnerable during nesting season three years in a row, including:

- A female observed with a partner looking for a nest site at Beth Lake in Okanogan County in 2008.
- A male shot while his mate was nesting at Yocum Lake in Pend Oreille County in 2009. The shooter, who said he'd been having some fun with his drinking buddies, was caught and fined.



*Photo by Daniel Poleschook, Jr. and Virginia R. Gumm.*

The killing in northeast Washington extends to other birds under federal protection. A trumpeter swan was shot near Colville in 2009 and a bald eagle was shot in Riverside State Park in 2010. ■

## Loon Gift Shop in The Old Schoolhouse



For an appointment or information,  
please leave a message at 509-233-2222

**Winter Hours**  
Oct 1 – Dec 31  
March 1 – June 30  
Tue 6-8 pm  
Sat 11 am to 1 pm

January and February  
open by  
appointment only

**Summer Hours**  
July 1 – Sept 30  
Tue 4-8 pm  
Sat 10 am to 2 pm

509-233-2222  
4000 Colville Rd  
Loon Lake WA 99148



The Loon Gift Shop is located in The Old Schoolhouse at the corner of Maple Street and Colville Road in downtown Loon Lake. Many unique and interesting items — from candy to books to greeting cards — are for sale, along with special shirts and clothing. You can even buy a bottle of the Loon Lake Historical Society's limited edition wine. Proceeds from the gift shop support the preservation efforts of the Loon Association.

# Loonsday Walk & Festival — June 4, 2011

This year's 28th annual Loonsday Walk is June 4 and begins at 7:00 am at the Old Schoolhouse. All participants need to register in advance. Fill out the entry form, make your check out to Loonsday and mail to Loonsday, PO Box 75, Loon Lake, WA 99148.

In order to guarantee a Loonsday shirt, participants must mail the entry form by May 24. Proceeds from the walk are donated to community projects.

A "Loon Festival" will coincide with the walk. Representatives from public and environmental groups will be on hand with displays and handouts. We hope to have a sinker exchange — bring in your lead sinkers and trade them for non-lead alternatives.

Information will be available on the Loon Association's banding program, fish "rescue" in lakes where there is no fry to feed the young and other preservation efforts of waterfowl.

There is no charge for the Loon Festival. The Loon Gift Shop and Loon Lake Historical Society's history room will also be open.

*Come join in the fun!*



Photos by Karen Meyer



## Loon Lake Loon Association Membership Application

### Membership Categories

- Loon Chick (*youth*) \$5
- Single Loon (*individual*) \$10
- Territorial Pair (*couple*) \$15
- Loon Family (*family*) \$25

**I would like to make a donation to the following**

- Keep the Gift Alive fund \_\_\_\_\_
- Other LLLA programs \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone \_\_\_\_\_

Total enclosed: \_\_\_\_\_

Please make checks payable to LLLA. Clip this form and mail to:

**Loon Lake Loon Association  
PO Box 75  
Loon Lake, WA 99148**

