

Does the nesting pair on your lake need a “STAY AWAY” Sign?

It all depends. Signs can help a lot at nesting sites at high risk of failure from human intrusion. In other cases, nesting signs may cause harm, attracting attention to a nest that is otherwise hidden, potentially causing loons to leave or abandon their nest. Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife (MDIFW) has traditionally discouraged and denied the use of signs at loon nesting sites because of this risk. Maine Audubon and partners of the Maine Loon Restoration Project are working with MDIFW to determine if, used in the right situations, signs can benefit at-risk loons in Maine as they have helped nesting in other states.

Only use a sign if these four conditions are met:

1. The nest is visible or in a high traffic area.

Signs may be beneficial near nests that are highly visible and attract attention, or are in highly trafficked areas. This could be nests that are on exposed beaches or peninsulas, near a recreational trail, at boat landings or launches, on popular islands, or along boating channels. (Some artificial rafts make nests more visible.)

2. The nest is being disturbed by human activities.

How can you tell? If a loon crouches on its nest with its head down or leaves the nest for a period of time when someone approaches, these are signs of high distress, which can impact nesting success. Find out if any reports have been made to wardens, the local lake association, or Maine Audubon about loon deaths from collisions with boats or nesting disturbances on your lake. Or participate in our loon monitoring program or place a game camera in a

permissible location to help determine the source, frequency, and loon reactions to disturbances.

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- Signs should not block allowed public access. Floating signs must not be in the way of boating channels, thru-lanes, or angling sites. Floating signs at nesting sites should be placed 20-30 feet from shore and 50-100 feet away from the loon nest.

4. You have landowner permission.

Maine Audubon, Maine Lakes, and Lakes Environmental Association can help you determine if there's a nest on your lake or pond that might need extra protection.

Questions?

Email loonrestoration@maineaudubon.org or loons@lakes.me.

