

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

It all depends. Signs can help a lot at nesting sites that are at high risk from human intrusion. In other cases, nesting signs may attract 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) traditionally denied the use of signs at loon nesting sites because of this risk. Yet, used in the right situations, signs have helped nesting loons in other New England states. The Maine Loon Restoration Project is working with MDIFW to determine if well-placed signs can also benefit at-risk loons in Maine.

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 or are in highly trafficked areas. These could be nests that are on exposed beaches, 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 too closely, these are signs of distress, which can impact nesting success. You can also find out if any reports have been made to wardens, the local lake association, or Maine Audubon about nest failures or disturbances on your lake. Or place a game camera in a permissible location to help determine the source and

frequency of disturbances and the reactions of loons on the nest.

- 3. It's not in the way.** 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?
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