



QUICK DIVES

National Loon Center News



Two New Staff Members Join the Raft*

**Fun fact: one name for a group of loons is a raft*

November is heading off to a great start for the National Loon Center! Beginning on November 1, the NLC team grew by two with the addition of Mike and Natasha. Our newest staff members are both very passionate about loon and freshwater conservation. Read more about their backgrounds on our [website](#).

An Interview with Natasha Bartolotta, Communications and Outreach Coordinator

Why are you excited to join the National Loon Center?

It is not every day that you come across a group of people so passionate and optimistic about the work they are doing to better their community. I am excited to be a part of a growing team of committed and enthusiastic individuals all working together to conserve our lakes and their inhabitants. Plus, as an avid kayaker and birdwatcher I am looking forward to spending even more time out near the water! I am truly hoping to share my appreciation for nature and loons with as many people as possible.



What is the coolest thing about loons?

The most transfixing thing about loons is their calls. From the tremolos to the wails, it's hard to think of any other sound like it. I've always been fascinated by the way animals communicate and loons certainly have their own unique way of doing so. Many of us could not picture a world without bird song and for those of us living near lakes, we could not imagine it without the sound of loons. You could say I answered the call of the loon by finding my way to work for the National Loon Center!

Do you have any personal loon stories to share?

Hailing from the Northeast, I first heard the eerie call of the loon while backpacking in the Adirondacks. There's no peace quite like looking at the stars overhead while the call of the loon echoes across the lake in the distance. Many years later I found myself kayaking on Lake Cuyuna while visiting a close friend living in Minnesota. To my delighted surprise, I was actually seeing, rather than just hearing, loons! My friend was very patient as the scientist in me wanted to time how long the loons were diving underwater. Coincidentally, just two months later I was making the drive back to this area to begin my new adventure working for the National Loon Center!

Has anyone inspired your conservation ethics or career? Who and how?

As a kid, I wanted to be just like Jane Goodall. Primarily, because I wanted to study great apes, but as I've grown older I'm inspired by the way she instills hope in others through her many conservation action programs. Throughout the last few years I've also done fieldwork on apes and birds plus worked as a zoo conservation educator. I'm inspired by the many different people I've met along the way who hold so much compassion in their hearts for both people and wildlife. I've now committed myself to always look at the big picture and to think of how to best support all those who depend on our natural ecosystems to survive!





An Interview with Mike Pluimer, Program Operations Associate

Why are you excited to join the National Loon Center?

The National Loon Center feels like home to me. It enables me to use both my passion for issues surrounding sustainability directly alongside my passion for creativity. The only thing better than being creative is being creative to advance a cause that you believe in. I appreciate the way that the NLC pushes for conservation while simultaneously placing focus on the loon, which is such a good depiction for why these issues matter. Especially when I reflect on my childhood memories of loons, it truly feels as though my life has come full circle in that now I am looking out for them for a living.

Why are clean lakes important?

Clean lakes are important for anybody or anything that uses them. Wildlife needs natural habitat, and the less wildlife we allow to share our world with, the less interesting our world will become. We need to recognize how fortunate we are to live in a time in which we have the choice to preserve our lakes. Had we existed any later, and our lakes had fallen into the hands of different people, we may not have ever been able to hear the ambient call of the loon. It already sounds as if it's something out of a dream; perhaps that is a good reminder of how fortunate we are that it is not.

Why is the loon important to you?

I've been familiar with loons my entire life. I haven't always lived in the Brainerd Lakes Area, but my grandparents have had a cabin on a lake just north of Pine River my whole life. It's always been my favorite place on earth. The lake has always had a pair of loons every summer, and ever since I was very young I've enjoyed awaiting their arrival in the spring, rooting for their chicks to survive, and bidding them farewell come fall time. From those days, I've developed vivid memories associated with their call, and there is something about the sound of a loon that makes me feel like I'm a little boy standing on the dock again. When you grow up with something, you develop a sense of attachment to it, and it is from this sense of attachment that comes my obligation to ensure their protection and safety. I take great pride living in a state that is so strongly associated with them.



Has anyone inspired your conservation ethics or career? Who and how?

My Grandpa is largely responsible for my interest in the outdoors and my passion for conservation and sustainability. His teaching over the course of my lifetime has instilled in me a strong sense of appreciation for the beauty of the natural world, which ultimately is the reason for which I feel so strongly obligated to preserve and protect it. He has taught me much of what I know about the outdoors, but most importantly, he's taught me how and why we are to respect and look after it.

What are your favorite things to do outside of work?

I spend most of my free time doing anything that enables me to be unique and creative, such as music, photography, videography, and graphic design. The most prominent of these is music, specifically pertaining to songwriting, production, recording, and audio engineering. I am a sportsman, specifically enjoying duck hunting, bass fishing, and ice fishing. I also enjoy a number of athletic activities. I like to play pick-up basketball, go mountain biking, I run every day, and I would golf every day if it was as cheap as running.



Give us a Yodel



(218) 692-LOON



info@nationallooncenter.org



PO Box 642
Crosslake, MN 56442