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NEWS RELEASE

NATIONAL LOON CENTER LAUNCHES LOON RESEARCH AMBASSADOR PROGRAM FOR 2022

For the summer of 2022, the National Loon Center has initiated an exciting new opportunity for community supporters to become engaged in nationally-significant loon research. The Loon Research Ambassador Program provides opportunities to sponsor research loons at three donation levels: Loon Champions, Loon Guardians, and Loon Ambassadors. Loon Champions (\$2,500) and Guardians (\$1,000) take part in the research project by sponsoring one of the 48 adult loons banded last year, while Ambassadors sponsor a symbolic loon for \$25.

The National Loon Center's long term research study of the common loon is led by Dr. Piper of Chapman University. Piper has studied a population of 120 breeding loon pairs in northern Wisconsin since 1993. In the first research season, Dr. Piper's team surveyed approximately 60 Minnesota lakes including the Whitefish Chain of Lakes and smaller lakes in the surrounding area. They identified 105 breeding loon pairs. Essential to the research is marking individuals with colored leg bands. A total of 78 loons, including adults and juveniles, were banded. These studies of Upper Midwest loons will provide critical insight into understanding this iconic bird and how to keep it common.

The research team will watch for banded loons to return in the spring and settle on their breeding lakes. As part of the Loon Research Ambassador Program, Loon Champions and Guardians follow their loon throughout the summer via email updates and enjoy exclusive benefits including a Meet & Greet with Dr. Piper, private loon watching tour, special recognition at the National Loon Center, and more. Registration is open through April 30, 2022.

"As soon as I saw the opportunity to be a Loon Ambassador with the National Loon Center, I jumped on the idea!" said Shannon Watters, who registered to be a Loon Guardian. "I grew up on Clark Lake in Nisswa with a loon couple we affectionately named 'Larry and Lucy'. As I grew up and moved away

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from Nisswa, I have thought with fond memories about ‘Larry and Lucy’, often wondering what happened to my childhood ‘Loony friends’. Fast forward to today, I live on Rush Lake and we have a loon family in our little bay.”

“All last summer (2021) I watched our little loon couple work together to teach and protect their baby loon. I was thrilled to see that the family was tagged so we would know how they are doing and where they end up through the years. Naturally I named my newly ‘adopted’ loon mom ‘Lucy’. This is such a fantastic program to create a ‘personal relationship’ with the loons and be able to keep track of your adopted friend. It’s also an excellent way for kids to get involved and learn to be responsible and care for our wildlife friends,” continued Watters.

Loon enthusiasts across the country can support this nationally significant research by becoming a Loon Ambassador with a \$25 donation. Loon Ambassadors receive a special edition sticker and Loon Research Ambassador certificate. Registration for 2022 is open from March through November.

To learn more about the Loon Research Ambassador program, please visit <https://www.nationallooncenter.org/loon-research-ambassador-program>

The National Loon Center restores and protects loon breeding habitats, promotes responsible recreation, and serves as a national leader in advancing loon and freshwater research and education. Research on the Common Loon will be shared to the public via exhibits at the NLC’s world-class facility, slated to open in 2024, and the current visitor center, The Nest, in Crosslake Town Square.



A Common Loon that was banded in 2021.



Martha Kebeh, a member of the 2021 research team.