



National Loon Center & Ricketts Conservation Foundation 2026 Common Loon Research Grant

The National Loon Center and Ricketts Conservation Foundation aim to catalyze widespread support to protect loons for future generations while improving lakeshore habitats and freshwater quality, increasing loon populations, and reducing unnecessary human-caused loon mortalities.

The NLC/RCF will fund Common Loon research needs at a range-wide scale, with emphasis on questions related to survival, productivity, health, and conservation of Common Loon populations.

These grants are available to non-profits, universities, Native nations, and government agencies. Individual applicants are preferred to be associated with an organization or have an organizational sponsor.

Grant Proposal Guidelines:

Specific 2026 research priorities identified by the Scientific Advisory Council of the National Loon Center include:

- Promote development of international standards/protocols for use by the loon research community for a) contaminant, parasite, and disease assessments of captured loons; and b) carcass evaluation/necropsy to ensure comparable data and interpretation among collaborators..
- Improve our understanding of Common Loon genetic variation across geographic space (i.e., genoscape) by ensuring the entire range of the species is covered, improving resolution of geographic breeding origins over the currently identified six differentiated conservation units, and improving accuracy of assigning membership of recovered carcasses to a particular breeding conservation unit.
- Determine factors contributing to documented declines in local/regional Common Loon abundance. Investigate declining productivity in relation to environmental change, human development, water quality changes, prey availability, contaminant/parasite/disease effects, loon health assessment, etc.
- Develop improved breeding loon aerial survey census techniques that incorporate

estimated detection probability.

- Conduct surveys to evaluate efficacy of Common Loon translocation efforts.
- Expand efforts to recover moribund loons and carcasses to include all wintering and migration stopover areas.
- Evaluate efficacy of lakeshore restoration efforts in support of breeding Common Loons.
- Creating and evaluating public outreach efforts to advance Common Loon conservation.

Proposals should be clear, concise, and submitted by **December 15th, 2025**. Incomplete proposals will not be considered.

The main body of the proposal should not exceed 6 pages (2000 words) in length using 12-point font. The curriculum vitae of the principal investigator and letters of recommendation for students are not included in the 6 page maximum.

Budgets may include up to 10% in overhead or indirect costs. We do not fund coursework, but will fund direct research costs of projects leading to B.S., M.S. or Ph.D. degrees.

The grant will be designated for research conducted within 12 months of the grant award date toward proposed objectives. We will consider funding up to 3 years of research; however, continued funding is contingent upon satisfactory completion of an annual report.

It is suggested that individual proposals not exceed \$25,000 per year. Smaller requests may be considered more favorably. Matching funds are not required, but may also be considered more favorably.

Successful award recipients will be notified no later than **February 2nd, 2026**.

Grant Conditions:

The National Loon Center and Ricketts Conservation Foundation will receive acknowledgment for financial support in, as well as copies of, any publication or report resulting from the study.

The principal investigator shall submit a progress report to both the National Loon Center and Ricketts Conservation Foundation by December 31, 2026.

A final report should be submitted to the National Loon Center and Ricketts Conservation Foundation within 12 months of the completion of the project. The report shall include major

findings and account for expenditures of the grant.

Proposal Format:

Title: Concise description of project.

Principal Investigator: Include name and institutional affiliation.

Objective: Concise statements of goals and hypotheses to be tested.

Justification and Background: Provide background for the purpose of the research with a description of the situation, followed by a statement of need. Include relevant published literature and current research. Describe how this project is consistent with NLC/RCF goals and research priorities.

Methods: Describe study area, data collection, equipment to be used, experimental design (include sample sizes and methods for the control of bias), and statistical analyses.

Budget: Itemization of proposed expenditures.

Other sources of funding: Indicate other awards applied for and current available funding.

Qualifications: Curriculum vitae of principal investigator including other research programs and publications. Students must include two letters of recommendation.

Deadline for submission: **11:59pm (Central Time), Monday, December 15th, 2025**

Proposal Submission:

Please email all proposal materials as a single PDF attachment to research@nationallooncenter.org with the subject line: "2026 Common Loon Research Grant"

If you have any questions, please email:

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