
AN INVESTIGATION OF THE COMMON LOON ON SPENCER LAKE AND BLANCHARD LAKE, MONTANA: IDENTIFYING POPULATIONS OF BANDED AND NON-BANDED BIRDS OF THE COMMON LOON.

Spencer Hale, Montana Tech- Undergraduate Research Program, Montana Tech of the University of Montana, Butte MT. 59701

Common Loon (*Gavia immer*) studies were conducted between May and August, 2014 at known loon territories in the Whitefish, Montana area. Data were collected on nesting pairs at Spencer Lake and Blanchard Lake, both of which are a few miles of Whitefish. Loon pairs were observed and behaviors recorded as well as leg-band identifications, foraging habits, territorial behaviors, chick stages, and nesting success. The study covered 46 hours of observational study. Based on prior data provided by the Montana Common Loon Working Group and the Flathead National Forest Service, it is possible to identify pairs that are returning to the same locations and remaining with the same breeding pair. This summer research provided valuable data including identification of nesting pairs on both Blanchard and Spencer Lake, adult band data from both of these lakes, and both lakes had chick hatch dates allowing for a comparison between both lakes of study noting their differences as possible causes for differing nest success and hatch dates between Spencer Lake and Blanchard Lake.