

COMMON LOON MOVEMENTS OVER THE PAST 28 MONTHS

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Each year hundreds of common loons (*Gavia immer*) stage on Flathead Lake during their fall migration. Banding data has provided information on winter locations and a few stop locations in between. Documenting the timing, route, duration and destinations are goals of this project. In October 2005 four adults were captured and surgically implanted with intra-abdominal Argos PTT-100 satellite transmitters (Microwave Telemetry, Inc.). Modifications of each PTT included doubling the battery capacity and fusing attachment materials to the exterior (final weight 65 g). Transmitter duty cycles were eight hrs on and 26 hrs off during the first six weeks to intensely monitor migration timing. Along with the PTTs, each bird was banded with USFWS and color bands. Updated information on loon movements was made accessible by using Satellite Tracking and Analysis Tool (STAT). Upon release each individual occupied separate locations of Flathead Lake. While one loon departed within the first week after surgery, three individuals remained on Flathead Lake until early November. Two general routes have led to four separate winter locations. Three individuals returned north along the eastern route to breeding areas in Alberta and Saskatchewan, Canada. Only one transmitter remained active since the fall/winter 2006-2007 to migrate along the same route as the earlier fall two more seasons. The distance between breeding and winter locations ranged from 2300 and 3535 km for each of the loons.