

FALL MIGRATION OF COMMON LOONS AFTER STAGING ON FLATHEAD LAKE

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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 65g). Transmitter duty cycles were 8 hours on and 26 hours off during the first six weeks to intensely monitor migration timing. Along with the PTTs, each bird was banded with USDI Fish and Wildlife Service and color bands. Updated information on loon movements was made accessible by using Satellite Tracking and Analysis Tool (STAT). After 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. These final three loons left Flathead Lake within a 24-hour period coinciding with the first snowfall in the Mission Valley. Two general routes have led to four separate winter locations. Total displacement ranged between 1070 and 2587 km for each of the loons. Each transmitter should remain in operation for the next fourteen months.