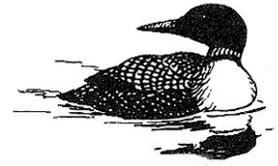




What YOU can do to enjoy and protect Alaska's boreal birds!



As people enjoy outdoor recreation on some of Alaska's lakes and coasts, they often experience the haunting calls of the loon and the bustle of activity as shorebirds flock the beaches. Birds are an integral part of Alaska's natural beauty – a living symbol of clean air, clean water, and high level of environmental quality.

Although Alaska has healthy populations of many boreal bird species statewide, there are some concerns about the future of water birds in areas that are heavily used by people. Fortunately, studies in other states have shown that water birds and people can coexist if certain care is taken.

You can help protect boreal birds by following these suggestions when you find yourself in “Boreal Bird Country”.

Enjoy loons, grebes, and other birds from a distance!

If you see a loon or grebe rising out of the water, running and splashing across the surface, you are too close. This behavior, known as the “Penguin Dance” for loons, indicates severe stress from your presence and the birds are trying to distract you from its nest or young. If the adult has been scared off its nest, the eggs can chill and die, or be eaten by a predator.

Steer clear of water birds!

While recreating on lakes with motorized watercraft, steer clear of loons, grebes, and their nesting areas. Wakes can destroy nests and drown chicks.

Pick up discarded fishing line and other litter!

Litter, especially fishing line and plastics, can entangle birds and even kill them, along with fish and other wildlife.

Use non-toxic alternatives to lead sinkers!

Loons may mistakenly ingest discarded lead sinkers on the lake bottom while searching for small pebbles to aid with their digestion. Lead poisoning quickly follows and is likely fatal. The use of non-toxic alternatives to lead is an easy way to protect loons.

Keep dogs leashed!

Keep your dog on a leash while birds are nesting and when their young are just born. Confining dogs helps protect eggs and nests from being destroyed.

Spread the word that you care about boreal birds!

Join the Alaska Citizen Science Program's - Birds n' Bogs - and help protect boreal bird species. Contact Arin Underwood with the Alaska Department of Fish & Game, Threatened, Endangered, and Diversity Program, at (907) 267-2182 or email arin.underwood@alaska.gov for more information.

Dealing with Harassment of birds

Intentional and unintentional harassment of boreal birds is one of the problems encountered in parts of Alaska. Pairs attempting to nest, raise chicks, and feed can often tolerate some human activities, but repeated disturbance of a bird incubating eggs or tending newly hatched young can result in abandonment of the nest or death of the young.

Most harassment occurs simply out of ignorance. Some people may not realize that they are disturbing breeding birds and are surprised to learn about what they need to succeed. Passing out pamphlets about local boreal birds or posting "Nesting Bird Alert" signs at public access points and other areas around a lake can help **prevent problems before they occur**. Signs are available from the US Fish and Wildlife Service (contact Arin Underwood at (907)267-2182).

There are times when an obvious harassment situation should be reported to the State Trooper's Fish and Wildlife Protection office. You will be able to get a lot farther in these cases if you follow this procedure:

1. Carefully document the actions involved (date, time, location, boat registration number, number and description or identity of people, actions, etc...)
2. Get witnesses or a videotape to support your testimony.
3. Call US Fish and Wildlife Law Enforcement at (786-3313), FWP officer (Palmer 745-4247, Soldotna 262-5312, Anchorage 269-5443), or Wildlife Safeguard (1-800-478-3377).
4. Be willing to follow through to a court case.

These cases of obvious harassment tend to be few and far between. Most often, the harassing party doesn't know or care enough about birds to change their behavior. However, in some cases, when people are given a friendly message about boreal bird species, they can become a bird's best friend.