



Alaska Common Loon Guide

Your Complete Guide to Alaska's Iconic Wilderness Diver



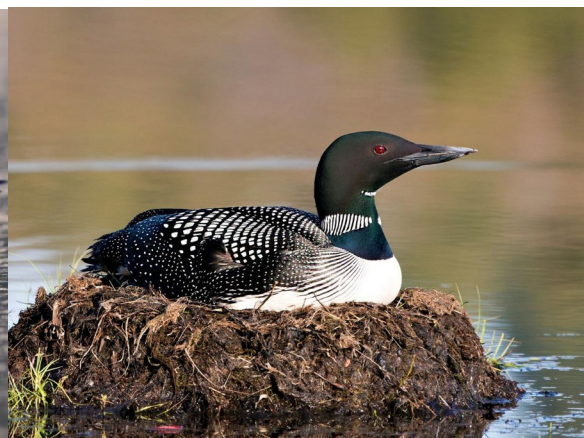
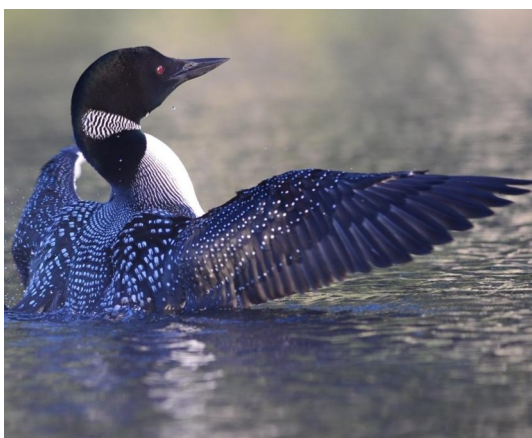
Few sounds capture the spirit of the northern wilderness quite like the haunting call of the **Common Loon**. Echoing across quiet lakes in the early morning or at sunset, its unmistakable cry has become one of the defining sounds of Alaska's backcountry.

Known for their striking black-and-white breeding plumage, ruby-red eyes, and remarkable diving ability, common loons are expert fishermen that spend much of their lives on the water. Although they can fly long distances during migration, they are far more graceful in the water than on land.

For travelers exploring Alaska by land before or after a cruise, spotting a common loon—or hearing its unforgettable call—is one of those peaceful moments that stays with you long after the trip is over.



Quick Facts



Scientific Name: *Gavia immer*

Length:

- 26–36 inches

Wingspan:

- 4–5 feet

Weight:

- 8–15 pounds

Lifespan:

- 20–30 years

Diet:

- Fish
- Crustaceans
- Insects
- Frogs
- Aquatic invertebrates

Loons are among the best diving birds in North America.

Where Can You See Common Loons?



The best places to spot common loons include:

- Denali National Park
- Kenai Peninsula
- Interior Alaska
- Anchorage area lakes
- Fairbanks
- Chugach State Park
- Southcentral Alaska lakes
- Quiet freshwater ponds and rivers

They prefer peaceful freshwater lakes during the summer breeding season.

★ Masters of Diving



Common loons are built for life underwater.

They can:

- Dive more than **200 feet**
- Stay underwater for over a minute
- Propel themselves using powerful legs placed far back on their bodies
- Catch fast-moving fish with remarkable accuracy

Because of their body design, loons are awkward on land but incredibly agile in the water.

👶 Raising Chicks



One of the most heartwarming sights in Alaska is a loon chick riding on its parent's back.

Both parents:

- Build the nest close to the water.
- Take turns incubating eggs.
- Feed and protect the chicks.
- Carry young chicks on their backs to keep them warm and safe.

It's one of the most distinctive parenting behaviors among North American birds.



Can You See Common Loons on an Alaska Cruise?

Traditional Southeast Alaska cruises rarely encounter common loons because they spend the summer on inland freshwater lakes.

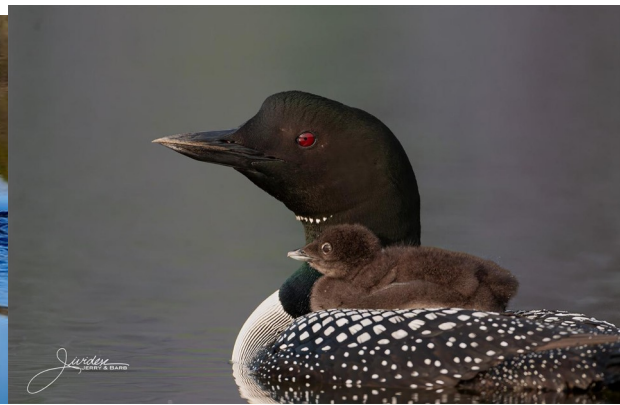
Your best opportunities are during:

- Denali CruiseTours
- Anchorage sightseeing
- Alaska Railroad journeys
- Kenai Peninsula excursions
- Interior Alaska road trips

They're a wonderful bonus for travelers extending their Alaska vacation beyond the cruise.



Photography Tips



For the best photographs:

- Visit lakes early in the morning when the water is calm.
 - Use a telephoto lens.
 - Look for reflections on still water.
 - Watch for diving behavior.
 - Be patient—loons often remain underwater for 30–60 seconds before resurfacing.
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Best Time to See Common Loons

May

Excellent.

Breeding pairs return to nesting lakes.

June

Outstanding.

Adults begin raising chicks.

July

Excellent.

Families are commonly seen on lakes.

August

Excellent.

Young birds continue growing.

September

Very Good.

Many loons begin migrating south.



Interesting Behaviors

Common loons are known for:

- Their haunting, echoing calls.
- Carrying chicks on their backs.
- Diving deep for fish.
- Returning to the same nesting lakes year after year.
- Flying surprisingly fast despite needing a long "runway" across the water to take off.

Their eerie calls are often considered the soundtrack of Alaska's wilderness.



What to Bring

Bring:

- ✓ Binoculars
- ✓ Camera
- ✓ Telephoto lens
- ✓ Polarized sunglasses
- ✓ Patience

Quiet lakes and early mornings often provide the best opportunities for loon sightings.

Premium Travel Group Tip

If you're spending time in Alaska before or after your cruise, plan an early morning visit to a quiet lake. Not only are loons more active at that time of day, but you'll also have the best chance to hear their unforgettable calls echo across the water—a true Alaska experience.

Continue Exploring Alaska

Continue planning your Alaska adventure with our other guides:

- Alaska Wildlife Guide
 - Trumpeter Swan Guide
 - Bald Eagle Guide
 - Golden Eagle Guide
 - Great Horned Owl Guide
 - Moose Guide
 - Denali National Park Guide
 - Alaska Railroad Experience Guide
 - Anchorage Guide
 - Best Time to Visit Alaska
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Fun Facts

- Common loons can dive **more than 200 feet** in search of fish.
 - Their legs are positioned far back on their bodies, making them excellent swimmers but awkward walkers.
 - Their haunting calls can travel for miles across calm lakes.
 - Chicks often ride on a parent's back during their first few weeks of life.
 - Loons can fly at speeds of **up to 70 mph** during migration.
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Why Are Common Loons So Special?

Common loons are one of Alaska's most iconic freshwater birds. Their haunting calls, elegant appearance, and incredible diving abilities create unforgettable moments for anyone exploring Alaska's lakes and wetlands. While they may not receive as much attention as bears or whales, they represent the peaceful side of Alaska's wilderness that many visitors come to treasure.



Joe's Logbook

Sometimes the most memorable wildlife experience isn't seeing something rare—it's hearing something unforgettable.

The first time you hear a common loon calling across a quiet Alaska lake, you'll understand why so many people describe it as the sound of the wilderness itself. It's haunting, peaceful, and somehow perfectly matches the scenery around you.

If you're lucky enough to see a loon with its chicks riding on its back, take a moment to simply enjoy it. Those quiet wildlife moments often become just as meaningful as watching a whale breach or spotting a bear.

Alaska isn't just about dramatic landscapes and giant animals. It's also about peaceful mornings, calm lakes, and the unforgettable sounds of nature that stay with you long after you've returned home.