

A Brief History of the Loon Survey on Mississippi Lake  
Contributed by Jim Tye, January, 2021

The Canadian Lakes Loon Survey was launched in Ontario in 1981 by Bird Studies Canada (then Long Point Bird Observatory). It went national in the early 1990's. Over the years, the participants have monitored breeding Loons on 4500 lakes across the country.

Our records indicate that loons have been monitored on Mississippi Lake in 2007 and from 2010 to 2014 and 2016 to present. Jo Ellen Beattie co-ordinated the survey on Mississippi Lakes for 5 years from 2010 to 2014. Jo Ellen sold her house and moved out west. As no one took her place, the survey was not conducted in 2015.

Over the winter of 2015-16, the Environment Committee of the Mississippi Lakes Association discussed re-activating the survey. The Mississippi Valley Field Naturalists are a member of this committee. Cliff Bennett was their representative at that time. Cliff agreed to be the contact person for information, the compiler of the results, and the contact with Birds Studies Canada. Cliff also co-ordinated the observers who were MVFN members. Jim Tye agreed to co-ordinate the boat operators, most of whom were property owners on Mississippi Lake.

The lake is divided into 4 areas and the survey is conducted the last week of June, July and August. A package including a map and tally sheet is prepared for each area for the observers and boat operators. Normally a meeting of all concerned to review the maps, forms and guidelines is held each May. Since the count has been revived, the MVFN has generously reimbursed the boat operators \$20 per trip to help cover the cost of gas.

Cliff Bennett advised the MLA early in the winter of 2020 that he would like to step back and Nick de Boer, also with the MVFN, agreed to take his place. Early in the spring of 2020, Birds Studies Canada suspended the Loon Surveys due to the Covid-19 Pandemic. As the MLA and the MVFN felt that this survey was important to continue, they decided to conduct the survey using only the boat operators and their immediate family member(s) as observers. This went well as the 2020 boat operators were the same operators in 2019. Nick compiled the summary, with help from Cliff and Jim, which was sent to Birds Studies Canada in September 2020.