

## Sample Multigenre Reports

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### Encyclopedia Article

#### *The Common Loon*

Loons have stout bodies, long necks, pointed bills, and three-toed webbed feet. They spend most of their time afloat, since their heavy, low-slung bodies make movement on land slow and awkward. As a result, common loons spend little time on land and pull themselves onto land only to nest. They generally move one foot at a time to walk, shuffling along with their breasts close to the ground.

The summer plumage of the common loon is very striking with its black and white checkered back, glossy black head, characteristic white necklace around the throat, and bright red eyes. The white feathers of the belly and wing linings are present year-round, but all loons, young and adult, have grayish feathers in the winter. Both males and females sport the same plumage colorings, although males are generally larger. Loon adults are large bodied, weighing from 2.7 to over 6.3 kilograms and measuring almost a meter from bill tip to outstretched feet. Their bill, which is black in color, is quite large, averaging 75 mm in length.

The skeleton and muscular systems of a loon are designed for swimming and diving; their legs are placed far back on their bodies, which gives them excellent movement capabilities in water but make them ungainly on land. Their heads can be held directly in line with their necks during diving to reduce drag, and their legs have powerful muscles for swimming. Many bones of the loon's body are solid, rather than hollow like those of other birds. These heavy bones make loons less buoyant and help them to dive. The loon's large webbed feet provide propulsion underwater, and their wings are used only for turning underwater.

### Letter to the Editor

Dear Editor,

Each summer when I visit the lakes in your area, I have enjoyed the haunting voices of the loons calling across the lake in the early morning and at dusk. This year, however, I heard few of those calls, and I am deeply concerned about that. As a result, I contacted the Department of Wildlife to find out why there seemed to be so few loons in the area this year. And, I was horrified to learn that the common loon is in danger of disappearing from our waters.

According to the Department of Wildlife, even though all loons are protected by federal law, may not be hunted, and still nest in large numbers across Canada and the United States, recent studies have shown low breeding success. This is because the loon nests in populated areas, so it suffers the effects of pollution, development, and disturbance. Loss of breeding habitat from lakeshore development and spills of oil and other pollutants make safe breeding difficult. In addition, wakes caused by boats and water skiers often swamp or destroy nests or cause loons to abandon some nesting sites. Furthermore, increased lake acidity also affects the loons' survival, since acidity results in a decrease of fish and other foods, causing loon chicks on very acid lakes to starve. Acidification of lakes also increases the rate of methylmercury production in lake sediments and water, thus giving loons mercury poisoning or causing them to lay fewer eggs. Finally, careless fisherman also add to the problem, since their use of lead sinkers can lead to lead poisoning, which loons can get after eating fish with lead sinkers or picking up discarded sinkers from the lake bottom. And, abandoned or unattended fishing line and hooks also cause loon injury and death.

So, let's protect the loons we have left. To do this, boats should be kept away from swimming birds and chicks too young to dive or fly. Some shoreline areas should be left undisturbed so loons can nest, and boaters who pass should travel at low speed to prevent wakes. Anglers must use nonlead sinkers and be sure that no hooks or lines are left unattended or abandoned. We must strive to save the loon, the "voice of the wilderness."

## Sample Multigenre Reports (continued)

### Diary Entry

Dear Diary,

Today my baby brother or sister died. I know if it was a boy or a girl because the baby never had a chance to come out of the egg. My dad was taking his turn sitting on the nest when a water skier went by. My dad got scared by the noise and the rushing water of the skier's wake, and he started to run across the water the way loons do to start their flight. When he did this, his foot hit the egg that was not yet hatched and it cracked open. When my dad got back to the nest, he called to my mom, and together they looked at the broken egg. Then I knew I would not have a companion to grow up with. To be sage, my mom urged me up on her back, and we swam away from the ruined nest. I hope tomorrow is a better day.

### Biopoem

Common Loon

Large, feathered, red-eyed, solid boned

Relative of all waterbirds

Lover of fish, diving, deep waters

Who feels unsteady on land, at home in the water, frightened of motor boats

Who needs clean water, a quiet lake, a place to nest in peace

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Who fears lead sinkers, polluted waters, water skiers

Who gives a haunting *cry*, beauty to the world, support to its mate

Who would like to see no more acid rain, vacationers respect them, to be off the endangered list

Resident of the waterways of Canada and the United States

Loon

### Advertisement:

For Sale: A Safe Place for Loons

Clear, deep, acid- and mercury-free lake stocked with fish

Ready for immediate occupancy

No fishing, boating, or water skiing allowed

Contact the Department of Wildlife at 1-800-LOON

### Interview with a Male Loon

**What kind of loon are you?** A common loon

**What do you look like?** I am large and have a low-slung body and short legs. I have black and white checkered feathers on my back, white feathers on my belly, a glossy black head, and a white necklace around my throat. My eyes are bright red, and my black bill is very long and pointed. Like other loon adults, I have a large body; mine is within the normal range of 2.7 to 6.3 kilograms. I measure almost a meter from bill tip to outstretched feet and have quite a large bill.

**Does your mate look different? Explain.** My mate and I have the same plumage colorings, but I am larger.

## Sample Multigenre Reports (continued)

### Interview with a Male Loon (continued)

**Tell me about your bone structure?** Many of my bones are solid rather than hollow like those of other birds.

**What do you eat?** I eat fish, crayfish, frogs, snails, leeches, and salamanders.

**Are you a better swimmer and diver than walker? Why?** I am a much better swimmer than walker, because my body is so large, and I am so heavy that I am clumsy on land and I walk slowly. But, when I am in the water, I swim and dive with ease. My legs have powerful muscles for swimming; my heavy bones make me less buoyant and help me to dive. My large webbed feet propel me underwater, and my wings help me turn easily underwater.

**Why are you sitting on the nest?** That's what loon fathers do—we take turns with loon mothers.

**How many babies do you usually have each year?** Two, but lately only one egg hatches.

**What kind of help will your baby need when it hatches?** Loon chicks are born already covered with down. They are able to maneuver around the nest on the first day after they are hatched, finding their own grit and pieces of vegetation. They are also able to swim within a day. After their first day or two of life, the chicks do not return to the nest. But, they spend more than half their time on their mother's and my backs to rest and conserve heat.