

# Pacific Loon

*Gavia pacifica*

The Pacific Loon is perhaps the most abundant loon in North America. It spends most of the year on the Pacific Ocean, returning to inland Arctic tundra lakes only for three months in summer to breed.

## Keys to Identification

### Adult Description

- Large waterbird, medium-sized loon.
- Long body.
- Rounded head and nape.
- Relatively thin, pointed bill.
- Dark flanks.

### Immature Description

Similar to nonbreeding adults; dark gray upperparts and white throat, chest, and belly.

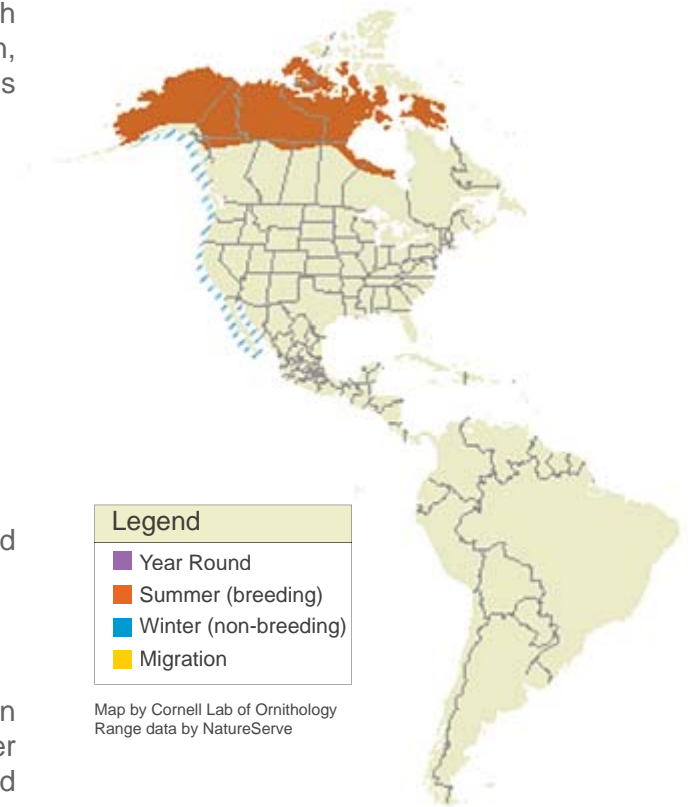
### Cool Facts

- Pacific and Arctic loons in the waters off Japan in late winter forage cooperatively, swimming under and around schools of sand lance (a small fish) and concentrating them into an area about one meter in diameter. Japanese fishermen exploited this habit by fishing for sea bream that gathered to feed on the sand lance. With such assistance from the loons, the fishermen could earn a year's livelihood in February and March alone; as a result, the loons were worshipped as messengers from heaven. Now, this practice has ceased because of unexplained declines in loon populations, collapse of sea bream populations, and adoption of other fishing methods.

## Measurements

### Both Sexes

- Length - 22.8 - 29.1 inches
- Wingspan - 43.3 - 50.4 inches
- Weight - 35.3 - 88.2 ounces



Map by Cornell Lab of Ornithology  
Range data by NatureServe