

Signs of the Seasons & Maine Audubon Loon Chick Observation Categories

Do you see downy young?

Answer YES and include number observed if:

You see loon chicks covered with fluffy down feathers, and without any smooth contour (adult) feathers. Down may be darker (“natal down”, top two photos, chicks 0-2 weeks old) or lighter brown (“brown down”, bottom two photos, chicks 2-4 weeks old).

Please add a note in the comments if you see chicks riding on their parent’s backs as it indicates the chicks are <10 days old.

Also add a note in the comment section if you have any information about hatch date, or if you can age the chick more closely to the Natal Down vs. Brown Down stages.



Do you see partially fledged young?

Answer YES and include number observed if:

You see loon chicks with a mix of both fluffy down and smooth contour feathers, often having an unkempt or ragged appearance.

These chicks are typically 4-10 weeks of age. Towards the end of this stage, chicks will be attempting to fly.



Do you see fully-fledged young?

Answer YES and include number observed if:

You see loon chicks covered with smooth contour feathers and no fluffy down(natal) feathers. This includes young that can fly, young that are still incapable of sustained flight, as well as young that are still dependent on adults. These chicks are typically >10 weeks old. They will retain this plumage until they molt into their breeding plumage at 2.5 years.

