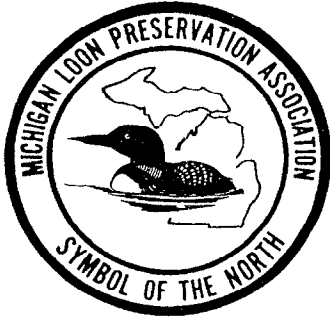


For more information about
Common Loons and their
protection, please contact:

Michigan Loon Preservation
Association/Michigan Loonwatch

Michigan Audubon Society
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Helping Protect Loons



The Modification of Trap
Nets to Reduce Capture of
Common Loons

Estimated Loon Mortality In Trap Nets

The Common Loon experienced serious population declines throughout southern portions of the breeding range in the Eastern United States in the 1960s and 1970s.

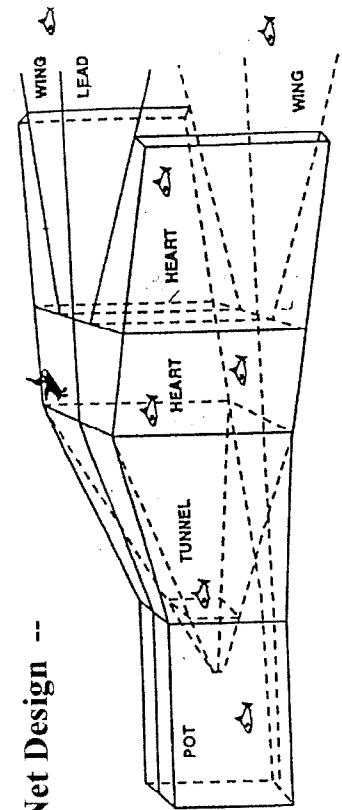
Destruction of breeding habitat through human activities & toxins in the water are responsible for loon mortality. HOWEVER, commercial trap nets set for whitefish have also been the cause of substantial mortality.

Losses appear to be especially high in south Lake Superior with recent annual estimates of 263 dead loons. Eighty-six percent of dead loons had been caught in the hearts of trap nets.

The origin of loons dying in trap nets in Lake Superior is unknown, but it is likely that these birds are young adults that have failed in their nest attempts. If these birds are actual or potential Michigan breeders, loons trapped in nets set in the Great Lakes could represent about 50% of total chick production in Michigan.

Basis For Change of Mesh Size

- Most loons are entangled in the roof or top of the heart of trap nets when they attempt to surface, they are caught in the net and drown.
- Traditional mesh in the top of the heart of the net is 4" to a side.
- Carey (1992) found that 80% of loons could pass through a mesh square 6" to a side.
- Trials of such mesh in the top of the heart of the net suggest that fish catch was not diminished because of escape thru the larger mesh.
- Voluntary conversion to nets with the enlarged mesh in the top of the heart should be encouraged.
- Conversion should occur when nets are replaced. Repairs to the top of the heart should be made using the large mesh.
- Follow-up studies should monitor the success of protecting loons and the percent of conversion to the larger mesh size.



Trap Net Design --

Christiansen, J.L. and W.L. Robinson, 1997.
Modification of trap nets to reduce capture of
common loons. Lake and Reserv. Manage.
13(x): xx-xx