

*Common loon  
eggs hatch after  
about 29 days.*



Photo: James La Vigne

*Male and female loons take turns incubating the eggs.*

## 36. Common Loon

*Figure 19 (page 102)*

The common loon, Minnesota's state bird, usually nests on islands or on shorelines of our northern lakes. On some lakes or reservoirs, loons experience frequent nest failures because of water level fluctuations or because their mainland nesting sites are vulnerable to predation by raccoons or other predators.

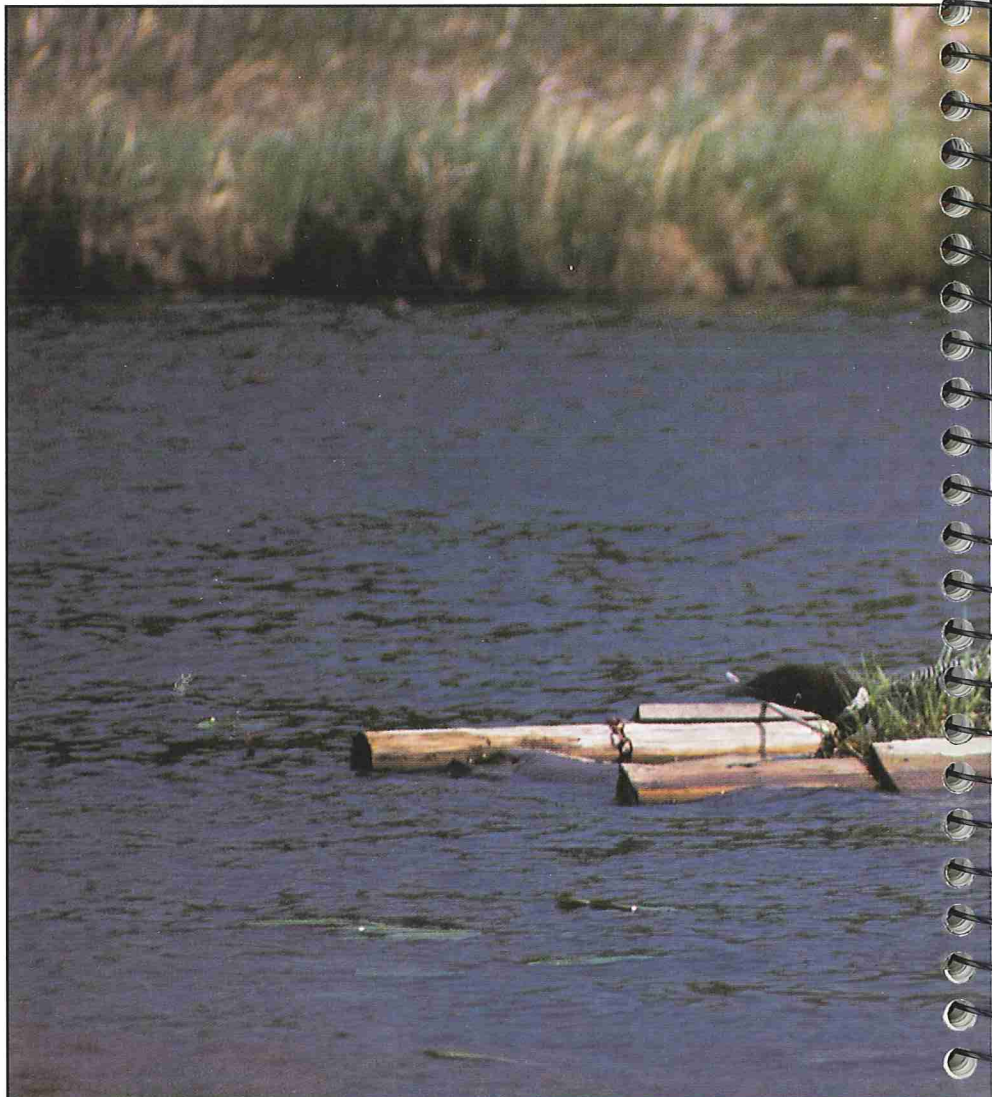
In such cases, a floating nesting platform can provide a more secure site for loons to nest on. Because of the high degree of development on many lakes in northeastern states like New Hampshire, such platforms now provide a substantial portion of the loon production in that region.

It is important to place the nest platform in a location that is reasonably sheltered from wind

action. In most cases this means anchoring it within 30 to 50 feet of the shoreline on the west or northwest side of a lake. Wind-sheltered bays that are connected to larger lakes are ideal. Figure A, page 67, shows some examples of where to locate a loon nesting platform.

Important! Loon nesting platforms can be a hazard to boaters. To avoid safety hazards and legal liability in Minnesota, place reflectors on all four sides of the nest platform and register the nest platform with the county sheriff in the same manner that you would register a swimming raft.

Supplies needed to make a loon nesting platform are five dried ce-



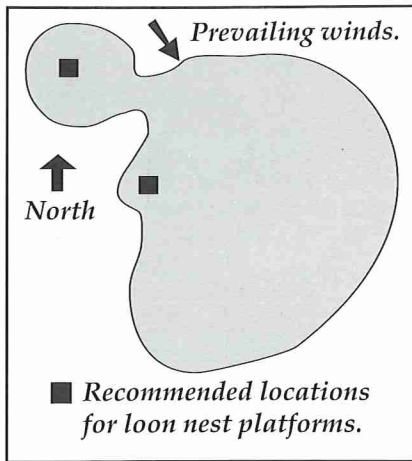


Figure A

dar posts, 6 feet long and 10 inches in diameter; a 6' x 6' section of 12 1/2 gauge 2" x 4" zinc-coated welded wire; 1 1/2 pounds of 1 1/2 inch fence staples; 24—No. 60 spikes for fastening the cedar frame at the notches; 30 feet of No. 9 wire for lashing the frame; four

cable clamps to secure rope or cable to 3/16-inch wire cable for anchor raft and anchor blocks; 30 feet of lines; two 8" x 8" x 16" concrete blocks or equivalent for anchors; boughs, cattails, rushes, moss, sedge mat, or equivalent to cover the platform to make it look natural; and two bushels of old reeds for nest building to be added immediately after ice-out in the spring.

To build the loon nesting platform, notch, spike, and wire the framework of the platform. Staple welded wire onto the bottom of the three parallel logs by placing staples 4 inches apart with double rows of staples on each log. Attach anchor lines at two opposite corners. Fill the raft with cattails,

Photo: Cornell Lab of Ornithology



Constructing a loon nest platform can be a good project for a lake association.

Photo: Cornell Lab of Ornithology

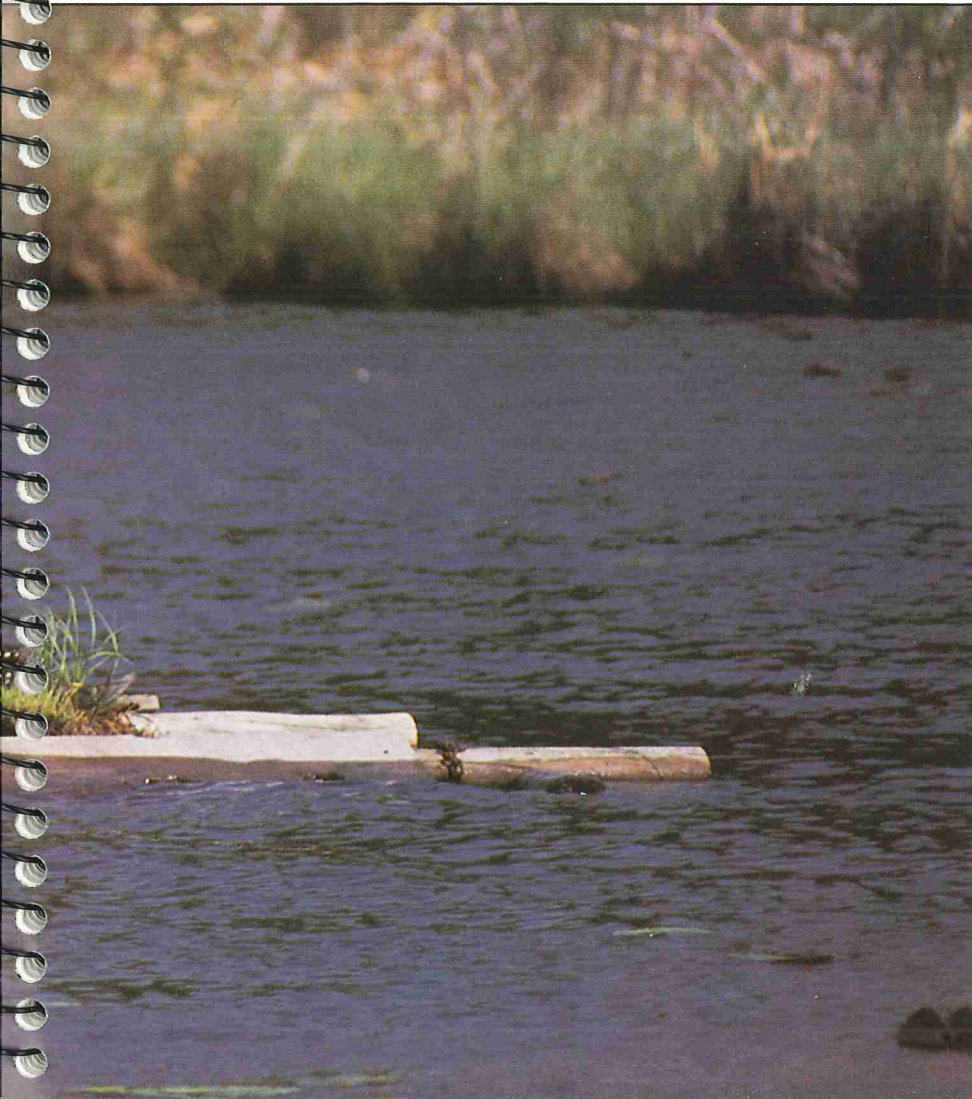


Some aquatic vegetation is planted on the loon nesting platform so it looks like a small floating island.

rushes (roots and all) and sedge mat. The water should be at least 2 to 3 feet deep. There should be at least 3 feet of slack in the anchor lines to allow for high water. To help prevent this platform from eventually becoming waterlogged and sinking, it may be desirable to fasten a several-inch layer of styrofoam on top of the wirescreen before adding the marsh vegetation.

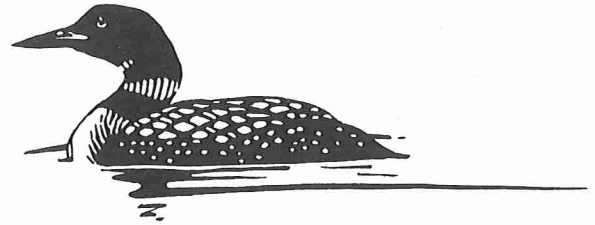
This information has been provided by Mr. John Mathisen, Forest Biologist, Chippewa National Forest, Cass Lake, Minn.

*This loon was using a nest platform near Nisswa, Minn.*

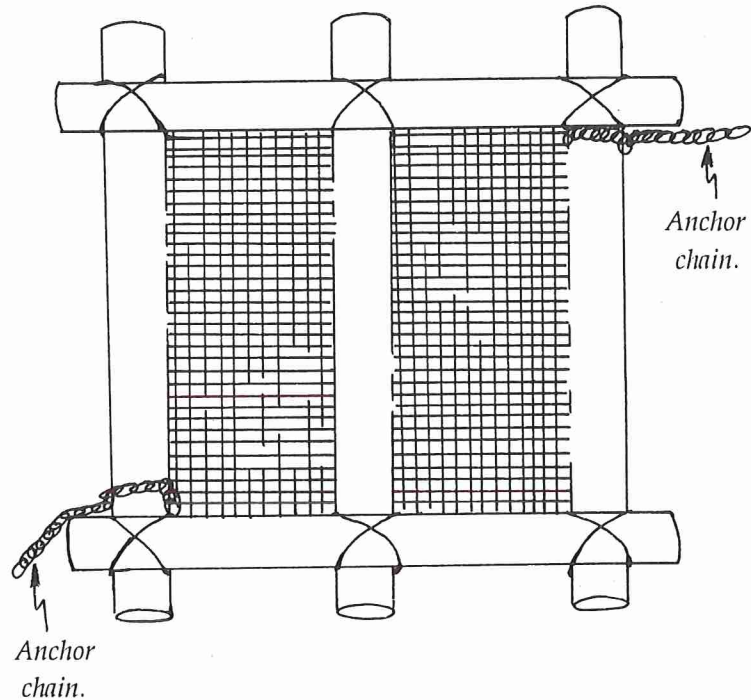


# Figure 19

## Common Loon Nest Platform

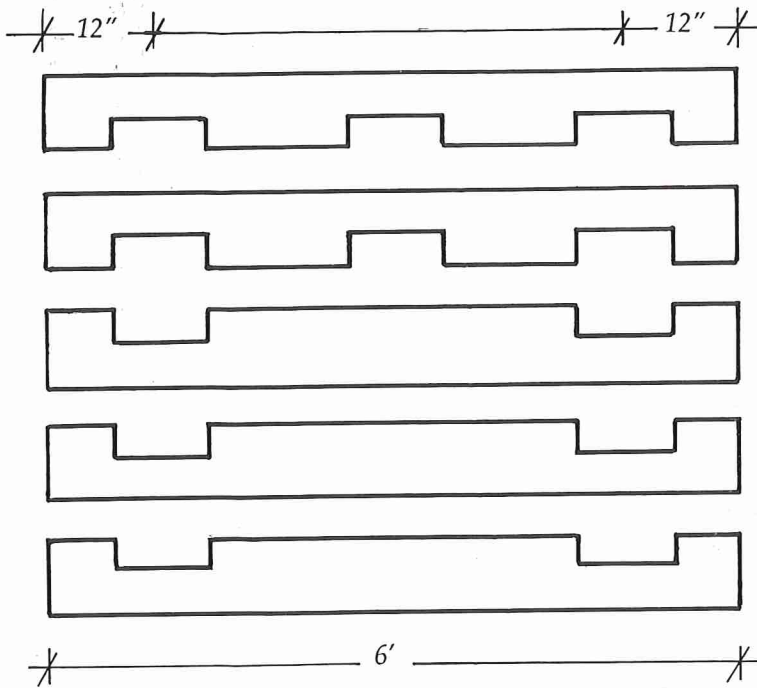


*Chick ramp:* It is important to fasten a gently sloping ramp from the side of the platform into the water to allow loon chicks to climb back onto the platform after their first swim.



**Materials:**

- Five 10" diameter cedar poles - 6 feet long.
- One 4' x 4' welded wire screen (2" x 4" mesh).



Notch logs and latch together with wire.  
 Staple wire screen under raft.  
 Fill raft with wet aquatic vegetation.  
 Anchor with chains at opposite corners.