

Why might it be important to learn more about loon music?

Jay Mager¹ and Charles Walcott²

¹Department of Biological & Allied Health Sciences, Ohio Northern University, Ada, Ohio, 45810, USA; j-mager@onu.edu

²Department of Neurobiology and Behavior, Cornell University, Ithaca, New York, 14853, USA; cw38@cornell.edu

Although it is perhaps one of the more identifiable characteristics of loons in general, we know very little about the “messages” and “meanings” of the various calls that constitute the loon vocal repertoire. The advent of technologies to analyze acoustic signals as well as reliable methods to individually-mark and identify individuals in the field have allowed biologists to conduct empirical investigations of the function of long-distance acoustic signals in loons.

Here, we review research that we and others have conducted considering acoustic signaling among loons, and delve into our specific work investigating the information communicated specifically by the territorial ‘yodel’ of male common loons (*Gavia immer*). We then explore what benefits can be gained, from the perspectives of animal acoustic communication as well as loon conservation and management (across all species), by continuing studies that explore the structure and function of acoustic signals within loons. Such future work can greatly enhance our understanding of the behavioral and ecological adaptive significance of such acoustic signals in this unique group of non-oscine birds.