

Capital Investment Committee
State Office Building
100 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.
St. Paul, Minnesota 55155

March 28, 2022

Re: Support of S.F. 3934 / H.F. 4193 – National Loon Center

Dear Members of the Committee:

Audubon Minnesota supports appropriating funds for the National Loon Center, located in the City of Crosslake, Minnesota, as described in S.F. 3934 / H.F. 4193. The Common Loon is classified as a Minnesota Species of Greatest Conservation Need. The National Loon Center will provide critical public education to support Minnesota's state bird.

The National Audubon Society's [Survival by Degrees report](#) paints a dire picture of the future for birds: More than 150 species in Minnesota are threatened by the impacts of changes to Minnesota's weather patterns. A recent study from the Cornell Lab of Ornithology also found a staggering loss of birds. Collectively, North American bird populations have declined by 29% since 1970. But Minnesota has more common loons than any state other than Alaska. Threats to loons include human disturbance and pollutants such as lead and mercury.

Loons' lives are filled with [fun facts](#):¹

- Most birds have light, hollow bones. Loons have solid bones.
- That extra weight helps loons dive as deep as 250 feet and stay underwater for up to five minutes.
- Because their bodies are heavy relative to their wing size, loons need a 100-600 foot "runway" to take off from a lake. But once in the air, loons can fly more than 75 miles per hour.
- The distinctive red in the loon's eye helps them see underwater.
- Scientists think loons can live for 30 years or more.

The work of the National Loon Center aligns with two best management practices contained in the [2014 Common Loon Minnesota Conservation Summary](#), a project supported by Minnesota's Environmental and Natural Resources Trust Fund:

- On a lake-by-lake basis, recreational activity in the north-central region of the state may be the highest concern to loon occupancy and reproductive success. Working with lake associations to monitor loon activity and educate lakeshore residents about the impacts of recreational activities on the lake's nesting pairs is among the most effective management practices.
- Inform the angling public about risks related to lead fishing sinkers and lures (i.e., jigs) and encourage the use of non-toxic materials.

¹ See <https://www.dnr.state.mn.us/birds/commonloon.html>



MINNESOTA

2355 Highway 36 West
Suite 400
Roseville MN 55113
651.739.9332
mn.audubon.org

The National Loon Center's mission of restoring and protecting loon breeding habitats, enhancing responsible recreation, and serving as a national leader to advance loon and freshwater research and education, will be a benefit to all Minnesotans. Audubon Minnesota supports this work to protect the Common Loon for future generations.

Sincerely,

Dr. Dale Gentry
Conservation Manager
Audubon Minnesota