

# The Last Loon

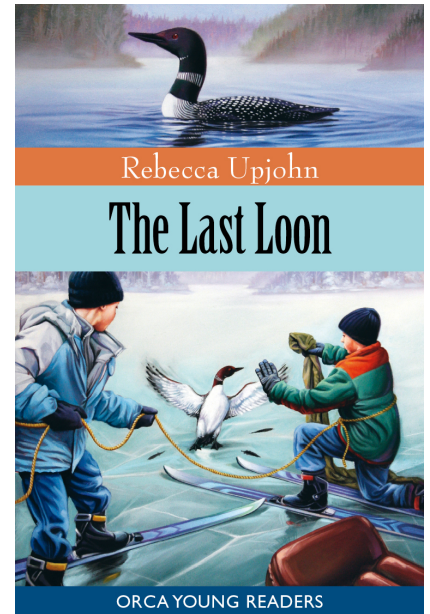
by Rebecca Upjohn

## Science

### COMMON LOON FACTS

Average Adult loon:

- ❖ length from tip of bill to outstretched feet almost a metre
- ❖ wing-span up to 1.5 metres/5 feet
- ❖ average weight is 4.1 kg/9 lbs
- ❖ can dive up to 60 metres /200 feet
- ❖ can fly up to 128 kilometers per hour/80 mph
- ❖ flies at 1,500-2,700 metres/4,900-8,800 feet)
- ❖ wings beat 250 times per minute
- ❖ if it makes it past 2, can live up to 30 years
- ❖ big flipper like feet set far back on their bodies
- ❖ black and white with red eyes during breeding season
- ❖ grey and white with faded rusty/brown/black eyes in winter
- ❖ lives in freshwater in summer
- ❖ lives in saltwater in the winter
- ❖ lays one to two olive-coloured, black-splotched eggs
- ❖ eats mostly fish: perch, suckers, catfish, sunfish, smelt, and minnows. Loons will also eat crayfish, frogs, leeches, and snails.



Predators:

- ❖ raccoons, skunks, gulls eat eggs
- ❖ crows, ravens, herons, bald eagles, snapping turtles will take chicks (usually won't mess with adults)
- ❖ one male challenging another; also may kill chicks of an established mated pair

Biggest cause of adult death:

- ❖ lead poisoning.
- ❖ Also boats, degradation of habitat, human disturbance of nesting sites etc., pesticides and other contaminants.

### Loon Calls:

**Tremolo** – alarm or distress; frightened or disturbed; males and females may enter into a duet to distract a possible threat; also the only call given by loons in flight.

**Wail** – conversational; calling to one another; often heard at night; interaction between mated pairs or to rejoin another family member. May use combination calls as well.

**Hoot** – used among members of family often a parent calling a chick.

**Yodel** – male only call, territorial or border confrontation; serious threat, number of repetitions indicate degree of excitement.