

2015 NUTTALL ORNITHOLOGICAL CLUB'S BLAKE NUTTALL FUND REPORT: ADIRONDACK LOONS AS AN ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATIONAL TOOL



2015 REPORT

ADIRONDACK LOONS AS AN ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATIONAL TOOL



**BRI's ADIRONDACK CENTER
FOR LOON CONSERVATION**

SUBMITTED TO:

The Nuttall Ornithological Club's Blake Nuttall Fund

SUBMITTED BY:

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FRONT PHOTO CAPTION: *Mari West, 2014 Intern for BRI's Adirondack Center for Loon Conservation, holds an Adirondack loon chick.*

Project Description

In 2014, Biodiversity Research Institute's (BRI) received \$2000.00 in generous support from the Nuttall Ornithological Club's Blake Nuttall Fund to provide partial salary support for an intern to assist with the research and education efforts of our Adirondack Center for Loon Conservation. BRI's Adirondack Center for Loon Conservation conducts a variety of loon conservation and research projects to better understand and address threats affecting the Adirondack Common Loon (*Gavia immer*) population and the aquatic habitats in which it lives.

Founded in 1998, Biodiversity Research Institute is dedicated to supporting global ecological health through collaborative research, assessment of ecosystem health, improving environmental awareness, and informing science-based decision making. With more than 100 projects worldwide, we work to assess emerging ecological threats, raise awareness, and inform policymakers, leading to enhanced environmental protections. Our Adirondack Center for Loon Conservation, based in Ray Brook, NY, provides a platform for addressing state, regional, and national issues related to airborne pollutants and loon conservation. Our research and education efforts have been instrumental in advancing both public and scientific understanding about loon natural history and addressing major threats to aquatic ecosystems across northeastern North America.

We utilize the results of our long-term scientific research in our innovative educational and outreach initiatives to disseminate a broad base of information to enhance public and scientific understanding about loons and conservation concerns affecting aquatic ecosystems across northeastern North America. This project provided support for an intern to gain experience in a variety of outreach techniques to communicate the results of our research with the public and scientific communities.

Project Objectives

The primary objective of this project was to hire an intern to assist BRI's Adirondack Center for Loon Conservation with its outreach and conservation projects.

A secondary objective was to provide an intern with a variety of outreach, communication, and data management skills that will be valuable in his or her future career.

Project Activities

The following activities were conducted in the late summer and fall of 2014:

- With the support of the Nuttall Ornithological Club's Blake Nuttall Fund, an intern, Mari West, was hired from late August through mid-October, 2014. Mari was one of our summer, 2014, loon monitoring field crew and was very reliable and capable, thus, she continued on in the internship position. Mari's enthusiasm, dependability, knowledge of loons, and pleasant personality proved to be excellent attributes for her internship work.

- Because of funding limitations, and because Mari decided to pursue an incredible opportunity to work on an invasive species project on the Johnston Atoll, we were only able to hire Mari for a limited time in the fall of 2014. However, in that brief period, Mari participated in and successfully accomplished a variety of the outreach and research projects outlined in our 2014 proposal to the Nuttall Ornithological Club's Blake Nuttall Fund, including:
 - Assisting in the coordination and implementation of our second annual Adirondack Loon Celebration.
 - Revising and updating our elementary school curriculum, *The Loon Scientists Program*.
 - Presenting displays about loon natural history and BRI's Adirondack Center for Loon Conservation at community events.
 - Reviewing and refining of our recently updated website, www.briloon.org/adkloon.
 - Assisting in the development and distribution (by email and postal mail) of our annual newsletter, *The Adirondack Tremolo*, to more than 7000 people on our mailing list.
 - Initial cataloging of trail camera photographs from our 2014 loon nest camera project, including thousands of photos from cameras placed at 19 Adirondack loon nest sites.

Project Benefits

The specific benefits of this project included:

1. The coordination of our second annual Adirondack Loon Celebration event, which was held on Sunday, October 12, 2014. The Celebration was attended by more than 250 people, who enjoyed concerts by Roy Hurd and Jamie Savage, a hilarious ventriloquist act by Sylvia Fletcher and her extraordinary puppets, a presentation about Common Loons and the work of BRI's Adirondack Center for Loon Conservation, and other activities. Additionally, Mari co-led a field trip for some of the Celebration participants to observe some of our study loons.
2. The revision and expansion of our school curriculum, *The Loon Scientists Program*, to provide a broader curriculum that will be accessible for all elementary-school grade levels, from grades 1-6. The updated curriculum will be available for schools world-wide through our website, www.briloon.org/adkloon, in the fall of 2016.
3. Increased public awareness about Common Loons and the research and outreach projects of BRI's Adirondack Center for Loon Conservation through the distribution of our newsletter, *The Adirondack Tremolo*, and by Mari's presence at our display for several community events.
4. A fresh look and opinion of our updated website, www.briloon.org/adkloon, enabling us to fine-tune and improve many sections.
5. The organization of thousands of trail camera photos from Adirondack loon nests to enable us to assess Adirondack loon breeding activities, nesting behaviors, predation events, and disturbance (human or wildlife) of loon nest sites.

Additionally, Mari greatly benefited from her internship with BRI's Adirondack Center for Loon Conservation. She obtained a wide variety of unique experiences, including the coordination of a community event (e.g., developing media materials, contacting sponsors and in-kind donors, and leading

field trips); development of an elementary school environmental science curriculum that meets national and state learning standards; development and presentation of outreach materials for our website and public displays, as well as our newsletter, *The Adirondack Tremolo*; and the management of large quantities of data for subsequent analysis. These essential skills will be a solid foundation for Mari's future career opportunities.

Summary

In 2014, funding from the Nuttall Ornithological Club's Blake Nuttall Fund provided essential support to enable BRI's Adirondack Center for Loon Conservation to hire Mari West, an outstanding, enthusiastic, and fun (!) intern, for the fall of 2014. Mari was instrumental in assisting the Adirondack Loon Center with a variety of outreach and organizational tasks throughout her internship, thus increasing public awareness about loon research and conservation concerns affecting the Adirondack loon population. Additionally, the internship provided Mari with numerous public outreach, curriculum development, and data management skills that will be valuable in her future endeavors.

We are most grateful to the Nuttall Ornithological Club's Blake Nuttall Fund for your generous support of our 2014 intern, Mari West, which provided benefits to both BRI's Adirondack Center for Loon Conservation and the intern herself, as well as to members of the Adirondack public and elementary school students worldwide. *Thank you!*