

SOUTHERNMOST BREEDING RECORD OF THE PACIFIC LOON (*GAVIA PACIFICA*) IN BRITISH COLUMBIA

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In autumn 2006, a friend and I planned a fishing trip near the south end of Takla Lake in the central interior of British Columbia. On 20 September, we put our rowboat in Embryo Lake (55° 07' N, 125° 27' W). The lake is divided in two by a narrow, shallow slough with about 20 cm (8 in) of water. Both large portions of the lake are about 6.1 m (20 ft) deep. Cutthroat trout (*Oncorhynchus clarki*) and rainbow trout (*O. mykiss*) are abundant. We fished in the larger portion first and after an hour moved to the south end. When we rowed out into the lake around a point of land we saw an adult Pacific Loon (*Gavia pacifica*; Figure 1), who hung around that portion of the lake for the 2.5 hr we were present. We saw only one bird, an adult.

The following day we proceeded directly up into the portion of the lake where we had seen the adult loon. We were fishing for 20 min or so when we noticed a large but young loon that was much more wary than the adult. It was in juvenile plumage, was considerably smaller than the adult seen previously (3/4 size), and showed traces of grayish-brown down



Figure 1. Adult Pacific Loon incubating near Bell II River, BC. 8 June 1999 (R. Wayne Campbell). BC Photo 3151.

about the nape and upper neck (see Russell 2002). The young loon was alone when first spotted but moved away from us and joined its parent. Since we were having frost at night we wondered if the young loon would make it out of the lake before freeze-up.

Over the past three decades the Pacific Loon

has slowly been extending its breeding range southward into British Columbia from the southern Yukon Territory. It was first confirmed breeding in the province in 1978 when two pairs of Pacific Loons, each with a small chick, were discovered on small lakes along Highway 37 between the Yukon

Territory-British Columbia border and Boya Lake Park (Campbell et al. 1985). Through 1983 there were 16 additional nest sites discovered, the most southerly at Kitsault (55° 27' N), east of Alice Arm (Campbell et al. 1990). The family found near the south end of Takla Lake in 2006 is the most southern breeding location known for British Columbia.

Literature Cited

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