

PACIFIC LOON COLLIDES WITH POWER LINES AT TAHSIS, VANCOUVER ISLAND, BRITISH COLUMBIA

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Tahsis is a small coastal village located at the end of Tahsis Inlet, a long fiord on the central west coast of Vancouver Island. On 11 January 2008, while a group of workers were gathered at a job site planning the day's activities, we heard a sound overhead and then was startled by the noise of something in the back of one of the trucks parked near where we were standing. The owner of the truck opened the tailgate to discover a large gray bird amongst the tools and supplies (Figure 1). At the same time we looked up to see the overhead hydro lines, about 6.1 m from the ground, moving back and forth. We came to the conclusion that our feathered friend had collided with the lines and fallen into the back of the truck. A couple of the workers on site moved some of the equipment and supplies away from the bird, and dropped the tail gate to aid in its possible escape. Although it seemed in no hurry to leave the truck the bird did not seem to be in any great distress. The bird, which we initially thought was a grebe, looked to be more dazed and confused than really hurt. We later learned that it was a Pacific Loon (*Gavia pacifica*) in winter plumage (Figure 2). The incident occurred at 1030 hrs on a sunny, calm day. We carried on with our work activities while the loon remained in the truck showing no attempt to leave.

Sometime later Greg Feser, village of Tahsis works department, decided to take the loon for a truck ride to the ocean but it hopped out of the vehicle. He noticed that the loon's legs were so far back on its body that it had difficulty moving about on land. The bird was captured and put into a box and released into the ocean at a nearby boat launch. The bird happily (it seemed) swam away diving for short periods of time while moving towards deeper water.

While there are documented cases of Common Loon (*Gavia immer*) mortality from collisions with power lines (Evers 2004), this incident has not yet been reported for Pacific Loon likely because the

latter species is primarily a coastal marine migrant outside the breeding season (Russell 2002). The record is also of interest because in British Columbia the Pacific Loon is rarely found in winter in protected marine waters at the head of long inlets (Campbell et al. 1990).

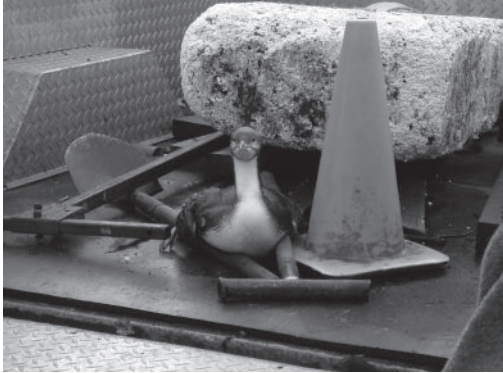


Figure 1. After hitting hydro lines at Tahsis, BC, this Pacific Loon fell into the back of a pickup truck where it was later given a ride to the ocean and released. 11 January 2008 (Stedman Harvey). BC Photo 3638a.

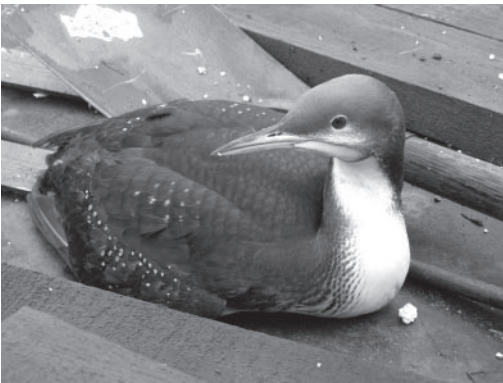


Figure 2. While waiting for its fate this Pacific Loon remained calm while recovering from its mid-air collision with hydro lines at Tahsis, BC. 11 January 2008 (Stedman Harvey). BC Photo 3638b.

Literature Cited

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About the Author

Stedman, an engineering technician with *Telus* in Victoria, BC, considers himself fortunate to have a job that on occasion allows him to get to some of the more remote locations around Vancouver Island. Wherever he goes, his camera, a pocket-sized digital, isn't far away. When not working Stedman is interested in photography and enjoys capturing the beauty of nature throughout British Columbia.
