



Sample Script: One-on-One Discussions

When to Use This Script: This document provides Look Out for Loons Volunteers with a sample script for speaking with individuals or small groups of friends, neighbors, lake users, and others about Maine's common loons. It is designed to be used in conjunction with the brochure titled [How Close is Too Close?](#)

This sample script assumes you have met a family at a community boat dock but you should customize this script to fit the circumstances you are most likely encounter.

Greetings & Introduction:

- Hello, my name is _____. I am a volunteer with *Look Out for Loons*, a program of Maine Lakes and Maine Audubon.
- We are making sure that lake users are aware of our resident loons and know a few simple things you can do to make sure we do not disturb them.
- As you are out on the pond today, the most important thing to know is that we do not want to disturb this family which is trying to nest and raise babies this summer.
- [Share any details you are aware of about the loon's recent history].
 - We have ___ loons on this pond.
 - They have a good track record of raising chicks each year.
 - [Other interesting facts you can share].

Share the *How Close is Too Close?* Brochure:

- So, while you are out on the lake today there are some simple things you can do to ensure we are not adding stress to the loon's lives.
- The most important thing is to observe from a distance.
- To help know how close is too close, there are a few simple signals a loon will give.
 - You can tell when a loon is relaxed when:
 - Its neck is relaxed (show picture in [How Close is Too Close?](#)),
 - It might occasionally peek under water,
 - You may see it diving and coming up with something to eat
 - It might flap its wings, stretch its leg, or preen its feathers while you watch.
 - This is how we want loons to be when we are around them.
 - How would we know if you are getting too close? A "Concerned" loon may show one or more behaviors:
 - It may raise the feathers on its forehead making it look bigger and squared off – that is a nervous loon.
 - It may stretch its neck up higher and look around if something is disturbing it
 - It may ride low in the water.
 - Its body will be low and it will lower its neck and head with its chin almost in the water.
 - This is a bird that is trying to hide.
 - These are all signs are a nervous loon.

Continued

- If you observe any of these behaviors it is a signal to move away.
- You may be getting too close to its mate, its nest, or its chicks.
- This becomes more critical if you see signals that the bird is “Stressed.”
 - If you were to get too close to a mother sitting on eggs she might hunker down trying to hide.
 - This is a stressed bird. We never want to scare her off the nest.
 - So, if you see this behavior back away immediately.
 - Stressed loons on the water will sometimes do what we human’s call a penguin display:
 - This a bird that feels threatened.
 - It will rare up, spread its wings, tuck its chin and paddle rapidly toward the threat in a splashing fashion.
 - This is a loon that is literally throwing its body at a threat that has gotten too close.
 - This is a sign you should move away.
 - Finally, if you see a loon with a stretched neck and it then starts to give that tremolo call – that yodel that loons are famous for - That means you have crossed a line and gotten too close to a nest or babies.
 - This is a stressed bird.
 - You should back away.

Summary & Close:

- So, those are a few things that will allow you to observe these loons and not risk disturbing them.
 - Thank you for our help and cooperation.
 - Have fun out there!
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Optional Talking Points:

- For Boaters:
 - I see you are going out on a boat.
 - Unfortunately, boat strikes are one of the growing causes of death for Maine loons.
 - Please keep a careful watch for them and be prepared to slow down quickly. They can pop up at any time.
 - Also, it is important not to create a wake within 200 feet from shore [or from the loon raft if applicable].
 - Loon nests are on the ground [or a raft if applicable] and waves can swamp the nest.
 - That would be a disaster.
 - So please, no wake within 200 feet from shore or an island or from a nest platform.
- For Fishing:
 - It is important to retrieve all fishing line and tackle which presents hazards for loons.
 - Also, lead poisoning is another cause of death for loons.
 - That is why Maine has passed a law banning the use of lead sinkers and bare-headed jigs 2.5 inches or less or 1 ounce or less.
 - Believe it or not, loons ingest these things and get lead poisoning which can be deadly.
 - Here is a brochure telling you more [[Fish Lead Free](#) brochure].