



U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

Region 7 - Alaska

1011 East Tudor Road

Anchorage, Alaska 99503

(907)786-3309 (TDD Available)

News

07-18

For Immediate Release

Contact: Ted Swem (907) 456-0441

Larry Bell (907) 786-3431

**FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE SEEKS INFORMATION ON
POPULATION STATUS OF YELLOW-BILLED LOONS**

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service announced today that a petition seeking to add the yellow-billed loon to the federal list of endangered and threatened species presents substantial information indicating that Endangered Species Act protection may be warranted. The Federal Register notice will be published on May 30, 2007.

In response to this initial finding, the Service will initiate a thorough review of all available biological information regarding the loon's status to determine whether to propose it for Endangered Species Act protection. In initiating status review, the Service asks the public to submit any pertinent information on the status of, or threats to, this species.

The initial finding, called a 90-day finding under the provisions of the Endangered Species Act, is based on scientific information about the species provided in a petition from domestic and international organizations, including the Center for Biological Diversity and the Natural Resources Defense Council.

Information currently available to the Service describes threats to yellow-billed loons, including destruction and modification of habitat due to development and pollution, lack of regulatory protection, and mortality from accidental drowning in fishing nets and hunting. Yellow-billed loons are few in number, do not recover easily from population declines, are susceptible to disturbance and may be vulnerable to habitat loss. If listed, the species would be afforded the full range of protections available under the Endangered Species Act, including prohibitions on killing, harming or otherwise "taking" a species.

There is little comprehensive scientific data on worldwide populations of yellow-billed loons. In Alaska, where some studies have been conducted, population estimates range from 3,700 to 4,900. More than 75 percent of breeding yellow-billed loons in Alaska are found on the National Petroleum Reserve. A rough estimate of the world yellow-billed loon population is 16,500.

Yellow-billed loons nest exclusively in coastal and low-lying arctic tundra, always near permanent, fish-bearing lakes. The large-bodied birds have low reproductive success and depend on high annual adult survival to maintain population levels. Simply put, individual birds must live many years before they can reliably replace themselves with offspring that survive long enough to breed.

The Service will solicit information from state and federal natural resource agencies and all interested parties regarding the yellow-billed loon and its habitat. Comments and information must be submitted by August 28, 2007. Data, information, and comments concerning this finding may be submitted by any of the following methods:

- Via mail to Yellow-billed Loon Comments, Endangered Species Branch, Fairbanks Fish and Wildlife Field Office, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 101-12th Ave., Room 110, Fairbanks, AK 99701.
- Fax to (907) 456-0208. Please indicate you are submitting comments for the Yellow-billed Loon finding on the cover sheet.
- By electronic mail (e-mail) to YBLoon@fws.gov. Include “Attn: Yellow-billed Loon” in the beginning of your message, and do not use special characters or any form of encryption. Electronic attachments in standard formats (such as .pdf or .doc) are acceptable, but please name the software necessary to open any attachments in formats other than those given above. Include your name and return address in your e-mail message (anonymous comments will not be considered).
- Submit comments via the internet at the Federal eRulemaking Portal: <http://www.regulations.gov>. Follow the instructions for submitting comments.

In 2006, the Service, working with a variety of Native, state and federal partners, developed a conservation agreement to protect the yellow-billed loon in northern and western Alaska. This agreement represents a cooperative effort among the partnering resource agencies to take measures necessary to conserve the species and its habitats in Alaska. In so doing, the partnering agencies hope that current or potential threats in these areas can be avoided, eliminated or reduced to the degree that the species will not become threatened or endangered. The conservation potential of this agreement will be evaluated as part of the status review. The Yellow-billed Loon Conservation Agreement is available at <http://alaska.fws.gov/mbsp/mbm/loons/species/Yellow-billed-loon.htm> or can be requested from the address listed above.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is the principal federal agency responsible for conserving, protecting, and enhancing fish, wildlife, and plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. The Service manages the 95-million-acre National Wildlife Refuge System, which encompasses 547 national wildlife refuges, thousands of small wetlands and other special management areas. It also operates 69 national fish hatcheries, 64 fishery resource offices, and 81 ecological services field stations. The agency enforces federal wildlife laws, administers the Endangered Species Act, manages migratory bird populations, restores nationally significant fisheries, conserves and restores wildlife habitat such as wetlands, and helps foreign governments with their conservation efforts. It also oversees the Federal Aid program that distributes hundreds of millions of dollars in excise taxes on fishing and hunting equipment to state fish and wildlife agencies.

-FWS-

*For more information about the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service,
visit our home page at <http://www.fws.gov>*