

(Kevin Metcalf)



## Gaviidae the LOONS

Loons are waterbirds known for their powerful swimming and diving abilities. They have three fully-webbed front toes which differentiate them from the grebes and ducks. They are good fliers with long, narrow, pointed wings, but they are poor walkers, barely able to move around on land. They are primarily fish eaters.

Five types of loons can be found in North America. Three of these, the Red-throated, Pacific, and Common Loons, are found in the Carolinas. These birds breed on lakes in the far north and migrate far to the south to spend the winter. A substantial percentage of all western Atlantic loons winter in coastal North and South Carolina. Most winter in our coastal areas, but some can be found wintering inland on large lakes. Only the Common Loon and Red-throated Loon have been found visiting the Central Carolinas.

To date, there have been three sightings of Pacific Loon on inland lakes in North Carolina: McDowell County, May 6, 2007; Guilford County, November 18, 2008; and Buncombe County, January 5, 2012.