

# Bird Symbols of Canada

## Part 1

### Ontario

#### Provincial Bird: The Common Loon (*Gavia immer*)

Ontario adopted the Common Loon as its official bird on 23 June 1994. This choice is rather appropriate, given that lakes and rivers make up one fifth of the geographical area of the province. About this bird, the Canada Government website states:

*“Found in lakes and rivers across the province, the loon’s eerie call is associated with the beauty and solitude of Ontario’s wilderness. The loon can dive to depths of 70 metres in search of food, and stay under water for three minutes.”<sup>1</sup>*

The Common Loon has appeared on several bird stamps issued by Canada Post. The first of these, issued in 1998, was from a set of two (the second featured a polar Bear) and the design artwork was done by Alain Leduc et Steven Slipp, with engraving done by Martin Mörck.<sup>2</sup>

#### 1998 Common Loon



Image source: [www.stampworld.com](http://www.stampworld.com)

Fast forward then to 2012, when the Common loon appeared on a definitive stamp based on the theme of “Baby Animals”. The stamp below is a self-adhesive and was also printed in a booklet of six stamps.

#### 2012 Baby Wildlife (definitives)



Image source: [www.colnect.com](http://www.colnect.com)

---

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/services/provincial-territorial-symbols-canada/ontario.html>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.stampworld.com/en/stamps/Canada/Postage%20stamps/1990-1999?year=1998&user=441875>



Our editor has previously included an image of the 2017 miniature sheet in the September 2017 edition of Flight Magazine (Vol. 32, No 1 page 14) and was as equally impressed as I have been by the quality of these stamps.

In addition to the miniature sheet, Canada Post issued the set also in self-adhesive booklets of ten stamps (two panes of five), priced at \$8.50, representing the Canada domestic rate. Canada Post printed 400,000 of these stamps.



Image source: <https://canadapost.ca/>

The Common Loon (or Great Northern Diver) is a large bodied water bird that breeds on floating mats of vegetation on lakes and ponds in boreal forests. In winter, the Loon is mostly found in open waters in bays and oceans, either singly or in flocks. The Loon feeds on fish in deep, clear water<sup>3</sup>. It may also feed on frogs, crayfish, mussels, leeches and aquatic insects.

Information from Nature Canada indicates that the Common Loon is between 66-91cm long; and 2.2-7.6 kg in weight. The Loon has different colouring during summer and in winter. In summer (when the Loon is breeding) the Loon has a glossy black head with a black bill, thick black neck and a white collar. The back plumage is black and white in a checkerboard pattern. In contrast, in winter, the head and bill are grey; the neck white and the back plumage is grey in a scalloped pattern. Interestingly, the male and female Loons share the same colours throughout the year and can be distinguished by the fact that the male is larger<sup>4</sup>.

<sup>3</sup> <https://ebird.org/canada/species/comloo>

<sup>4</sup> <https://naturecanada.ca/news/blog/how-much-do-you-know-about-the-common-loon/>

Other postal authorities that have featured the Common Loon on their stamps include the United States, in particular its State Flowers and Birds series, as well as the similar State Flags set. The Common Loon is the State bird of Minnesota and also appears on the Flag stamp for New Hampshire:

### 1982 US State Birds and Flowers - Minnesota



Image source: [www.stampworld.com](http://www.stampworld.com)

### 2010 US State Flags – New Hampshire



Image source: [www.stampworld.com](http://www.stampworld.com)

The State bird of New Hampshire, as highlighted in the 1982 set above, is the Purple Finch, not the Common Loon!

Other countries that have issued stamps with the Common Loon are:

### 1988 Greenland



Image source: [www.stampworld.com](http://www.stampworld.com)

The Greenland stamp came from a set of four stamps featuring birds designed by Jens Rosing.

The next stamp comes from Iceland:

**1967 Iceland – Great Northern Diver (Common Loon)**



Image source: [www.stampworld.com](http://www.stampworld.com)

We finish this article with a return to Canada, and this single stamp in the “National Wildlife” series, issued on 10 April 1957:

**1957 Canada – National Wildlife Week**



Image source: [www.stampworld.com](http://www.stampworld.com)

Canada Post issued 51,000,000 of this stamp<sup>5</sup>. John F Mash carried out the engraving work<sup>6</sup>.

---

<sup>5</sup> <https://postagestampguide.com/stamps/15683/common-loon-1957-canada-postage-stamp-national-wildlife>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.stampworld.com/en/stamps/Canada/Postage%20stamps/1950-1959?year=1957&user=441875>