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*Raven Hill Discovery Center, incorporated in 1991, is a 501(c)(3) tax-exempt corporation.*

**Mission:** Raven Hill provides a place that enhances hands-on and lifelong learning for all ages by connecting science, history & the arts.

To: Friends and Family everywhere

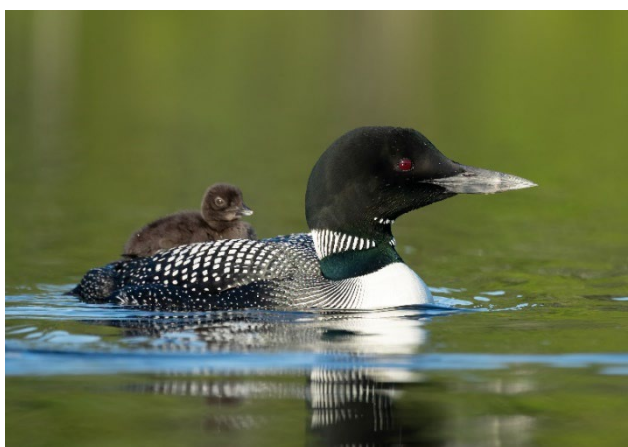
From: Cheri and Raven Hill

Date: April 3, 2021

Re: Weekly Update

Welcome to April, Everyone!

April showers may bring May flowers, but April also brings many birds back to northern Michigan from their winter homes. After the Vernal Equinox, the official beginning of spring in late March, a range of bird species arrive, including our state bird, the robin. Here at Raven Hill, the robins have been back for a couple weeks, but I look forward to mid-April, when the loons begin to appear here in the north.



Newly hatched loon chicks have dark downy feathers on their backs and white bellies. Unlike adult loons, a young loon chick is able to walk upright on land. Wouldn't it be great to have a pair of loons raise their babies on Raven Hill Pond?!



A beautiful pattern of black & white adorns this loon, a descendent of prehistoric birds. No wonder loons are a favorite of scientists, historians and artists! This taxidermy specimen is on display in Raven Hill's Great Room.

Soon after arriving here to breed, loon pairs work together to build their nest on the ground beside water or in shallow water. Then the adults incubate the eggs for about 30 days until they hatch. While baby chickens & ducks are precocious and can feed themselves right away, loon babies are semi-precocious. They hatch down-covered and active, with their eyes open. However, they depend on their parents for food. Baby loon chicks can swim & dive two or three days after hatching. For a couple of weeks, they rest on their mother's back after swimming & diving, so they can warm up. By 12 weeks, they can fly.

The Center's staff took care of a loon once, as allowed with Raven Hill's Department of Natural Resources salvage permit. The loon was thrown up on land during a storm. Its rehabilitation was short and filled with wonder. The loon recuperated at Raven Hill Pond, before being released. It was spring and there were many school field trips. The highlight for each school group was going to the Pond and trying to estimate how long the loon would remain underwater & where you would see it resurface! Students enjoyed charting their observations!

For additional information on common loon territorial behavior, visit [The Loon Project](#) website provided by Dr. Walter Piper at Chapman University.



Look for the loon sculpture in Raven Hill's Exploring Beyond Jurassic Park outdoor walkway! You'll find the loon near *Archaeopteryx*, a bird-like creature from 150 million years ago that had teeth, wings and feathers. Wood sculpture by unknown artist



In Native American mythology, Raven gives us the sun, moon and stars, while Loon plays the role of Earth-Diver. Legend says that Loon is the only animal to succeed at diving to the ocean floor to bring up earth for the Creator to use for making land. Wood sculpture by J. Dudley, The Boyds Collection

Loons belong to the group or clade Aequorlornithes, along with other water birds like flamingos, grebes, shorebirds, penguins, pelicans, herons and storks. Loons are in the order Gaviiformes and they appeared over 40 million years ago.

Inside the Center, visitors will also find loons in the Center's art collection. They are a popular subject for artists in all media, as well as for bird enthusiasts!



Artist, Jennifer Flynn, created this great batik. Jennifer teaches a two-day batik class. Interested in attending a batik class here at Raven Hill? Call Cheri at 231.675.6025 and we'll see, if we can work something out with Jennifer.

The Canadian First Nations people believe, "Loon is a solitary bird of the wilderness that symbolizes peace, tranquility, communication, serenity and generosity. Loon relies on water and water is a symbol for dreams and multiple levels of consciousness, therefore Loon awakens the imagination and reminds us that all hopes, dreams and wishes can become realities." —First-Nations.info

During this continuing pandemic, let Loon be your guide. Like Loon, learn to enjoy solitude; let the beauty of nature envelop you, be at peace; communicate with others; and believe that your dreams can come true. Continue to do your part to beat this coronavirus and its variants. Get vaccinated, wash your hands often and well, wear your mask, socially distance & stay away from crowds. Take care of yourselves and each other, especially as the weather gets nicer. **Don't forget**—only two weeks until we re-open, **IF state pandemic guidelines allow!** Visitors will be asked to mask and socially distance inside and out. Visitor numbers and time spent indoors will both be limited, with other visitors being a given return time for indoor exploration. Check the website for the latest updates. If you have questions, please feel free to call me at 231.675.6025.

Cheri

P.S. If you know someone who might like to receive weekly updates, please send their email addresses to [info@miravenhill.org](mailto:info@miravenhill.org), so I can add their names to our list. If you are interested in previous updates, they are all available on our website—[www.MiRavenHill.org](http://www.MiRavenHill.org)