

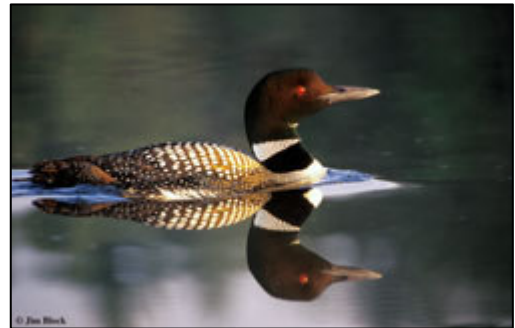
The Squam Lake Important Bird Area

The New Hampshire Important Bird Area Program is part of a national and international effort to identify areas that provide critical habitat to birds during some stage of their annual cycle. In New Hampshire the program is a partnership of the Audubon Society of New Hampshire, the New Hampshire Fish and Game Department, and the University of New Hampshire Cooperative Extension. IBAs are identified based on strict scientific criteria, including 1) the presence of threatened or endangered species, 2) other species and habitats of conservation concern, and 3) areas where birds congregate during breeding, migration, or winter. It is hoped that recognition of IBAs can help guide future conservation and research efforts at areas that meet these criteria.

Squam Lake meets categories 1 and 3 of the IBA criteria, as follows:

1) Endangered, threatened, and conservation concern species

Common Loon (state threatened) – As recently as the 1970s, Squam Lake was one of very few places in New Hampshire where the Common Loon population was relatively stable, albeit depleted from historical levels. As conservation activities increased, Squam almost certainly served an important role in the repopulation of central New Hampshire's lakes. Today, between 10 and 15 pairs nest at Squam, comprising 5-8% of the statewide population. Numbers had been declining in recent years, and productivity (young produced) was low in the 1990s, but both trends appear to be reversing somewhat.



Bald Eagle (state endangered) – In 2003 a pair of Bald Eagles successfully produced a single chick from a nest on one of Squam's many islands. This eagle territory had been active since 2000, but the last recorded nesting prior to this dates to the 1930s.

3) Congregatory species

Great Blue Heron – One of the state's largest heron colonies is found on Long Island. It was last surveyed in 1993, at which point it contained 86 nests. Numbers of nests at this site have varied between 60 and 130 since at least the 1970s.

Waterfowl – Although several species of waterfowl use wetlands in the Squam area, relatively few use primarily the open water itself. The primary species are divers, especially Common Goldeneye and both Hooded and Common Mergansers. The latter has been recorded in especially high numbers: often occurring in flocks of over 200, with a high count of 1000 in December 2001. These data suggest that Squam may be something of a staging area for the species in late fall as other lakes begin to freeze. Common Mergansers may also breed in small numbers around Squam Lake, but recent data are unavailable. Less common divers include Ring-necked Duck, Greater Scaup, Bufflehead, and Black Scoter.

For the purposes of the NH IBA Program, the Squam Lake IBA is defined as Squam Lake, Little Squam Lake, white Oak Pond, all associated islands, and a 250 buffer around the perimeters of all three lakes as per the Shoreland Protection Act.

For more information on the New Hampshire Important Bird Area Program, contact:

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More details on the IBA Program are also available on the N.H. Audubon web site.