



Loon Quest

Enfield, New Hampshire

Physical Difficulty: Moderate

Special Features: Natural

Walking Conditions: Water Quest – Boat needed

Duration: 1-2 hours

Bring: Binoculars, Field Guide, Swimsuit

QUEST SITE OVERVIEW

The Loon Quest is a water Quest that explores Mascoma Lake. You may choose to travel either by kayak or by canoe. Our purpose in making this Quest was to create a fun and fact-filled adventure that showed the importance of preserving our waterways. In particular, we wanted to talk about the recent settlement of Common Loons on Mascoma Lake. Loons are not found in many places in this region so getting a chance to see them is a real treat. If you are interested in seeing the loons, come either in the early morning or at dusk, and there will be less boat traffic then too. Common loons are fish-eating water birds characterized by black and white checkered backs, white bellies, and black heads with black and white striped “necklaces.” The bird is listed as Threatened in New Hampshire. Learn more at www.loon.org.

Want to know where the name Mascoma comes from? You will have to find the treasure box to find out!

To get there: I-89 take Exit 17 toward RT 4-A/Enfield-Canaan. Turn right at the end of the exit ramp onto US-4. Continue along US-4. Bear right onto US-4A. Turn left to cross Shaker Bridge. Take your first right hugging the shore and park at the Mascoma Lakeside Park.

Clues:

This is a quest in search of the loons,
At the least, we hope you will hear this bird's croons.
We also will show you some local lake fun.
All-right, get ready, your quest has begun.

After you park at the lakeside park, you've landed,
Walk down to the edge, and from where you are standing,
Place your kayak into the lake,
Now several paddles to the right you must take.

Now pass by the coffee brown house
It used to be a boat house.
And see how water may flood in from the shore.
We have lots to show you! You won't be bored.

Go under the bridge at the closest partition.
Make sure to avoid motorboats on a mission.
On this side of the bridge where you have paddled,
There is a dam down yonder where water is saddled.

This dam controls water that leaves the lake
And helps control flooding for everyone's sake.
Carefully make your way across the divide
And paddle back through on the far side.

Pass the motorized boat landing & look at the bank, you will see –
A place where good skipping rocks are known to be
Pick up a rock and give it a toss
And teach your companions if they're at a loss.

A few more paddles all in a straight line,
Look to your left: Mount Cardigan you'll find.
A hint for those who don't know where to seek:
Across the lake, two white pines point to its peak.

On this side of the lake loons rarely nest.
The other side of the islands is the place they like best.
Here the highway is too close to the shoreline,
But on their island location, peace is divine.

We're taking our time to show you some sights.
Before we go on we'll tell you loon rights.
All summer long, loons take care of the chicks,
Please don't harass them or play any tricks.

Parent loons flap their wings when they're being protective,
For one moment, we'll switch your perspective.
Baby loons can't fly or dive,
So parents are careful to keep them alive.

Keep paddling near the bank till you reach a seasonal small stream
And ninety degrees to the left turn your team.
If you feel tired, you should take a small break.
Then paddle toward the red roof on the right 'cross the lake.

Make sure you don't paddle all of the way,
For the deepest location is where you will stay.
Stop when you line up with three given spots.
We're playing a game of connecting the dots.

The first spot you align with is all taken care of.
It is the red roof you're already aware of.
The second spot, to your right, is Shaker Point.
Hard working Shakers once lived in this joint.

The third spot, to your left, is the old boating station.
The cream colored house near the bridge is its location.
Once you lined yourself up with this place,
Pause for a moment above 71.5 foot deep space.

Now you're in the middle, take a look around;
Water flows to form this lake from peaks that surround.
Across the lake there is an inlet and the mouth of 'scoma River
This is another source from which water does deliver.

Do not stay too long there,
Or motorboats may come near.
Pass the boating launch, paddle to the bridge if you're smart
Retrace your path, passing where you did start.

Paddle for a while; keep your eyes on the land.
See a six-trunk tree rise where honeysuckle stand.

This tree should have vertical ridges on its bark.
"That is a Locust," to your friends now remark.

Keep paddling along passing boats at rest
To the little inlet, where wildlife like it best
There could be Painted Turtles marked with yellows and reds.
When scared these guys will tuck in their heads.

In this inlet waterfowl dwell.
If you saw a blue heron, that would be swell.
Although you may see one keep this in mind,
Mallards and geese you're more likely to find.

Kingfishers and loons also hang near.
At dusk or at dawn they often are here.
Beavers have also been seen here to roam.
That pile of sticks with chewed ends was their home.

Continue to paddle further into the inlet,
Then up river to the bridge unless a current makes you fret.
This river used to be the cause of great pollution.
When it carried a textile mill's waste dyeing solution.

Here is something that will make you think:
What goes into rivers is what goes down your sink.
The people who live upon these shores used to see
What color water Baltic Mill sent out its pipes: yucky!

Loons are environmental purists.
For many years on Mascoma they were only tourists.
But now that they have chosen to nest here,
We know that from dyes our water is clear.

Turn around and paddle along the left shore.
Don't return to the side that you came from before.
You pass out of the inlet and stay close to the land,
Think of the native people who fished with many a hand.

Follow along the edge of the lake.
Note deposits of large rocks, which glaciers did make.
Many years ago with land covered in ice,
Glaciers shaped this lake. Isn't it nice?

Now you'll pass houses that are on the shoreline.
When you'll no longer see them on the incline,
The land in view was placed into a trust.
For our world today, protecting land is a must.

In order to keep loons upon this lake,
Greater efforts to keep virgin shoreline we must take.
About their environment and nest sites loons are picky.
Fighting against housing development will be tricky.

Since 2002 loons have returned.
This is one reward recovery has earned.
Cleaning the water has taken some time,
But it has been worth it, as you've seen in this rhyme.

Now do a reverse to go back to the park
Where this whole journey made its start.
Hall up your craft, on to the shore
And walk right to the dog park to see what's in store.

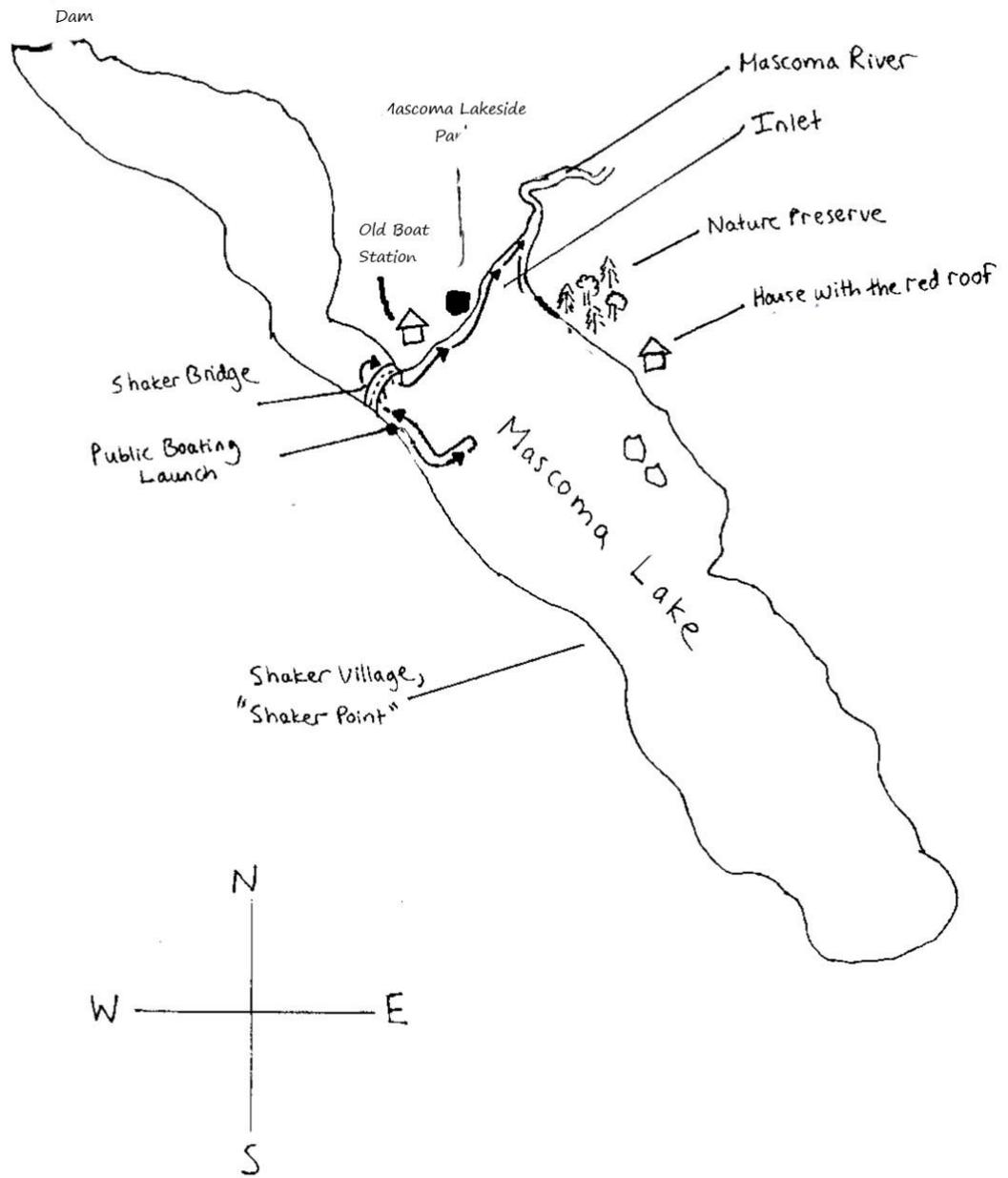
Dogs love to run in this grassy place,
But swimming for some is what makes them race!
Go down a path to the doggy beach,
Enjoy the view, but watch your feet.

Two large trees will be on your right
With multiple trunks all bundled tight.
The second one a maple by name,
Holds a treasure box, this Quest's domain.

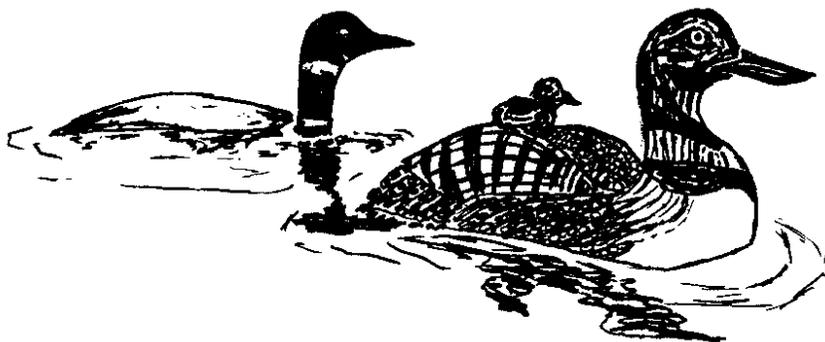
Original Quest was created by Hannah Lindner-Finlay and Rachel Lynch as part of their independent project in Jeannie Kornfeld's Honors Environmental Science class at Hanover High School in 2006. Revised in 2020 by Vital Communities.

The LOON Quest MAP

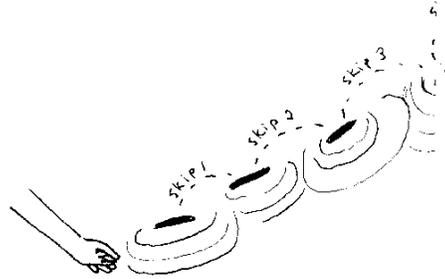
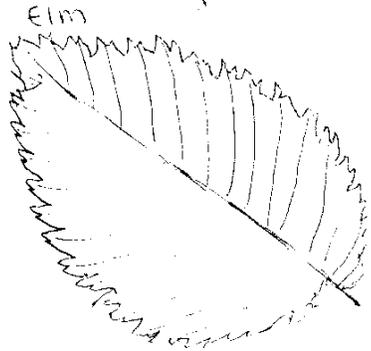
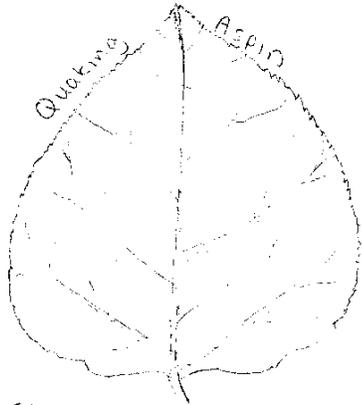
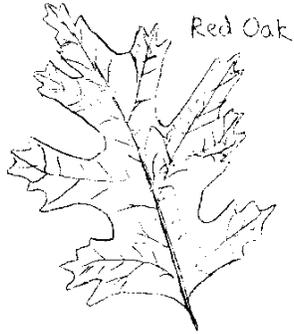
(The arrows → show the path of the quest)



Common loons are duck-like water birds characterized by black and white checkered heads, white bellies, and white wing lining.



As you paddle along,
look for these trees:



a cairn is a pile
of stones usually
used as a memorial
or marker

