

# FINDING FAMILY

The Duckling Raised by Loons



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**Lerner** 

This guide was created by Laura Purdie Salas.

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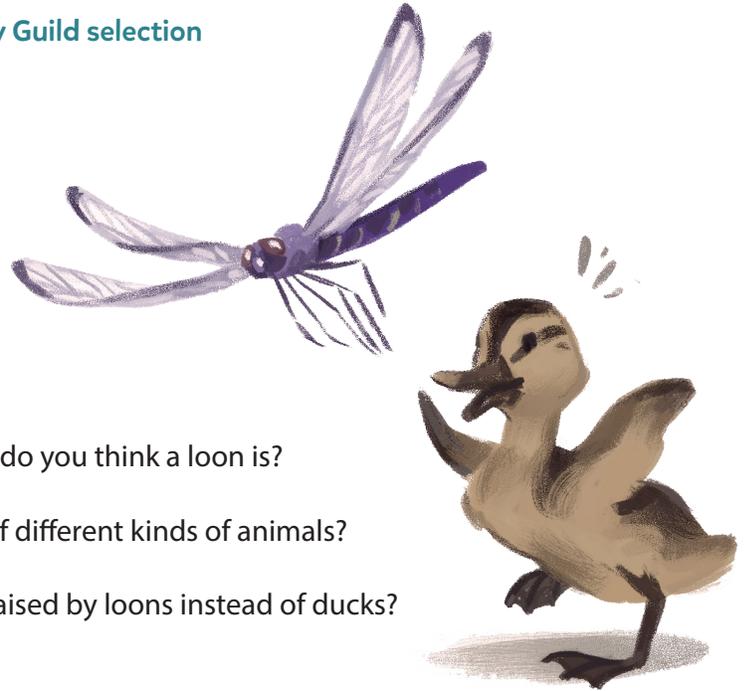
# FINDING FAMILY

## Teaching Guide

On a lake in northern Wisconsin in 2019, loon researchers were surprised to discover a mother and father loon caring for a mallard duckling. Normally, loons and mallards live very different lives and do not get along. Follow along as the duckling grows and displays a mix of both loon behaviors and mallard behaviors.

“Engaging natural science for the very young.” —*Kirkus Reviews*

A Junior Library Guild selection



### PRE-READING QUESTIONS

- *[Read the full title of the book and show the cover.]* What do you think a loon is?
- Do you know any animal friends or families made up of different kinds of animals?
- Why do you think the duckling in this book might be raised by loons instead of ducks?

### READING

Read the book several times over a few days or a week.

The first time, **just slowly read the book aloud** and enjoy it. Invite students to respond with questions or comments. Share back matter as appropriate.

Another time you read, have **students join in** on the repeated lines, “Nobody knows” and “But Duckling does.” Chat with students about why those lines are important *[They show that scientists don’t have all the answers about this incident, and how different Duckling’s behavior is from most ducks’ behavior.]*

During another reading, invite students to notice **what’s the same and what’s different** between Duckling and Mother and Father Loon. How is Duckling’s body like Mother and Father Loon’s bodies? How are ducks’ and loons’ behaviors usually different from each other?

# RESPONSE TO STORY

## WRITING

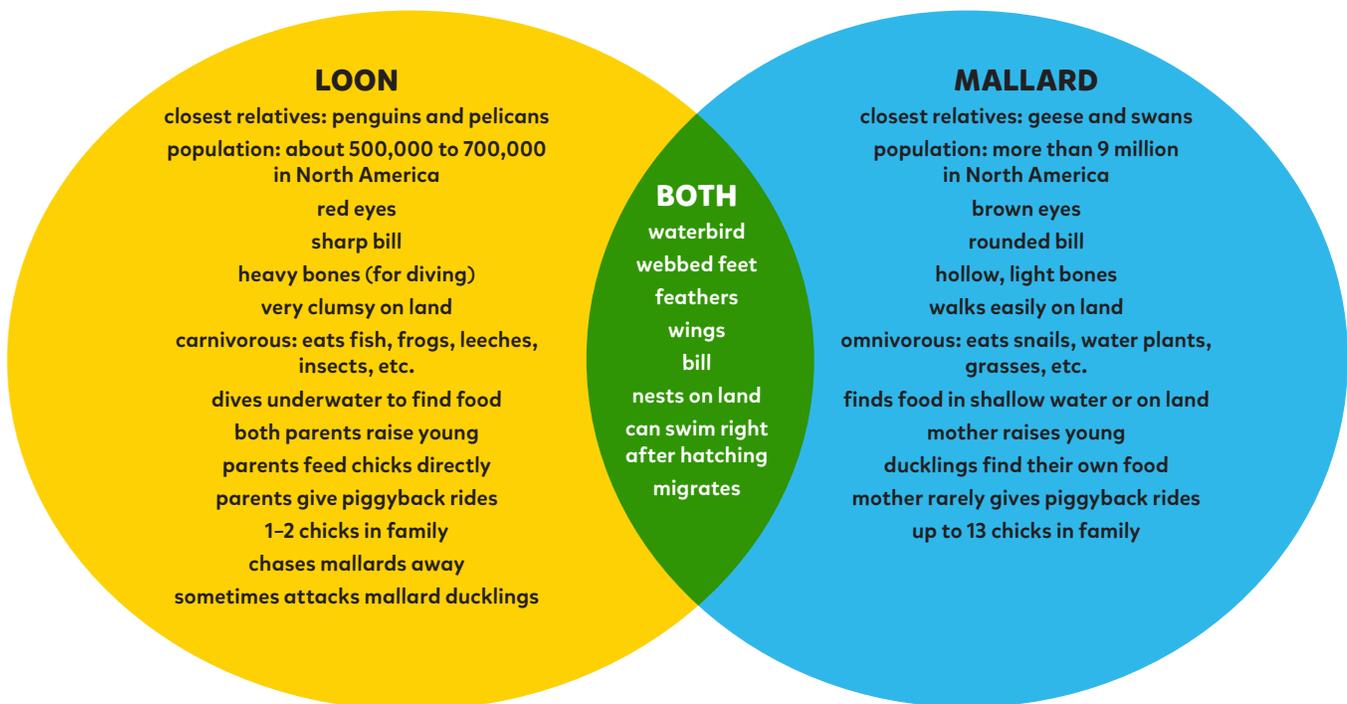
Write your own ending to Duckling's story. What do you think (or hope) happened the next summer? Write that story. *[This will be a fictional story, while the book is nonfiction.]*

## MATH

1. Look up 5 common waterbirds (or just birds) in your state. Find the estimated population of each. Also put the estimated population (if any) of mallards and common loons on your list. Create a bar graph to show the bird population numbers, in order from smallest to largest.
2. In random order, display the five specific dates that appear in the main text of the book. Invite students to arrange the dates in chronological order, from first to last. *[May 13, June 14, June 23, July 9, July 12, August 3]*

## SCIENCE

Share the Venn diagram from the back matter, which compares and contrasts ducks and loons. Choose two other common animals and create a Venn diagram to show how they're alike and different.



## MUSIC: IF YOU'RE LOONISH AND YOU KNOW IT

Sing this loony version that Laura wrote of "If You're Happy and You Know It."

**If you're loonish and you know it, paddle fast.**

**If you're loonish and you know it, paddle fast.**

**If you're loonish and you know it,  
then your feet will surely show it—**

**if you're loonish and you know it, paddle fast.**

**If you're loonish and you know it, give a cry (ooo-ooooooooo-oooo)...  
then your wail will surely show it...**

**If you're loonish and you know it, dive for food...  
then your dive will surely show it...**

**If you're loonish and you know it, shake that fish...  
then your bill will surely show it...**

**If you're loonish and you know it, fly away...  
then your wings will surely show it...**

## LANGUAGE ARTS: WRITE A DEFINITO POEM

Have students identify unfamiliar vocabulary from the book. Read these two "definito" poems written by Laura (also online at [laurasalas.com/finding](http://laurasalas.com/finding)). As a class or in small groups, write definitos for other new vocabulary words. Have fun with language, write 8-12 lines, and end with the word being defined.



### SO MUCH LOVE!

Does the way that you act  
say "I love you!"?

Do you help somebody  
and protect them, too?

Give hugs and snacks  
and stick close, like glue?

Because when you do...  
you

DO TE!

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definito poem \* [laurasalas.com](http://laurasalas.com)

## GAME

### **DUCK, DUCK, LOON!**

Play a game of Duck, Duck, Goose (or Duck, Duck, Grey Duck, depending on where you live). Replace “Goose” or “Grey Duck” with “Loon!” Remind students that loons often chase ducks away.



## MOVEMENT

### **WALK LIKE A LOON**

Loons walk awkwardly on land because their legs are attached far back on their bodies. Squat, hold your ankles together, and walk.

### **PADDLE LIKE A LOON**

Loons don't alternate feet as they paddle. Keep your elbows at your side and swim!

### **DIVE LIKE A LOON**

Loons dive to escape danger from overhead, like bald eagles. They also dive to catch food. Just dive down!

### **SWIM UNDERWATER LIKE A LOON**

Loons are graceful underwater. Paddle your arms out to your sides, keeping your elbows in. Open your webbed feet as you “kick” downward.

### **FLY LIKE A LOON**

Loons have heavy bones for diving, so taking off is hard. They skip across the water for a long time before taking flight.

## MINDFULNESS

Mindfulness is about focusing on the present moment, as Duckling and Mother and Father Loon do. Here's a quick mindfulness activity. Invite students to sit or lie comfortably. Lead them in five deep, calming breaths. Then ask them to answer your questions inside their head (not out loud).

*What are four things I can see...small things I don't usually notice?*

*What are three things I can feel...like where my body touches my chair or the floor, or the texture of my sleeve against my arm?*

*What are two things I can hear...besides a grown-up's voice?*

*What is one thing I can smell...perhaps trees or flowers...or markers...or lunch?*

# TEXT-TO-TEXT CONNECTIONS

## LOONS AND DUCKS

## INTERSPECIES RELATIONSHIPS



## WE DON'T KNOW ALL THE ANSWERS

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**Laura Purdie Salas** is a former teacher who believes reading small picture books and poems can have a huge impact on your life. She has written more than 130 books for kids, including *Lion of the Sky* (*Parents Magazine* Best Books of the Year), the *Can Be...* series (Bank Street Best Books), and *BookSpeak!* (NCTE Notable). Laura loves to share inspiration and practical tips with educators about poetry, nonfiction, and more. Visit Laura at [laurasalas.com](http://laurasalas.com).



Photo: Justin Mullens

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