

2018 Loon Log

All entries by Dick West

4.26.18

I took a car ride counter-clockwise around the mostly frozen lake this morning.

South of Recreation Point the lake is still nearly solid with ice so, not surprisingly, I did not see an eagle in the eagle tree.

Stopping at The Maples Resort, there is a good area of open water at the river which was teeming with waterfowl...many ducks, geese and some swans but no loons in that crowd.

More ducks and swans in the river in Bellaire above the dam and in Craven Pond as usual.

Avoiding the mud at the end of Walleye Lane, I spotted my first two loons of the year!!

They were close together, diving in an open patch of water well away from shore but surrounded by ice...about where we place the southernmost nesting platform. I had actually spotted them from The Maples but was much closer at Walleye Lane to be 100% sure they were two loons. Always exciting to see my first loons! (Of course KenCam reported seeing loons weeks before me but it is still ok for me to get

excited about MY first sighting! Maybe I will see a hummingbird before him...lol...)

Continuing past the ice enclosed launch site at Openo Road and just north of the 90 degree turn, I had to stop in the road to allow a fully fanned out turkey to escort his bevy of females across in front of me. Ah yes, spring is in the air!...just like the rabbits and sea gulls mating in my yard this morning...but I digress...

The final stop of my morning circumnavigation was at the launch site in Central Lake. Using my binoculars to scan the open water from the bridge to Mile Point I was able to see four more loons scattered around that area. None were very close together acting like pairs as the two I saw at the south end, but they were diving and preening normally.

One of the loons was very close to me at the launch site dock and asked me to see if we could get the Coast Guard to bring in an ice breaker this weekend. I get the impression it is in the mood to get into the swing of things like the rabbits, gulls and turkeys...just my guess of course...

Anyway, it was a very interesting and successful ride this morning.

4.30.18 / 5.1.18

The ice finally gets off the lake!

5.5.18

Sunny, low 60's, light wind.

Andy Hickman, Bob Webb, Jim Gilleylyn and I used Steve Young's boat to launch 2 artificial nesting platforms (ANP) and 4 buoys at the south end, 1 ANP at Snowflake and 1 ANP at the Arnold's property.

A pair of loons immediately examined the one near Openo Rd.

5.7.18

Jim and I waded out from Jean Griffin's place to put 1 ANP near the Gorham Beach nesting site. The water is too high for that pair to find a dry spot on the little island to nest. We thought they would appreciate a dry spot, even though man made.

We were wrong...they didn't like it there. In fact they rarely came even close to it according to Jean.

5.23.18

Removed the ANP from Gorham Beach. Loons were back around the island within an hour!

5.24.18

Loons working on nest at GBeach on high ground next to the biggest bush.

5.29.18

The south end pairs have been diligently tending their nests since right after the nesting platforms were put in place May 5th so not much to report on those two potential families.

The Gorham Beach pair is another story...

Most of you know, that pair has been hanging around that area ever since the ice went out waiting for the water level to go down so they would have enough dry land to nest on. They completely ignored the platform we put there...and in fact seemed to be aggravated by it being there. As soon as we removed the platform on May 23rd they started working on a nest near the bushes which is the highest part of the island. However, they did not establish residency on that nest site. Nearly every day I would see the pair cruising the area feeding and preening together.

Yesterday morning they cruised by within 30 feet of me while I was working on my dock. I told them that it is getting late in the season and they should be getting on a nest and laying some eggs. Apparently they listened to me cuz when I paddled by this morning one of them was hunkered down on a nest in a completely different spot. It appears they felt the first nest was too high out of the water now so they moved to an area closer to the drop off end of the island. Hopefully they will lay a couple of eggs soon.

We should have some chicks from the south end nests in a couple of weeks...the Gorham Beach pair won't have chicks for about a month.

The platforms at Snowflake and the Arnold property remain vacant as expected. Time will tell if they attract

any attention.

5.30.18

I just got back from my morning paddle. Both Gorham Beach loons were in the water very close to the island where I saw one hunkered down yesterday.

At first I thought I was seeing a changing of the guard...but nope...that was not the case.

I stayed very far away from them anchored in some weeds to watch through my binoculars. In just a few minutes they both tucked their heads back to rest. Certainly not in any hurry to get back to any eggs...even when some black birds were on the island in the "nest" area they didn't wake up...and even when a fisherman came in to his dock a couple of hundred feet away and left again only one loon raised its head...

After watching sleeping loons drift for over 15 minutes I came to the conclusion that if there is a nest there must not be any eggs yet.

5.31.18

Jim sent a picture of a loon sitting on GB site right where I had spotted one sitting before.

6.4.18

Walked down near the GB site and could see a loon sitting on the same spot. We probably have an egg or

two there now. The weeds are higher so hard to see the loon from that angle even with binoculars.

6.7.18

We have a chick!

Yep, it is true!

The southernmost pair have one healthy chick and are still sitting hoping for another.

When I cruised the lake yesterday morning I thought I saw a chick on the platform nestled close to the sitting adult...but after a first glance I could not confirm it and my friend did not see it...so I scratched that off to "seeing what I wanted to see."

This morning as we passed the southernmost platform with an adult sitting and panting in the warm sunshine, I spotted a chick in the water right next to the platform. I easily confirmed that sighting with my binoculars as the chick circled the platform...at least once unsuccessfully trying to get back up on it.

The second adult was not in sight.

After watching for several minutes, and finally spotting the second adult about 100 yards from the nest, the sitting loon joined the chick in the water.

My wife then easily saw the chick swimming up to the adult.

As we slowly left the area, the other adult quickly joined the others.

I am quite sure the chick was hatched yesterday and that is what I saw on the nest.

It will be interesting to see if they continue to sit on

that nest.

The other two pairs were both sitting on their nests as expected.

We should have a chick soon from the other southern platform if all is well, since both of those platforms were occupied at about the same time.

The Gorham Beach pair are about a month behind.

6.8.18

Took a sunset pontoon ride south...Gorham Beach and Openo Rd still just sitting...but the southernmost nest was something to see! An adult was on the nest and the baby was tight to the platform while the other adult brought it food. A pontoon boat with two fishermen was very close to the platform casting in every direction but the loons did not seem bothered by that at all, other than the sitting loon had its head held very high, perhaps to keep an eye on the baby. The baby stayed mostly on the side of the platform away from the fishermen, venturing out to grab a snack from the "fisherloon" and then back beside the platform. Wish I would have had a decent camera to record that delightful scene.

6.10.18

A second chick for the southernmost pair has been confirmed!

6.25.18

The southernmost chicks are growing fast. They both already look too big for a fish to grab. Unfortunately the other southern pair continues to sit...probably on infertile eggs. The GB pair are also still sitting and hopefully will have a chick or two by the 4th of July.

6.26.18

NEWS FLASH!

The Gorham Beach pair have a chick!!

Just spotted it on my morning paddle boat ride!

I had headed toward the south end, staying way away from the nest, and saw the sitting loon with the other adult close by the GB site. I did not see a chick at that point and the swimming adult was well away from the nest as I was.

On my return trip the wind was pushing in the right direction so I could just drift by closer to the nest, but still about 100 yards out. An adult was sitting as usual. Then, with my binoculars, I spotted what I thought was a chick in the water in the weeds very close to the nest. Sure enough...as I watched the baby was trying to climb up to the sitting adult. It did not make it but kind of flopped back into the weeds and water. Then I could clearly see the little guy swimming around between the weeds. Such a cute sight!

As I continued drifting by, the adult left the nest to join the baby. The adult was calm and did no verbalizing so I do not think I bothered them. As I paddled slowly away the two of them swam close by the nest. I did not see the other adult, leading me to believe this was a very recently hatched chick.

It will be fun to see if they have a second baby for us to watch.

A very exciting morning!

6.26.18 Continued

At the 12:30 beginning and 2:30 end of our afternoon pontoon ride, we saw the two Gorham Beach adults and one chick in the water near their nest site.

At 9:00 tonight I paddled my kayak to the little island. The nest was vacant and I did not spot the family.

It appears to me that pair will remain a one chick family.

Now, let's hope all three Intermediate Lake loon youngsters survive their summer challenges.

Dick

6.28.18

Observing the birds and the bees...

Well, the loons are birds and bees are bees...

First about the bees...

I was startled by hundreds of good sized insects flying around in our front yard late yesterday afternoon. When I went out to investigate, it wasn't hundreds it was thousands...and they were bees...swarming into a cedar clump about 25 feet up.

That was really something to see and experience. I had been with a bee keeper catching a swarm when I was a kid so I knew the bees buzzing around me were focused on swarming and would leave me alone. Within a few minutes the number of flying bees dropped to the hundreds and I spotted the swarm. It was about the size of one and a half basketballs...hanging onto a good sized branch...sort of oolong in shape...so there could have been 20,000 to 40,000 bees in it.

As I looked at the swarm periodically last night and this morning, it had subtle changes in shape but not noticeably in size. When I looked at it just before I went in for lunch at about 12:30, it looked like it was drooping more from its main branch in the tree...almost like it might fall. When I went out 45 minutes later it was entirely gone! Wish I could have seen it leave.

Probably best that they moved on, but I do like fresh

honey...

Now the birds...

As I am typing this, the Gorham Beach family is right in front of my place. The baby is resting on an adults back and the other adult is bringing it snacks...in fact, the fishing loon just brought it a three course meal sized minnow that the baby was able to choke down! This little guy likes to eat like I do...lol...

The family has been hanging out here since late morning, just inside the drop off...occasionally giving a loud wail for no apparent reason or if something approaches...they are keeping me entertained...and keeping me from doing the chores I should be doing...you know I have my priorities!

7.19.18

All is well with the three chicks...but the pair are still sitting on the Openo Rd nest...most certainly wasting their time...as I told them on my kayak ride down there this morning...

7.24.18

3:00 Pontoon ride.

Openo Rd still sitting, saw the three youngsters, 2 eagles land in the tree, a really big turtle, 2 herons and several swans.

7.28.18

The northernmost nest at the south end near Openo Rd/Recreation Point has finally been abandoned.

The last time I saw them sitting was on 7.24.18.

The other two families are doing very well. In fact the Gorham Beach family is out in front of my place feeding as I am writing this. The chick is diving and staying under water for several seconds now. I am sure it's later hatch has been offset by the adults only having one chick to feed...this one will be in good shape and well developed when the time comes to head south.

8.7.18

My grandson, Drew, and I had a productive afternoon out on the water bringing in the buoys. We were able to get them all in one trip.

8.23.18

Exciting loon report...

Well, at least it was exciting to me...

On my paddle boat ride this morning I spotted the Gorham Beach youngster with his dad (I think) hanging out close to their nest site.

As I watched, the young loon took off for a short test flight into a light breeze from the east. The flight went

less than 100 yards but the little guy looked to be a strong stable flyer. It will most certainly be ready to fly south in a couple of months.

I watched those two for quite a while hoping to see another flight but did not see one. I did see a lot of communicating gestures and some non-feeding diving going on. My guess is the old man was explaining his upcoming departure and trying to coax his offspring to show me another test flight...

The females have probably left the area already, in my opinion, since I have not seen the whole family together in well over a week. I have also only seen one adult with the two babies at the south end of the lake lately.

Once the males leave we can pull the nesting platforms.

8.31.18

One down...three to go...

On my paddle boat ride this morning I retrieved the nesting platform and anchors from the Snowflake site.

9.6.18

Loon Report and...

...two down and two to go...

This morning I cruised down to the south end on my

paddle boat and brought in the platform and anchors from the site near Recreation Point.

Now the loon report...

On my way down to the south end I spotted the Gorham Beach youngster and an adult near the nest site...just hanging out...nothing exciting...

But, on my return trip, the youngster surfaced very close to me off Gorham Beach. It was close enough for me to ask it to make another test flight for me...so, after a few more dives, and hearing a warning call from an adult I was unable to spot, it appeared to grant my request! It opened its wings, held them open then started to take off, flapping and running across the water as loons do...but only going a very short distance and not actually getting airborne. The youngster did that maneuver 3 times...and lo and behold, ended up joining the adult in the middle of the lake. It was not granting my request at all...it was merely hurrying to get away from me and join the adult. Oh well, it was still fun to watch...and further evidence the youngster is maturing nicely.

9.9.18

Four down and none to go...

Andy and I went out this chilly morning and brought in the last nesting platforms and anchors.

9.10.18/9.11.18

Saw the adult and juvenile on 9.10 and watched the juvenile for a long time out in front in the morning 9.11 and again now on a still calm lake at 7:45pm just before dark - always alone. Saw other adult loons on our long pontoon ride but not with the youngster and did not see any loons in the south end...two eagles in the tree tho...has the other adult split from the juvenile???

8:03 to 8:10 the baby is staying in close here, not feeding moving east while an adult? is way out...3/4 of the way due north across the lake preening. Getting too dark fast now.

9.12.18

Nope...the adult is still with the GB youngster...right near GB site at 7:30 pm.

9.16.18

9:30am adult and baby out in front.

9.17.18

7:30pm adult and baby off Deep Water Point.

9.19.18

Adult and baby at Linda Gs at 3pm...near log house at 7pm.

9.22.18

Adult and baby right out front at 8:15am after big wind storm yesterday.

9.23.18

Baby alone out front at 12:40pm

Baby and adult near shallows towards Recreation Point about 1:45pm.

9.24.18

In the afternoon saw two loons out in front but not together. A juvenile was diving and very alert along the drop off heading east and an adult was way out heading West and making a soft moaning cry a few times.

9.27.18

Adult and baby right out front at 6:35 pm.

9.28.18

From my living room, I first spotted the Gorham Beach juvenile out front at 8:40am. It joined the adult out deeper at 9. Then the juvenile took a short test flight into the westerly breeze toward the log home at 9:15. Hardly got airborne but did a nice landing glide. As I checked out the adult, I missed the juvenile's take off but watched it make a low, fast arcing flight over the adult and off with the wind to the east and out of my sight, which was blocked by trees. I went outside to the end of my remaining few sections of dock hoping to catch the return approach and landing...but no luck. I know it went a long way this time, but don't know where it ended up.

The adult swam directly towards me and nearly to the drop off, as if to say "Did you see that little guy go??"...then, with a smile, it took a long dive much further out and to the east...I swear these birds know I like to watch them...

End of story for now...but further evidence that our late hatching chick appears well prepared for its eventual journey south...and the adult is still sticking around to be sure it is...

9.30.18

Juvenile alone near Snowflake.

10.1.18

Almost 5 mile kayak trip and only saw one juvenile between Recreation Point and the horse ranch.

10.3.18

2:30pm Juvenile alone taking long feeding dives just beyond the dropoff out front. No others in sight.

10.5.18

3:20pm 2 loons out in front fairly deep, maybe 50 yards apart in choppy water. Hard to tell size difference but I am pretty sure it was an adult and a juvenile judging from the color difference.

10.8.18

Saw juvenile east of Gorham Beach at about 4:00.

10.9.18

Saw juvenile West of Recreation Point at 9:30 and by the resort at 10:30am

10.21.18

3:30 saw juvenile at the dropoff.

10.23.18

8:30 two loons out in front. Could be migrating adults. Could hear call from another but didn't see it. 9:30 saw our juvenile out in front heading east then 15 min later out deep heading West.

That was my last loon spotting for 2018 as I relocated south (downstate) myself.