

Loon Log 2021

Dick West

3.20.21

The ice still covers the lake, but it is a calm 55 degrees without a cloud in the sky...a good day to have Loon Platooners over to get acquainted and check out the equipment. Paul Winkler, Stan Yoder, Sue Thomas, Andy Hickman, Kay and Dave Egert and I met at 2:00 to do just that. We decided to do away with the thin cables as anchor lines, replacing them with easier to handle rope with chain around the anchor blocks for better wear. Dave offered to get the chain, fasteners and rope. I will get some additional straw. With those things covered, we will soon get the anchors prepared and the platforms and buoys will be ready to launch.

3.24.21

With a southeast breeze, warmer temps and some light rain overnight, the ice was about half way gone from the big part of the lake when I looked out. It was interesting to watch all day as the edge of the ice moved steadily to the north. By the end of the day no ice could be seen this side of Snowflake.

3.25.21 am

I drove in to Central Lake and the ice is completely gone from the lake.

4.1.21

April Fools Day email to the Loon Platoon:

After some reports of loons in the area, I couldn't let freezing temperatures, gusty winds, snow flurries and whitecaps keep me from helping the loons...so, this morning I was up at the crack of dawn, and in my trusty rowboat, single handedly rowed out to put all five of our nesting platforms in place!

It wasn't easy...and also not anywhere near true...

Happy APRIL FOOLS DAY!!

The truth is, as you would expect, at the crack of dawn I was buried under my covers trying to ignore the freezing temperatures, gusty winds, etc., etc...

The truth also includes the fact that the platforms and buoys are ready to launch as soon as we confirm loons hanging out in the south end of the lake and we have decent weather to do the job.

Paul Winkler has seen a couple of loons in flight. Please let us know if and where you spot any loons. Just be sure you are seeing loons and not any of the loon-look-alike birds out there. We have seen lots of mergansers passing through.

Also, please let us know when you are in the area, able to help launch and if you have a boat available.

Sue Thomas and I have located rowboats available to launch the two most urgent platforms in the south end as soon as the loons and good weather are present... but of course a boat with a motor would be preferable.

I doubt if any of you believed my opening story, but happy April Fools Day anyway...

Dick

4.2.21

Sue Thomas and I put platforms, anchors and straw on land at The Maples and Bacon's place, ready to launch when any loon pairs are confirmed in the south end. Andy reported a pair of loons at a distance from Thomas's place but Sue and I didn't see any in the south end.

4.3.21

Went loon spotting from Central Lake, by Mortenson's and then at The Maples where I finally saw my first loon of the year. I watched it a long time to confirm and hoping to see a pair but only saw one.

4.4.21

Lake was like glass at 8am with a single loon right out in front to wish me a happy Easter. Again only one loon in sight. A half hour later it was way out in the middle still alone but I did hear it make a call.

4.8.21

Email to ILA mailing list:

The waiting game...loon-wise

With this latest stretch of summer-like weather you might be wondering what is going on with the Intermediate Lake loons and the Loon Platoon.

The Loon Platoon has had good success getting the nesting platforms, anchors and buoys ready to launch. Several members met on March 20 to inspect the equipment. We decided to install a chain around each anchor block and get new rope and sturdy brass clips to attach to the platforms.

Dave Egert went to the Bellaire Hardware for the supplies. We were very impressed that they offered to cut all of the chains and ropes to our specifications...but not only that, they donated all of those supplies to the ILA!!...over \$150 worth of material AND the labor to prepare the items for us!! That deserves a huge "Thank You!" to the owner, manager and staff of the Bellaire Hardware. They continue to be significant supporters of the ILA. We as individuals can show our appreciation to them by continuing to visit the Bellaire Hardware for the wide variety of goods and services they provide! And while you are there it would be appropriate to thank them yourself for their support.

We also need to thank Dave for getting all that taken care of, and for his donating the brass clips that had to be ordered.

In the meantime, I was lucky enough to acquire a much needed bale of straw from ILA member Jerry Basch. Thanks to Jerry for that contribution to our loon effort.

On March 27, Dave attached all of the chains and ropes to the anchors so all of the equipment was ready to launch.

The ice has been gone, the equipment has been ready, the weather has been perfect...but before we launch the platforms, we need a pair of loons or two. Especially in the south end, we don't want to put them out to be occupied by swans or geese...so we will wait...probably not much longer. (Note: Some loons have been spotted, so they're on their way).

Also on 4.8.21

Put a platform out at Snowflake.

4.10.21

Put a platform in at the Green's property near the 90-degree curve.

Met Bill Truscott.

4.11.21

With loon pairs being spotted near the sand bar, today Sue Thomas and I borrowed a rowboat from Steve Bacon and towed a platform into place in the north part of the south end. As in some previous years, a pair of loons was right there to supervise the project and, as you can see in the picture, point to the spot they wanted it.



Andy Hickman was able to put a platform out at his place just north of the sandbar the other day, so, along with one at Snowflake, and another at the Green's property near the 90 degree curve, we have four platforms ready for occupancy.

As soon as a pair of loons is spotted in the far south end we will get that platform in place.

4.15.21

I just took a walk this late afternoon in the chilly mist down to check on the Gorham Beach nesting site. The goose is still on its nest on the highest spot, but, lo and behold I saw a pair of loons in the water right by the little island!

This is the first time this year that I have seen a pair of loons in this part of the lake. Very good news.

4.19.22

Sent out email update:

Still waiting...

As most of you know, our loons are beginning to gather on Intermediate Lake again. Over the past few weeks we started seeing single loons, then some pairs began hanging out together near the traditional nesting sites.

The Loon Platoon took advantage of our summer like weather and launched four of our five nesting platforms. One at Snowflake, one across the lake from there near the 90 degree turn at the Green's property, one at Andy Hickman's place in Recreation Point just north of the sandbar, and one at the traditional spot at the weed bed south of Recreation Point.

As we launched that last platform a pair of loons was very close by giving their approval. As far as I know, at this point the pair has not yet been seen on that platform preparing a nest but they are often seen in the area.

A pair is also often seen near the Gorham Beach nesting site. That little island is high and dry at this point providing plenty of nesting area even with a goose nesting on the highest spot. Hopefully those geese will hatch and be gone in another week or so.

We are still waiting to spot another pair of loons in the far south end before launching the final nesting platform there. Many ducks, some geese, swans and seagulls are down in that area and we don't want any of them occupying the platform before the loons move in.

As soon as loon nesting activities are spotted we will let you all know...and please pass on any such activity that you may see.

4.21.21

Better than watching television...

Another chilly day, and as the choppy water calmed down at about 7:15 this evening I saw two loons fishing just off the drop off heading north. They both stopped fishing and started routine preening. Then I noticed another loon further to the north. It had its head held very high, occasionally looking under the surface, then resuming its head held high posture. The three loons soon came together with two of them holding a low profile and the third keeping its head high. They did some circling and a little diving but staying close together. Suddenly all three of them seemed to splash in the water violently and dive at the same time. They surfaced close together and, after circling, all three calmly dove again. After several minutes of not seeing any of them, I spotted one very far out in the middle of the lake somewhat towards the north with its head held high. Shortly after that I saw two loons together back near the drop off. Those two began feeding and preening again, moving slowly back towards the south. I then saw the single loon near the point at Snowflake. That seemed to be the end of their interaction. This all took place in less than half an hour.

My opinion is that the Gorham Beach pair were telling the single loon to clear out of their area. Who knows...but it was interesting to watch.

5.2.21

Last nesting platform launched!

I'm happy to report that Sue and Randy Thomas took advantage of a calm morning and launched the nesting platform in the far south end today. A big "Thank you!" to them.

They timed it just right as the wind picked up soon after they got done.

They did not see loons down there this morning even though loons have been spotted in that area recently. Hopefully that pair is in the area and will take occupancy before some non-loon squatters take over. If any of you see loon activity down there please let us know.

5.3.21

Intermediate River Action...

Here is a very interesting development...

Several days ago I had a report from Ron Kenroy of a pair of loons in the mouth of the Intermediate River. Ron's family has had a place there since the forties so he definitely knows how to spot loons.

Last night, obviously the same day the southernmost nesting platform was launched, I got a report and this very good picture from another resident on the river, Julie Gregg, of a loon on a nest! The picture was taken from across the river in her kayak making it hard to see the nest so I zoomed it in and cropped it to show the detail.



The nest is located fairly close to the mouth of the river. This is the first time I have heard of loons nesting in the Intermediate River. This may very well be the southernmost pair being ready to nest before their platform was in place. Perhaps they weren't spotted in the lake because they were hanging out in the more sheltered mouth of the river. After all, we do know that pair has produced the first chicks on the lake lately so they don't like to waste any time

before mating. I hope they won't be bothered by boat traffic passing close by the nest. Luckily the whole river is a no wake zone which most people respect. I'm not sure if putting buoys there would protect them or call more attention to gawkers trying to see the nest.

The main thing at this point is that we do have one active loon nest so far. Hopefully our other two pairs will be spotted on nests soon. Please report any loon nesting activity you see.

5.6.21

A Gorham Beach Nest!

I returned to the lake today after about a week downstate and promptly took a walk to check on the Gorham Beach nest site.

I am happy to report that there is a loon nesting there!

As usual, the nest was formed close to the water to make it easy for the adults to scoot on and off. It is at the edge of the reeds towards the dropoff well away from the highest part of the little island. It is very exposed to wind and waves from the north. Unfortunately, the water level is rising and the nest is in danger of being flooded out, especially if the water keeps rising and we get some big waves hitting that spot.

We now have at least two active nest sites, which is exciting news. However, that excitement is tempered by the fact that both of these nests are in real danger of being unproductive...the river nest may be threatened by boat traffic and possibly predators from land, and the Gorham Beach nest is threatened by high water, wind and waves.

It is going to be a tense few weeks for us loon watchers as the various forces of nature play their hands. I hope to have information on the status of the other nesting sites very soon.

(The gage in Central Lake is at about 7.37)

5.8.21

Met Ron Kenroy and looked for the river nest from his place but didn't see it.

I know I sent out a report two days ago, but this is the time of year when lots of wildlife nesting activity takes place. So, in the spirit of trying to keep those of you who are interested up to date, today was a breezy, chilly, but good enough day to get out and check things out...and give you a quick update.

This morning I launched my kayak from The Maples and went into the river. The river nest was easy to spot but was empty, with no loons spotted in the river or the far south end of the lake. I could easily see the top of the nest to be able to tell there were no eggs present. When I got back to The Maples, the owner, Jeremiah, was there. We greatly appreciate his letting us use his place for launching and observing the southernmost platform.

In the afternoon Andy Hickman and I moved the southernmost platform from near the shore out to the middle weed bed where it had been previously. The other platform in the south end was also empty but a pair of loons was hanging out just north of that weed bed. A loon was sitting on the Gorham Beach nest.

River residents Julie and Rob Gregg took their maiden voyage in their Boston Whaler today. They also noted the river nest being empty with no loons in that area. She reported being on the river last Tuesday and the river nest was empty then as well. We will keep checking it, but the river nest may very well be abandoned already.

On their ride today, Julie took some long lensed pictures of loons, including this good one of the Gorham Beach nest. It clearly shows how close that nest is to being flooded.



With no rain in the forecast for the next week,

hopefully that nest will stay dry.

5.10.21

Before I went downstate today I walked to Gorham Beach...A loon is still sitting so we can be pretty sure of an egg or two there. The nest looked high and dry even with a bit of wind and small waves. The graph of the water level gage in Central Lake definitely shows the level dropping. With no rain in the forecast for a while it should be ok. Keep our fingers crossed.

5.13.21

I took a paddleboat ride this morning down to the northern Southend nest. As I passed Gorham Beach the loons were not sitting on the nest. They were in the area but not close to each other at that particular time. When I got to where I could see the northern nest platform it was empty but a pair of loons was right close by it. I also spotted a pair of loons just north of the big island. That must have been the southernmost pair but in my observations it is rare to see them that far north.

A starling landed on the platform and one of the loons went over to check it out. I thought it was going to get up on the platform but it didn't. I had stayed very far away from the platform but as soon as the starling left, the pair of loons started wandering over towards me. I had already begun heading back, but when I saw them coming I just stopped to see what would happen. They both came up fairly close, about 40 yards away. They were very calm and acting normally without making any noise. We had a nice one sided conversation about them getting busy and laying some eggs. After several dives nearby they actually moved ahead of me and circled around back towards the platform. At that point I just kept heading back home.

North of the sandbar, I watched a black mink running along the shore. It eventually went into the water then ducked into the rocks. I wonder if it is living there or just hid as I went by.

As I got back to Gorham Beach I saw a loon on the nest hunkered down. I know they don't like my paddleboat so I was a good 300 yards away, but the loon slid off the nest and stayed in a hunkered down profile, just barely visible in the water. It stayed close to the nest as I left the area. As it pushed itself off the nest I think I saw a red band, possibly red and white, as well as I think a green band on the other leg.

5.14.21

I took a kayak ride this morning to check on the platforms at Snowflake and across the lake at the Green's property. Both were empty, as expected, and each still had plenty of straw in place. The one at Green's clearly had been used, or at least prepped, for nesting. There was a definite bowl formed in the straw. The bowl looked too small to have been made by a loon in my opinion, but I have no way of knowing unless occupants are spotted on the nest. I saw nothing in the area when I was there.

As I cruised back around by Gorham Beach, the sitting loon was again hunkered down. I was surprised at that posture since I didn't even head towards the nest, looking at it from near mid-lake, and I was in my

kayak, which usually doesn't seem to bother them. As I pulled up to the beach at the edge of Deep Water Point, the loon slid off the nest again. This time it sat higher in the water and stayed close to the nest as I left. Later in the morning I saw a loon back on the nest.

5.14.21 afternoon

On my return from Bellaire Hardware, I stopped at The Maples and saw a pair of loons in the south end but the platform was empty.

From Bacon's place on M88 the other platform also was empty. As I scanned the lake and back to looking at the platform, I saw a loon climb up on it with another loon right next to the platform. I watched for several minutes and the loon was active on the platform. Hopefully, they are getting ready to settle in and lay some eggs...just as I had talked to them about yesterday...I'm sure they listened to me...

(Yes, my wife thinks I get loonier every day.)

Obviously, this time of year there is lots of activity on and around the lake with wildlife of all sorts, along with plantlife of all sorts, preparing to propagate their species. This gives us humans endless opportunities to get out and see the beauty of it happening. I enjoy sharing my observations, with the hope that these reports might inspire others to get out and make their own observations. You won't be disappointed if you keep looking.

5.16.21 Email

A typical Loon Log entry and a Loon Nesting Show

5.15.21

I walked down to check the Gorham Beach nest in the late afternoon. A loon was hunkered on the nest due to three fishermen in a boat close by. I didn't stay there long. It didn't leave the nest while I was watching. I did not see, and have not recently seen, the other loon in the area.

5.16.21

I went for a sunset paddle boat ride at about 8:30. When I first looked, a loon was on the nest in normal, resting, head up posture. When I looked a few minutes later, it was off the nest heading slowly towards the dropoff. I parked in some weeds at the beach by what I call Austin Creek. That is a long way from the nest so I don't think the loon left the nest because my nasty paddle boat was approaching. Again I did not see another loon around so this wasn't a changing of the guard. The temperature was about 62 when I started out and cooling more, to the mid 50's, as the sun went down, which made me believe the loon would head back to the nest fairly soon. Well, it hadn't gone far from the nest but it certainly took its sweet time to head back to it. I sat where I was for over a half hour, cooling off myself more than I wanted to as the sun went completely down, wondering if those eggs were getting as chilly as I was. Finally it headed slowly back.

It was definitely worth the wait though, to see this beautiful big bird struggle to scoot its elongated body out of the water with its way-to-the-rear mounted feet pushing it a couple of feet across dry land and up on to the nest. That was not easy. Back on the nest it appeared to be turning the eggs with its neck curving downward and its big, sharp, pointed beak gently proding them. After completing that task, it fluffed itself around to cover the eggs and get comfortable for the next incubating session.

This whole process is absolutely fascinating to watch. And to think these magnificent creatures have been doing this for millions of years...now allowing us to sit back and enjoy the show here on The Intermediate Lake Theater stage!

I wish I could have filmed this to show you. My description certainly doesn't do it justice.

5.17.21

Is an important day!

Time was limited, but early this morning I took a quick kayak ride to check on Gorham Beach. A loon was sitting, with again, no other loon in sight. But...as I turned to head back, I heard a loon calling the familiar call of a loon in flight...and it was getting closer. As I turned back towards the nest I spotted it

circling over the nest then making a smooth belly landing not far away. It was heading slowly towards the nest as I paddled away. Both loons were calm and quiet so all is well at Gorham Beach.

Later in the morning, Sue Thomas reported seeing loons sitting on both south end platforms on her kayak ride today. That's great news!

In the afternoon we took our first pontoon ride of the year. We were lucky enough to see a loon fighting its way back up onto the Gorham Beach nest, turning the eggs and settling back down. We also saw loons sitting on both of the platforms in the south end as Sue had reported earlier.

Thus the importance of today...we again have three actively nesting pairs of loons on good old Intermediate Lake! Hurray!

Now we have another waiting game...waiting for chicks to hatch. The incubation period for loons is about 28 days, so, in less than a month we should be awarding the first chick prize.

5.18.21

On my way to hike at Mohrman Park I thought I saw something on the platform at the Green's property. On my way back I stopped and confirmed it...that platform is occupied! It would be much more exciting if it was occupied by a loon, but it is a mallard duck nesting there. At least it is being used for a nest.



(Picture from 6.6.21)

5.24.21

I loaded the buoys and anchors on my pontoon boat this morning and Sue Thomas helped me get them in place by the two platforms in the south end.

We wanted to have them out before the holiday weekend.

All three nests had a loon sitting with the mate close by in the water.

The loons on the platforms did not seem to be bothered at all by us dropping in the buoys and anchors. The loons in the water were also calm and quiet.

5.29.21

Things are still quiet...

As expected, there isn't much to report while our three loon pairs tend to their eggs. This morning, however, I had an interesting ride that I hope you will find to be worth sharing.

35 degrees but dead calm and not a cloud in the sky, so I took a kayak ride down to the first platform in the south end.

Going past Gorham Beach I saw one loon on the nest and another in the area. I paddled out beyond the swimming loon to give it plenty of room. Then it dove and surfaced quite close to me. I said hello and chatted about hatching their eggs. It had no comment but dove and circled my kayak, went under me, surfaced just a few feet away for about a minute, dove and circled my kayak again very close by, and surfaced again a little further away. The water was like glass, and so clear this time of the year I had a great view of the loon swimming underwater...like being in a glass bottom boat. It was absolutely amazing! It looked so big all stretched out curving around and just a foot or two under my kayak. We chatted some more as I paddled slowly away, once again a one sided conversation, but I was glad the loon was calm and quiet.

As I got to the south end a loon was on the platform and another very close to the platform. I watched from far away hoping to see a changing of the guard. After several minutes nothing exciting was happening, with the loon in the water just doing routine preening, so I headed back.

I did see two bald eagles sitting together in the eagle tree. I wondered why they weren't busy manning a nest themselves but I have no idea what their nesting schedule is. Nor do I have any knowledge of where their nest might be.

Not far north of the sand bar I saw a loon close to me. I asked it what it was doing so far from the nest, but it didn't answer, dove, and surfaced further south.

Approaching Gorham Beach I saw two loons in the water, one close to the nest and heading towards it, the other well out past the dropoff. I'm guessing those two had just escorted the other loon I saw out of their area. I watched the one loon go back onto the nest, turn the eggs and settle down on them. (I'm guessing there are two eggs but don't know for sure.) In the meantime, the other loon headed over towards me, dove, and once more circled closely around my kayak before surfacing well away back towards the nest. Again both loons remained calm and quiet.

They sure gave me a memorable kayak ride by putting on an underwater swimming show, not once, but twice.

A great day on the water already...and it wasn't even 10 o'clock!

Hopefully, in another week or so we will have chicks to report on.

6.2.21

NEWS FLASH!

WE HAVE TWO BABY LOONS!!

The Gorham Beach pair win the first chick award this year!

Dave Egert, who has a good view of the Gorham Beach nest site, confirmed with his spotting scope that the loons have left the nest with their two babies.

The chicks were just hatched today since Dave and I both saw a loon on the nest at sunset last night, and I saw one on the nest at about 7:30 this morning before heading downstate. Obviously, the high water did not give that pair any problems incubating their eggs. We first saw them nesting on May 6th which is exactly 28 days ago...the normal incubation period is 28 to 30 days.

This is very exciting news for us loon watchers. I will be back up tomorrow handing out cigar shaped minnows and crayfish meat!

And, hopefully, four more babies will be hatched within a week or so.

6.4.21

Took kayak ride at 7:30 and saw an adult and two chicks in shallow water near Austin Creek. The adult voiced minor warning so I turned around and left after watching both chicks climb up on the adult's back...a classic pose.

6.5.21

Pontoon ride with Drew. Saw all four of the Gorham Beach family. Both of the platforms had loons sitting with another loon in the area.

6.6.21

I hate to say it...

The Gorham Beach pair has lost a chick.

On our ride this morning we could only spot one baby but we weren't very close. This afternoon a neighbor reported seeing only one. At that same time we were just drifting in the breeze along the dropoff at Deep Water Point. The loons were very close to us for several minutes and there was definitely only one baby.

The chick climbed on and off an adult's back a couple of times while the other adult was diving and bringing it snacks. They were calm, quiet and acting normally as we silently drifted by. In fact, I was very surprised to see the four day old baby diving and staying under for several seconds in the shallow water. Kind of a sad drift but still fun watching the family.

I am hoping for more chicks to hatch around the 14th in the south end of the lake.

6.6.21 Just before sunset

The Gorham Beach family was slowly going along the drop off right out in front. Just to the left of the slide, the adults started to act like something was in the area bothering them but they were not vocal about it. One adult had its head high and was moving into deep water. The other adult stayed with the baby for a few minutes head high, then went into a hunker down position. It held that position for a short time then also headed out into deep water while the baby stayed parked near Tom's pontoon boat.

Then I saw four other loons together out in the middle of the lake. Both of the Gorham Beach pair went out to meet them. I had never seen such a young baby loon being parked. There was plenty of activity out in the middle of the lake. Lots of circling diving and even one of them water dancing and another scooting a short distance away. This went on for quite a long time, probably close to a half hour, before all of the loons dove under, with four of them disappearing and the Gorham Beach pair slowly swimming back our way. They joined the baby and the baby climbed up on the back of one of them. I could not spot any of the other four loons. Probably 10 minutes later I did spot two loons out in the middle of the lake. A Gorham Beach Adult spotted them too and went out to approach them again. The other adult stayed right by our place with the baby on its back. The three loons out in the middle again had a lengthy period of circling and diving but nothing looked violent on the surface. Eventually, two of the loons slowly headed to the north and one came back our way. By that time it was getting quite dark and the Gorham Beach family slowly headed back towards their nest site.

6.12.21

More good news...

The northern platform in the south end has produced a chick!

At about 12:30 we slowly approached the northern platform and saw both adults in the water very close to the platform. One adult swam away from the platform, diving and preening, while the other adult stayed very close to the platform... right tight up against it. I expected it to climb back up on the nest. We were quite a ways away but with my binoculars I thought I possibly saw a chick but I wasn't sure. The other loon came back close to the platform.

We watched for several minutes but were unable to clearly see a chick, so we went on down to the far south end. An adult was sitting on that platform. We didn't see the other adult of that pair.

Going back up to the other platform, we saw both loons still very close to the platform. Watching for several more minutes, we were finally able to clearly see one chick.

I was hoping one of the adults would get back on the nest to possibly finish incubating another egg. But they stayed in the water and after 20 minutes or so they slowly started moving away from the platform with just one baby.

After losing one of the Gorham Beach chicks, as I reported on June 6, it is exciting to have another new chick to watch. Of course we would have preferred to have had two chicks from that platform, but this is still great success.

The southernmost pair should produce a chick or two in the next couple of days if all is well with them.

6.13.21

Took an afternoon pontoon ride.

The Gorham Beach family was in the nursery as usual and acting normally.

The family near the eagle tree was hanging out near their nesting platform. It appeared that the baby was on an adult's back since the other adult was diving and carrying snacks over to it. After watching for about 20 minutes I didn't clearly see the baby raise its head or take a snack, nor did it go into the water. Assuming the baby must be taking a nap, we went down to check on the southernmost platform.

As expected, a loon was still sitting on that nest.

Heading back to the other family, they were still in the same area, acting the same. The baby was still not visible, but the adult's wings still appeared slightly raised, probably covering the chick. The other adult was a bit further away preening. Hoping to spot the chick we loitered in the area for nearly

another half hour. The second adult resumed diving and carrying snacks to the back of the "taxi". Again, during all that time watching with my binoculars I did not clearly see the chick, see it take food or even its head pop up. At this point it should be spending a lot of time in the water but it isn't. I am concerned that the chick may not be healthy.

6.14 and 6.15.21

Windy conditions kept us from going down to the south end. The Gorham Beach family came by a couple of times both days to say hello.

6.16.21

Three for three...

Our Intermediate Lake loons have done it again!

The pair on the southernmost platform has produced one chick. So once again our three pairs have turned into three families.

On our pontoon ride early this morning we spotted the family close to the platform in the middle of the lake. At first one little head was seen peeking up from an adult's back. Very soon the baby went into the water and the adults both started serving breakfast. The existence of just one chick was confirmed when both of the adults dove at the same time. This new little guy has an impressive appetite...it was gobbling up every morsel the busy adults delivered. It is so much fun watching the feeding process.

I'm pretty sure the chick was hatched today but we didn't get down to the south end for the last two days. A loon was still sitting on that nest on Sunday when we cruised by.

On our ride Sunday I was rather concerned about the health of the chick from the other southern platform. We watched that family twice for over twenty minutes each time and never did clearly see the chick. It appeared to be on an adult's back but wasn't even raising its head when the other adult brought snacks. And it didn't go into the water. Well, today that chick looked perfectly normal and healthy. It too was in the water eating a bountiful feast for breakfast...nothing to worry about there.

The Gorham Beach chick is also doing well. It is growing fast, already more than a mouthful for most predators in my opinion.

It was a beautiful calm morning to be out on the lake. Seeing our three new loon families enjoying the morning too is a very special way to start the day.

6.17.21

Dead loon on Intermediate Lake...

Hi Damon,

A dead loon washed up at Gorham Beach was reported to the Loon Network today. Arlene Westhoven called me with the contact info. I am acquainted with the people on whose beach it washed up on, so I collected it, put it in a garbage bag and into a spare refrigerator at my house.

It has no bands.

It has no signs of injury that I could see.

Some blood was coming from the beak.

A loud loon ruckus was reported by the next door neighbor at about 2pm yesterday.

A violent attack by a Gorham Beach adult on a lone loon was reported by a Deep Water Point resident less than a week ago.

6.18.21

Adult Loon found dead at Gorham Beach

It was a sad sight, so I haven't attached the picture I took when I went to retrieve the body. Following is most of the email I sent yesterday to Damon McCormick of Common Coast, the loon expert we consult with as needed:

(See above...)

Damon called me within a few minutes of receiving my email. As expected, he advised me to contact the local DNR office in Gaylord in the morning. I called the office as soon as they opened. They made arrangements and a conservation officer picked up the loon at about noon today. It will be sent to Lansing on Monday to be examined. I expect to get a report on their findings but have no idea how long that will take.

In the meantime, we have confirmed it was not one of the Gorham Beach pair as that entire family was seen later yesterday...and as a matter of fact, the Gorham Beach family is yelling at a paddleboat going by the three of them not far from me as I finish writing this! 😊

I will keep you informed as soon as I receive any more information.

6.18.21 comments...

The violent incident referred to was reported to me by Jim Lake the other day. While they were on a paddle boat ride less than a week ago, they saw the Gorham Beach family slowly moving southward. Not far away they saw a single adult loon. One of the Gorham Beach pair dove towards the lone loon and suddenly came up under it, actually throwing it into the air! There was a violent skirmish and both loons flew to the north.

6.18.21 continued...

Within minutes of sending my email to the Loon Watchers I received the following from Damon: On Monday I'll contact the director of the DNR Wildlife Disease Lab - Tom Cooley - and explain the context, which might accelerate the necropsy a bit.

Would you mind sending the pic of the dead loon directly to me? I can possibly determine male or female based on the bill size/shape.

So I sent him the pictures



6.20.21

Baby fed by one adult then sleeping right out front. Adults changed babysitters at about 5:30. With

spotting scope at just over 100 yards in calm, overcast conditions saw red and white on right leg on one adult...other one has green and white on left leg.

6.28.21

Latest Loon News

Let's get the situation with the dead loon covered first.

I was very impressed with the prompt attention given to this case by the Wildlife Disease Lab in Lansing. Thanks to Damon McCormick of Common Coast having personal contacts at that lab he was able to obtain a copy of the preliminary necropsy report, review it and send it to me today. The report contains a lot of medical type information but the results are best described by Damon's summary: "... based upon the locations of the hemorrhaging and the liver fractures the loon - a female - died of blunt force trauma, most likely from impact with a boat, unfortunately."

So the female loon was not killed in a confrontation with another loon, as we had suspected, but much more likely in a confrontation with a moving boat...which we know a loon can't win. A sad example of why we have to diligently watch for the loons as we play on the lake and give them plenty of room. It is a relief to know the adult female that was killed was not one of the adults raising Intermediate Lake's three chicks. As of this morning all three families are intact and doing well. My wife and I spotted them all in their usual nursery areas on our pontoon ride. That was good to see, since we had not had a chance to get down to check out the south end families...too much wind and rain lately...but the families survived it and the chicks are getting big. They look like more than a mouthful now to me. I hope the eagle we saw in the eagle tree agrees and leaves them alone.

While the three families are thriving, it is definitely not without stress. With the 4th of July weekend coming up boat traffic is increasing rapidly, which we know is causing them stress...especially the jet ski traffic. Remind your guests, and everyone you come in contact with, to respect the loons and, again, give them plenty of room.

But the boat traffic was not the stress we witnessed this morning. There are definitely more loons on our lake than usual this time of year. Nearly everyone I talk to is remarking about seeing loons frequently in every area of the lake on their boat rides. We are also hearing frequent loud exchanges between loons all over the lake. I have personally seen several loon encounters involving the Gorham Beach pair and various intruders in their territory. Well this morning, my wife and I saw the longest violent chase I have ever seen in all my years of observing the loons. It was actually rather frightening to watch.

As we cruised slowly down the east side of the south end south of the big island, we spotted a group of six adult loons. They were doing lots of diving and circling each other, with a few wing flaps and short scooting trips by a couple of them. Then one took off heading north and another took off, coming very close to our boat, heading south. I didn't see those two again and the others were much more spaced out. We cruised on around past the river and started up the west side. The remaining four loons had grouped together again, resuming the diving and circling routine. Suddenly, two loons came quickly out of the water making big splashes and one loon was definitely chasing the other...this I had never seen before. Any other time I have watched these encounters they ended with loons flying away or diving and disappearing from the area. Not this time...that one loon was definitely on a mission to catch the other and the other was running for its life! They were both flapping their wings and running on the water like they might be trying to take flight but the escaping loon couldn't get airborne with the chasing loon literally on its tail. So the chase continued...all over and back and forth in that part of the lake, going around our boat a couple of times, in close to shore, back out to the middle, back to shore, around they went with frequent sudden turns by the escaping loon and big splashing as the chaser tried to grab it, then off they would go again...this went on for over ten minutes!...both loons were visibly getting tired but the chase continued...finally zigzagging farther north and I lost sight of them. Several minutes later we saw four loons close together in the middle of the lake, they did a little diving and circling and

then just dispersed. Two disappeared for good and the other two were not close together. The chase was apparently over. I told my wife to watch for a loon body floating in the water but seeing four together again I didn't really expect there was a violent end. Maybe they just got exhausted.

At this point in our ride we had not seen either of the south end chicks. As the chase ended I noticed one loon was heading from the middle of the lake, across our path, towards the west shore. I guessed that loon was heading back to a parked baby...and I was right...very soon the adult rejoined the chick near shore and life for that family returned to normal.

I had also guessed that with all that ruckus the other pair probably had parked their baby to keep it safe. As we continued north past the northern platform I spotted a single loon heading on a straight course towards shore. Sure enough, very shortly I saw the baby swimming out to the adult. That meant all families were accounted for and doing well.

And for this boat ride...mission accomplished...with a lot more excitement than we had anticipated.

7.16.21

Mid July Update

And a very short update it is.

All three of our loon families are doing well.

On our three hour ride around the lake today we saw all of the families in their normal "nursery" areas. The Gorham Beach family definitely takes over the largest area. They were across the lake, well over a mile north of their nest site. That young loon, being the oldest of our three chicks, is showing significant white plumage on its chest and gray on its head and back. The other two are still pretty much all black but already about the size of an adult mallard duck. All of the youngsters are strong divers but still take advantage of the frequent "room service" provided by the adults. I was hoping to see the Gorham Beach youngster flap its wings to see how they are developing, but I haven't seen that in over a week. The wings were definitely worthless little flappers at that point.

There have been several close calls reported, and even some disturbing reports of downright harassment by jet skis and boats lately. We need to get the word out for everyone to watch out for and give plenty of room to our loons. In fact, the ILA is currently working on display sheets and handouts to make boaters, whether property owners, guests, day visitors or resort visitors aware of the stress and danger their careless operation causes our loons. If you are, or know, a resort owner please contact the ILA to obtain flyers that can be posted in rooms to educate visitors as soon as those flyers are available. As I have mentioned before, get out and enjoy all that our beautiful lake has to offer.

7.19.21

Nesting buoys

Sent to Loon Platoon, Steve, Jim and Ken.

Greetings all,

We had another sunny calm morning so my grandson, Ben, and I took a working pontoon ride to the south end and retrieved the four buoys and anchors.

Having decent sized rope on the anchors rather than cable made the job much easier. One drawback is that most of the ropes had one or two fish hooks in them. I had noticed that situation when I was inspecting one of the platforms earlier this summer so we knew to watch for hooks while raising the anchors.

The buoys and anchors are now back in storage at my place...and of course all of the fish hooks have been removed.

As usual, we will leave the platforms in place until late summer.

8.6.21

After a ski trip in the morning, watched the Gorham Beach youngster testing its wings. It was close to an adult and made several very short trips...running, flapping, just getting airborne then gliding gracefully to a stop. Later in the day Greg and Christina saw it make about a 30 yard flight.

8.19.21

Success!

Greetings all,

Our three loon families continue to do well.

Back on August 6, after a ski trip in the morning, friends and I watched the Gorham Beach youngster testing its wings. It was close to an adult and made several very short trips...running, flapping, just getting airborne then gliding gracefully to a stop. Later in the day, they saw it make about a 30 yard flight. Ever since then I have been hoping to see it take a substantial long flight.

Well, this afternoon I finally witnessed the not-so-little-anymore youngster make a very long flight.

I first saw it far out in the lake near my place. It appeared to be alone and I saw it make about a fifty yard flight into the nice breeze. Right after it landed it had to make a rather hasty dive as a boat pulling tubers was heading its way. I didn't see it surface, but as I was searching for it with my binoculars, it flew into my view just tucking its feet back after its takeoff. It held the normal streamlined shape as it flew just above the water for a very long distance, gradually gaining altitude and making a gentle curve to the right, then to the left, far out across the lake. I lost it in the trees then spotted it again closer to the water as it disappeared from view behind neighboring boatlifts and trees. It probably landed somewhere across the lake since I didn't see it circle back my way.

It was a very strong, healthy looking flyer...exactly what I had been wanting to see. I am confident the two chicks in the south end are making their test flights as well by now. Keep your eyes open and perhaps you can catch one of the early flights as I was lucky enough to do.

I did see the two Gorham Beach adults with their chick yesterday...but that is an increasingly rare sighting as the youngster becomes more self sufficient. It won't be long before one of the adults, usually the female, skips town and heads south.

As always, I hope you all get out and check out all this great area has to offer.

8.21.21

The Gorham Beach youngster is a show off!

I spotted it cruising the dropoff, right out in front, all alone early this morning. As the sun was already feeling plenty hot, I decided to forego my usual paddling trip and watch what the little guy was up to...and I'm glad I did.

It made a couple of dives, moving further away from shore each time. I spotted two adult loons way across the lake and thought it might be going to join them. I was wrong about that.

There was a breeze blowing straight out from the south (my place faces almost due north), so, as the youngster got a ways out, it decided to make a quick test flight into the wind, as usual, back to the dropoff, just barely getting airborne. After preening a bit it again headed back out...going much further out this time, over half way across the lake, again making me think it was going to join the adults.

Wrong again!

As I watched with my binoculars, the mini Wright brother started taking off into the wind right towards me. What a spectacular sight! It had to do a lot of flapping and running across the water directly at me, with my binoculars giving me a deluxe "wildlife film" view of every move...and still coming right at me...eventually getting fully airborne, it stretched its legs back straight and made a gentle curve, gliding to a perfectly smooth landing in front of me at the dropoff. Fantastic!!

I'm sure the little test pilot knew I was watching all this and just wanted to prove it was getting well prepared for its eventual long flight south.

I know I just put out a flight report the other day, but my zoomed in view of the activity this morning was just too good not to share. I wish my binoculars were a video camera...

9.1.21

Another success story...

And this one has nothing to do with loons...but it does involve one of our other long distance migratory

visitors...a hummingbird.

The hummingbirds have been going crazy chasing each other and draining the feeders, no doubt getting ready for their long flight south. They are as entertaining to watch as the loons. I've often wondered what it would be like to hold one of these tiny, lively critters, of course never expecting to get that chance. Well, this morning I got that chance...although at first it wasn't a pleasant experience.

I was doing some work in my barn when I spotted a very unhealthy looking little hummingbird sitting on the hood of my car. All hummingbirds are little so I didn't know if this was a baby or an adult, but I knew it was in trouble. It sat motionless, with its wings slightly open as I slowly approached. Its eyes were barely open. Since it didn't move, it occurred to me that perhaps it had gotten trapped in the barn with nothing to eat or drink for who knows how long. It was breathing and able to hold its head up but that was all. I used a clean fluffy towel to pick it up and it didn't struggle at all. I carried it down to the cottage, took down a feeder and stuck its beak into the feeder. I did that several times but couldn't tell if it was drinking or not. I propped it up on the towel and touched drops of the sugar water to its beak and, finally, it did appear to use its tiny tongue to taste the water. After doing that several times I left it to rest for a few minutes, keeping an eye on it from a distance. It moved its head slightly a couple of times. As I approached it again it opened its mouth very wide, like a baby bird wanting a snack, but I think it was really a defensive reaction to me approaching. Other than that, it still hardly moved. I offered it some more drops from the feeder and this time it was definitely lapping at the water...and its eyes were finally open. That was certainly encouraging. After letting it lick away at the drops for a few more minutes I decided to let it rest again. As I turned to walk away, my wife, Sue, exclaimed: "It flew away!!" I turned to see it hovering a few feet away...then it flew to a hanging feeder and proceeded to attack the feeder as if it had been stranded on a desert island!!...and I guess maybe it had been, so to speak...

What a thrill and great relief it was to see it fly off and begin to feed itself...a successful hummingbird rescue! Seeing it on the feeder, it appeared to be an adult female.

As I have said on many occasions...there is so much to see around this beautiful area...not just our loons...if you just take the time to look around you. Heck, you might even get lucky enough to help a damsel in distress...

Pictures of the damsel in distress...



9.2.21

Nesting platforms update.

Andy Hickman had previously brought in the platform at his place. He and I took advantage of a perfectly calm, sunny morning today and brought in the two platforms from the south end. On the trip we saw both of the south end young loons and an eagle in the eagle tree. We also suddenly came across a group of 7 adults that popped up right in front of us not far from the southern end. They immediately went into some wild gyrations, probably because we came upon them so suddenly and closely...then they quickly dispersed.

Three of the platforms and anchors will be stored at Andy's place this winter. I will eventually wander out to bring in the other two platforms and store those at my place.

9.6.21

I waded out to the two remaining platforms and flipped them over so the weed growth and mess might get washed off before they are brought to shore.

9.15.21

Took out the platform from the Green's property.

Sent email report about...

Loons are scarce...

After seeing more loons than usual on our lake this summer, it seems like all of a sudden they have disappeared. I have not seen an adult with one of our young loons since September 2. That was the same day 7 adults were spotted together in the south end of the lake. This is about the same time as last year when the adults suddenly seemed to disappear.

The Gorham Beach youngster has been seen frequently near my place but always alone lately. In fact I saw it close to me on my paddle boat ride this morning (along with two eagles in a tree at the point near Snowflake and a heron). Now it is just a matter of watching to see when the last young loons will be spotted. I'm guessing that will be late October or early November...after a couple of snow events and a

few below freezing nights.

It is interesting to note that the hummingbirds also seem to have suddenly disappeared at the same time. They were going crazy on our feeders and now I haven't seen one in two days.

Several flocks of geese have been seen V-ing their way south as well...it is definitely that time of year. As a side note, all of the nesting platforms have been removed from the lake except the one at Snowflake. That one will be taken out soon.

So, as we and our animal world friends prepare for the inevitable change of seasons, we can all still get out and enjoy what nature has to offer in this wonderful part of the world.

9.17.21

On our last pontoon ride of the year (because, at 6.9, if the lake level goes down more I won't be able to get our boat off the lift) we saw a juvenile in the far south end, then two juveniles not too far apart at Deep Water Point.

At about 6:45 pm I saw a juvenile preening maybe 20 yards from an adult that was doing nothing. The adult did not appear to be a big sized bird. They were 3/4 of the way across the lake. At 7:10 after coming back out there were three loons together. They did some flapping scoots, then two flew a few hundred yards, settled in for a few minutes then flew out of sight. While 2 of the three looked like juveniles, maybe they were all migrating adults.

9.28.21

Young loon feeding along the dropoff at 9:15am. Shortly after that I was 1/4 mile across the lake on the paddle boat and a young loon was close to me...the other one was still near the dropoff by Deep Water Point.

10.6.21

Saw two loons on my kayak ride, one by Green's and one in mid lake towards Al's point.

10.7.21

One out front at about 9am.

10.11.21

Blue heron on Jim's boat lift for over 3 hours.

10.12.21

Young loon in front of log home feeding and preening at 9am.

Cruising quickly and preening as it goes, right out in front at 9:30. Resumed feeding heading south.

10.26.21

Andy saw a young loon on a kayak ride between Openo and his place.

10.30.31

Took a two hour kayak ride around the big part of the lake...beautiful fall color tour!...didn't see any loons...or eagles.

11.3.21

I was back downstate but Andy Hickman and Sue Thomas spotted the same loon in front of their places near the sandbar at Recreation Point.