

## Loon Log 2022

Dick West

### 4.16.2022 Early Spring Excitement

Hello fellow Intermediate Lake fans,

With a few springlike days, the Intermediate Lake area has been providing plenty of excitement. In fact, maybe a little more excitement than some of us humans would like.

My emails usually include loon updates so I'll start with that. While I am still downstate, I have been getting several reports of loon calls and sightings. The first calls were reported on April 8th and 10th, with the first picture received on April 12th. While the lake is still mostly covered by ice, there have been several loon sightings since then in the open water around the lake. Our loons are obviously showing up on schedule and appear to be pairing up waiting for the ice to clear. Seeing the first loons back on the lake is a source of the good kind of excitement we like to have every spring.

The high water level can be a different kind of excitement, and right now the water is very high. With the ice starting to break up, hopefully the water level will go down and the ice won't pile up too badly on the downwind shorelines. Property owners don't need that kind of excitement. I am always worried about the little island near Gorham Beach being compromised by high water, waves and moving ice...all of which are a concern right now. We can only sit back and see what happens...Mother Nature is in charge of that outcome.

This spring we are experiencing another kind of excitement...bears! While it is not unusual for bears to be seen anywhere in Antrim County, the populated area around Intermediate Lake has never been a hot spot for them. This spring, bears have been caught on videos near [Central Lake](#), Walleye Lane and Recreation Point, while last year a big one was filmed on shore across the lake from Recreation Point. That means bears are roaming everywhere around the lake, so spread the word and take proper precautions. The videos confirmed that bears were the culprit in several bird feeder raids that left the feeders destroyed and support poles bent over. Definitely not the kind of excitement homeowners want.

As soon as the ice is gone and the weather cooperates, our Loon Platoon will get the loon nesting platforms in place. I'm sure the loons will be nagging us to get that job done so they can do their job.

We will keep you posted as things progress. Your personal eyewitness reports are always appreciated.

### 4.22.2022 Two Nesting Platforms Are In! (Straw Needed)

Another wonderful morning at Intermediate Lake...clear sky, calm water and a loon fishing for breakfast along the dropoff, entertaining me as I had mine. It was only 26 degrees so I decided to delay my kayak ride.

Then, after a quick conversation with Andy Hickman, the Loon Platoon sprung into action! The breeze was starting to build but stayed fairly light allowing us to get both of the nesting platforms launched in the south end. Thanks to Luke Hocking for letting us use his rowboat to launch the northernmost platform in the south end. As we towed the platform into place, sure enough, there was a pair of loons waiting for us! It is so exciting to have those gorgeous animals waiting in the same spot as in previous years, only two days after the ice cleared the lake.

After that successful launch, we took the next platform down to The Maples where they again generously allowed us to borrow one of their rowboats to get that one in place. To add to the excitement, there was another pair of loons waiting for us in that spot as well! In both cases, these pairs of loons were not just wandering the lake, they were there just a few yards away watching us place those platforms. As we returned to The Maples we could see that pair right up next to the platform, hopefully giving it their approval.

It will be interesting to see if these two pairs will have chicks on or about the same day. They obviously were at the platforms on the same day but that doesn't mean they will nest, mate or produce eggs at the same time. Gives us humans something to watch and wonder about.

The little island near Gorham Beach appears to be in decent shape for nesting. I hope the water level continues to go down so that spot will be ready for a pair of loons to nest on. I haven't seen a pair by me but a friend at Gorham Beach saw three loons together the other day...that is a good sign.

By the way, the Loon Platoon can use some help in one regard...we need some straw for the last two platforms. We thought we had enough but we used all of our supply on the first three platforms. We need the equivalent of at least a half bale of straw. We would appreciate it if someone has or knows a good source of straw. Obviously, we would like to get the last two platforms out soon.

Our most crucial nesting platforms are in place...the loons are in place...so now our summer of watching new loon families begins...along with watching all of the other wildlife that flourishes on and around this fantastic lake of ours...animals, plants and humans! Get out and enjoy it! And at the same time, remember to respect and protect all who flourish here...and remind guests to respect it all as well.

### **5.5.2022 Loon Platoon Progress**

The bright morning sunshine warmed me up enough to take advantage of the calm lake and get the last two nesting platforms launched. We now have five platforms in place...two in the south end of the lake, one near the sandbar at Recreation Point, one at Snowflake and one at the Green's property near the 90 degree turn of Intermediate Lake Road. Along with the little island near Gorham Beach, there are six nesting sites available on Intermediate Lake for any interested loons.

Once that was accomplished, my next priority was to hop in my kayak and check out the status of the little island near Gorham Beach. The water level is just about at the normal summer gage reading so the little island is in good shape for nesting. That fact has definitely been noticed by our returning loons. As I circled the island at a distance, two loons popped up and came over to say hello! I'm pretty sure they are the same pair from last year cuz they seemed interested in listening to my one sided conversation about them raising a couple of healthy chicks this year. They were calmly and quietly diving, and both came very close to my kayak. After our brief conversation, they even moved along with me for a while as I slowly paddled away. I've told you before that these two birds are my buddies, and I'm convinced they are...I don't care what my wife or anyone else might call me!

After that pleasant encounter, I went on down to the south end. I went as far as the platform near the eagle tree, and, sure enough, that pair of loons were close by the platform. I didn't see them on it but they are certainly keeping an eye on it. They both headed my way calmly and quietly as well but didn't get nearly as close as the Gorham Beach pair. They sorta seemed interested in my one sided conversation but I think happy that I didn't stick around long. I don't get down there often enough to earn buddy status with them.

I didn't see any eagles in the eagle tree this trip. I'm guessing they are busy doing nesting chores at their spot...wherever that is. I also didn't make it to the far south end, but Andy Hickman told me he saw that pair of loons close by that platform last night as well as the one by the eagle tree.

While we don't yet have reports of loons nesting, they are definitely staking out their territory and should be mating and sitting on some eggs soon. Please let us know if you see a loon sitting on a nest so we can get an idea of when the first chicks might appear. This is an exciting time of year to be out enjoying the lake.

#### **5.15.2022 Nesting Success**

The little island near Gorham Beach is again hosting a loon nest!

That means we have our three main nesting sites occupied...two in the south end of the lake and one near Gorham Beach. Now we let nature take its course and wait to see which pair wins the First Chick Award in 2022.

We hope to get the warning buoys in place soon, which will complete the Loon Platoon's spring activities...and very rewarding activities they are.

#### **5.23.2022 Another chilly morning...**

but it was sunny and calm, so the Loon Platoon loaded up the warning buoys and took a pleasant pontoon boat ride to get those in place. There was a loon hunkered down on each of the platforms in the south end as Andy Hickman and I dropped off the buoys. They didn't seem to be bothered much by us slowly moving in to get that job done. Hopefully the buoys will remind everyone to stay well away from the nests, as we expect more boat traffic this coming weekend.

The loons are nesting, ducklings have been spotted, goslings have also been spotted, fish are moving in to spawn, little birds are chasing bigger birds, hummingbirds are attacking the feeders and each other, the eagles are patrolling the area...lots of spring activity on and around the lake...a great time for us humans to check out the action...even if we do have to bundle up a bit to do so.

When you do get out, remember your binoculars to be able to get good views of the wildlife...especially our nesting loons...without bothering them by getting too close.

#### **6.2.2022 Loon watching and miscellaneous...**

Another chilly morning but sunny and mostly calm, so I loaded up a kayak and headed to the park in Bellaire. On my way I stopped at The Maples to check on the southernmost platform. Chicks could hatch any day now, and when I saw the platform empty and a loon close to it I looked very carefully for a baby. At the same time, if there was a hatch, I would expect both adults would be together with the new chick or chicks. Sure enough, as I watched with my binoculars, the second loon flew in with a beautiful classic landing for a routine changing of the guard...except it wasn't quite routine. As the two adults swam near the platform, suddenly they started making loud warning calls...and if my nearly deaf ears heard them it had to be really loud. Turns out an eagle was cruising by and the loons were not happy about it. As soon as the eagle flew past the returning loon promptly went up on the nest, tended to the egg or eggs, and settled down as the other loon wandered off preening and feeding.

After that, I launched my kayak at the park in Bellaire. It was a very pleasant paddle upstream to the lake where I again checked on the nesting loon. On my upstream trip I passed two swan families, not close

together...one had two already white feathered cygnets while the other had five younger, still "ugly duckling" colored cygnets. The adult swans were calm and not at all aggressive to me as I nervously passed them in the narrow river. On my return downstream I felt more nervous since the adults of the five family were on opposite sides of the river and both had wings raised slightly, which can be a sign of aggression. I chose to approach the bank where the smaller adult had all the babies, hoping they would move away from me into the middle of the stream...which they did. Then I saw why their wings were raised...the other family was in sight before the next bend of the river...also with their wings raised! At that point I was less nervous since I didn't expect the adults would be worrying about me. As I drifted by the family with two babies, one of the adults took off flying towards the five family! It was clearly chasing them but it did not fly all the way to them in an attack...just a show of force I guess. Another interesting observation was that one of the two white babies was actually riding on an adult's back. I see that all the time with loons, but had never seen that with swans...and that was definitely not a newborn cygnet since it had white feathers already...and so I drifted around a bend and out of sight of the swans...but not out of sight of additional interesting observations for this trip.

As I left the main river and turned into the stumpy area where the Cedar River merges in, I saw a good sized doe swimming from one of the little islands to the airport property. The deer apparently didn't see me as it very slowly swam across and wandered up into the swamp and then into the trees...a rare sight for me...and an exciting one.

I let the gentle breeze push me slowly through the stumps towards a large log famous in my trips for being a favorite sunning spot for turtles...and it was heavily occupied this morning. These were some good sized turtles. One of them must have been 18 inches or so wide. I was glad to see them there. I used to see dozens of turtles on my river trips...seemed like every log in the sun would have a turtle or two on it...but not anymore. I don't know why, but I don't think it is because of the popularity of turtle soup...

Anyway, I have been rambling on about a lot more than just loon watching...and there is a reason for that...I like to remind people there is a lot to enjoy about this area's lakes and rivers and forests that you just don't see going 55 miles an hour down a road or zipping across a lake...in fact, as I think about what I have seen after an interesting trip like this...I wonder what I missed...

But wait!!...there is more...

Heading home after leaving the river, I stopped along M88 to check on the nesting loons near the eagle tree in the south end. The platform was vacant but I spotted two loons about 100 yards away from it. I looked closely with my binoculars to see if I could see a chick or two. Both loons were diving with no sign of any babies. As I watched, I noticed those two were not acting like a pair...lots of quick dives, head dipping and slow circling with heads held high as loons often communicate...nothing aggressive...perhaps just a neighborly chat. Suddenly, one of them went running and flapping across the water like it was going to take flight...but it didn't...it just stopped, dove and disappeared. It was heading in my direction but I never saw it surface...it was just gone. The remaining loon slowly headed back towards the platform...at first with it's head held high as if on alert, then it settled down and calmly went back up on the platform, tended to the egg or eggs, and settled down.

Late in the afternoon I took a paddleboat ride to check on the Gorham Beach nest. Nice and quiet there...just a loon sitting on a nest...hopefully enjoying the day...not too hot, not too cold, not windy...finally a decent day to relax.

We should be having some chicks hatch in the next few days, so keep your eyes open and let us know if you see any babies.

#### **6.4.2022 WE HAVE A CHICK!!!**

At 11:50 this morning I got an exciting text from Sue Thomas announcing her spotting our first baby loon near the southernmost platform! The southernmost pair has won the First Chick Award for 2022! Congratulations to them...and us, the lucky loon fans that get the privilege of watching them.

A few minutes later she sent this picture clearly showing one chick between the two adults. She only saw one chick. It is possible there are two chicks but probably just one.



I went down to the Maples and easily spotted the loons but it was apparently nap time cuz one loon clearly was sheltering a baby on its back. The other loon was diving but not bring any snacks to the resting youngster.

On my way back I saw a loon still on the nesting platform near the eagle tree. I'm expecting a hatch on that nest very soon. I'm guessing the Gorham Beach pair are about a week behind the southern pairs in having a hatch. Time will tell.

#### **6.9.2022 It's a mystery...**

Our loon pair using the platform near the eagle tree has abandoned the nest...without any chicks. After the southernmost pair having their chick hatch on June 4th, I have been checking the platform by the eagle tree at least once a day. Since both of the south end pairs went on those platforms at about the same time, it was logical to think they would have chicks at about the same time. Every day there was a loon sitting on the eagle tree platform as usual...until yesterday.

Early yesterday morning I took a paddleboat ride to the south end. All was well at Gorham Beach. Not so much so at the eagle tree platform. One of the warning buoys had broken loose and was on the east shore down towards Walleye Lane. After spotting two eagles in the eagle tree, I saw two loons in the water near the platform. Expecting to see a chick or two with them I stayed way back and watched through my binoculars. The loons were not staying real close together and both were moving away from the platform. Within a few minutes I saw each of them dive, so no chicks with them yet. Both loons started heading my way so I turned and headed back towards the sandbar. Strangely, the loons kept

pace with me, parallel to my course staying about half way between me and the west shore. After being distracted by the eagles performing for me...one circling and snatching something from the water then heading south...the other grabbing a large fish and heading to land in a low tree to tear that apart...the loons were ahead of me still heading towards the sandbar and then I lost track of them while I took a phone call. I stopped to talk to Andy Hickman and we saw the two loons come around the sandbar out in front of his place. It was very strange to see them so far from the nest.

At about 12:30, on our way to Gaylord, my wife and I stopped along M88 to take a look at the eagle tree platform. two loons were in the area of the platform and weed bed but not real close together or very close to the platform. On our way back from Gaylord, at about 3:30, two loons were close to the platform but making no attempt to get up on it, and again moved away from it. At this point I was convinced they had abandoned the nest and curious to know if any eggs or eggshells were left on it. This morning I drove down and seeing no loons in the area, I launched my kayak from my observation spot along M88 and headed out to the eagle tree platform. I did see a single loon on the far side of the weed bed moving north. I stayed beyond the warning buoy until I saw the loon still moving away, then I went to the platform. The straw is still intact with a definite nest bowl but empty of any eggs or eggshells. So that's the mystery...what happened to that pair's egg or eggs? There had to be at least one egg there or they wouldn't have been sitting for a month. To me, the most logical explanation is that a chick hatched but was quickly lost to a predator...but that is just a guess...and we will never know for sure.

I spent a little time trying to find the anchor block for the wandering buoy but had no luck. Since I could see the buoy still down towards Walleye Lane, I decided to go check it out. As I headed that way, the nearby loon took off and flew south. As I watched it fly over the big island, I spotted three other loons flying north, circle in front of me and land. Within just a couple of minutes, two other loons landed fairly close to the other three. I watched them as I continued to the buoy and was surprised to see one more loon fly in to join the gathering. Six loons together this time of year seems very unusual to me. There was some head dipping and diving but no aggressive movements or displays at all. They were moving slowly north while I moved south to the stray buoy.

The buoy still had its anchor block attached and it had hit bottom in about eight feet of water. Apparently, wind and waves had dragged it off the dropoff by the weed bed and it came to rest there. I called Andy and he was available so we decided to pick up the stray buoy and store it at his place. On my way back to my car and during the pontoon ride to pick up the buoy, Andy and I did not see any loons. The six had apparently disbursed.

I understand there is a slight chance the eagle tree pair could try for another brood. It would be extremely interesting if they did nest again. At this point, though, we still have the Gorham Beach pair sitting on their nest...as of about six o'clock tonight...and one chick to watch in the far south end. I am hopeful the Gorham Beach pair will have a chick or two by this weekend...28 days from when they started sitting on May 15th will be June 11th.

Stayed tuned...

### **6.11.2022 Loon mystery comments...**

I have had a few people wondering if an eagle attacked our possible baby loon...one person even stating a chick from the platform near the eagle tree would be "doomed". As most of you know, the so called

"eagle tree" is not where the eagles have a nest, it is just their favorite observation post in that part of the lake. So, in partial defense of the eagles, I give you my thoughts on the situation. A loon chick from that platform is certainly not "doomed".

Loon pairs have been nesting successfully on a platform in that location for many years, producing lots of chicks and raising them through fledging stage.

In fact it is very unlikely an eagle would have grabbed a less than day old chick. Eagles would probably not be tempted by such a tiny, fairly well protected victim. A big turtle could easily gobble up a newborn chick but an adult loon would probably be able to spot and drive away a turtle. While those possibilities exist, it is much more likely a chick would be snatched by a sudden muskie or pike attack...a satisfying mouthful for those big fish. In fact I have fishermen friends that suspect that is very likely what happened. They actually have lures in their tackle boxes that look like little ducklings...dangling feet and all.

No one knows for sure what happened and we never will. The mystery is unsolvable.

#### **6.11.2022 A Gorham Beach chick!!**

At 1:20 this afternoon there was an adult with one chick in the water very close to the nest. The other adult is still sitting on the nest so we can hope for another chick soon.

I'll keep you all posted.

#### **6.11.2022 Hooray!!**

Two baby loons at Gorham Beach!

As of 5:00 the Gorham Beach pair are in the weed bed nursery area by their nest with two little babies! More details to follow...

#### **6.11.2022 More details...**

This has been an exciting day for us loon watchers.

As I had mentioned in an earlier email, today, June 11, is 28 days from May 15 which is when the Gorham Beach pair started sitting on their nest. With that in mind, at 7:30 this morning I took my kayak down and beached it in the shade for over an hour and a half. One loon was on the nest and the other was close by, diving and preening...and for a while, tucked its head back and took a nap. In the meantime, I saw the loon on the nest stand up and check the eggs three times within about ten minutes. That is unusual...seeing that is why I stuck around so long. Maybe twenty minutes later I saw the loon do that again. While I did not see a chick at that time, based on seeing a chick early this afternoon, I believe I was watching while the first chick was breaking out of its shell, perhaps with a little help from the adult. I don't know how long it takes for their feathers to dry before they go in the water, but by 1:20 to 2:00 it was swimming around, climbing on and off an adult's back and having lots of snacks.

I walked down again at about 2:45. One adult was around the weeds close to the nest feeding the swimming chick. The other adult was nesting calmly. I watched for about a half hour with no action on the nest.

When I walked back down at 5:00 is when I spotted the two chick family all in the water. They were hanging out on the other side of a patch of weeds away from the nest towards Deep Water Point. I thought that might give me an opportunity to make an early inspection of the abandoned nest. I certainly didn't want to go anywhere near them in a boat, but I figured if they were moving further from the nest I could wade out from shore without bothering them. I have been wanting to inspect a nest soon after a family had left it with their new chicks. You would think there would be pieces of eggshells scattered on the nest after the chicks hatch. When I have inspected nests even the day after a hatch, I have never seen even a tiny piece of eggshell remaining. Sooooo, I went to put on a barhing suit and water shoes, then back to Gorham Beach to check the nest. Unfortunately for me, by the time I got back the loon family was closer to the nest site and I had to abort the mission. No chance to quickly look for hatch residue. I hope to get a chance to inspect the nest tomorrow but I don't expect to see anything left on the nest by then. Perhaps birds or other creatures carry off the bits of eggshells soon after the loons are gone. Who knows. Another mystery as far as I'm concerned.

At this point we can be proud to have three chicks from our three nesting pairs. Let's hope they all stay safe and healthy to entertain us until they head south this fall. We all can spread the word about our amazing loons and remind people to watch out for them...giving them plenty of room to survive safely. Use your binoculars.

### **6.13.2022 An awesome loon show...**

And I didn't even have to go out on the water.

At a few minutes after 8:00 this morning I walked out on my dock and spotted the Gorham Beach family along the dropoff at Deep Water Point. At 8:23 I got a text from friends in DWP, Chris and Don Owens, telling me the loon family was heading my way! As they got closer I started watching them from my porch. At about 8:55 they were getting pretty close with both chicks in the water...then they started squawking about something. At 9:01 I got another text from the Owens that an eagle was on their shore...so that's what the squawking was about. The loons quickly settled down, slowly heading my way, feeding the chicks as they went. The chicks occasionally would get up on an adult's back and then back in the water. By the time they got to my place, feeding time was pretty much over. Both chicks were staying put on an adult's back while the other adult was preening and relaxing. Both adults would often tuck their heads back and cat nap for a minute or two but the chicks were not napping. They were preening themselves, raising their heads, stretching and yawning and occasionally waving a tiny webbed foot at me. Of course I waved back...

I have told you all before that this pair are my buddies, and even though they yell at me if they think I'm getting too close to their babies, this morning's visit was another example of our friendship.

I checked on them last night just before sunset and they were still hanging out near the nest area. I pretty much expected that since they usually don't wander far the first day after the chicks hatch. So



that tells me this was their first major foray away from their nesting area...and where did they go??...down to my place of course! But not only did they come here to show off their babies, but they stayed right out in front until after 10:30.

I parked myself on my porch in my rocking chair with my spotting scope while the loon family parked out in front. I was amazed that the adult with the babies on its back rested in one very small area for about an hour. My spotting scope has a small field of view and I hardly had to move it to keep an eye on those three all that time. It was as if the loon had its GPS locked into some coordinates that kept it in one spot.

Every once in a while the other adult would bring a treat to the fidgety youngsters but not often...I think it was supposed to be nap time. Sometimes the treat offered was apparently too big so if it didn't get gobbled up, the carrying loon would take the treat, that looked like a tiny minnow or something, off its back and chomp on it a bit with its big beak, perhaps tenderizing it before offering it back to the chicks. Usually one of the chicks would then gulp it down, but if they didn't the adult would eat it.

This lengthy show also gave me the opportunity to appreciate the magnificent black and white patterns of the adults' feathers...from vertical stripes below the head, to the black band on the neck, to delicate thin stripes curling back to the wings, to the large and small white spots on the wings and back...and of course the bright white chest...absolutely stunning in the morning sun.

Oops, I'm writing this at 12:15 and the family is back! Luckily, I had time for lunch! I grabbed my scope and went back to my rocking chair on the porch. And glad I watched. Both chicks were in the water. One chick got up on an adult's back...then the other chick actually dove! I couldn't believe a two day old chick would dive.. but it did...twice! When it came up the second time it also raised up and flapped its tiny little wings just like an adult often does after diving. Incredible...I had certainly never seen that before.

I thought they would just parade by this time...but no, the taxi loon stopped in exactly the same resting spot as before. I didn't even have to change the focus on my spotting scope. By the way, one loon clearly has a red and white band on its right leg, white on the top. One of the chicks flopped back in the water grabbing a snack and then changed taxis. Both adults had a chick on their back...but that didn't last long. The second adult soon dove leaving that chick in its wake. Then the chick dove too. In a few minutes the other chick went back in the water and both chicks were diving! The chicks stayed in the water with the adults bringing snacks for quite some time...virtually in the same small area where they rested this morning. Just after 1:30 they finally went under my dock heading towards Deep Water Point. I think the show is over. For now.

I didn't intend to bore you with another report so soon, but this show was such an amazing way to spend much of the day not doing my chores I decided to share it with you. If you have some time, find a good picture of an adult loon on line to see for yourself the beautiful patterns of their feathers...or, better yet, take your binoculars and go look at them live.

### **6.20.2022 Gorham Beach Family Update**

I was downstate for a few days but when I got back yesterday I was pleased to see my loon buddies from Gorham Beach stop by for a visit. Very considerate of them since it saved me the hassle of taking a boat ride to check on them.

The two little ones are thriving under the watchful eyes and frequent feedings of their parents. They are noticeably bigger after not seeing them for four days. I'm wondering if they are perhaps getting spoiled and lazy cuz I didn't see either of them dive during the hour and a half I watched. I think they are pretty much at the "more than a mouthful" stage at this point, so a muskie or pike attack is hopefully not too likely. After a while they moved back towards Gorham Beach, probably to spend the night.

By 8:30 this morning they were back out front napping, feeding, preening...and then repeating that cycle...several times. Again they were hanging out in virtually the same spot where I watched them for a long time the other day. This time I clearly saw a single white band on an adult's left leg with no band on its right leg. They entertained me for a good two hours today before moving slowly to the north.

I hope to see many of you at the ILA potluck this coming Sunday.

### **6.22.2022 Eagle scare!**

At 11:30 this morning I was out on our lawn swing and heard loons making an alarm/warning call coming from the northwest. With the binoculars I saw an eagle swooping low and circling. It dove, but out of sight behind a boat blocking my view. It came up clutching something fairly small and black...and with what looked like a little webbed foot dangling! I watched it circle and climb until it headed south behind some trees. In a mild panic I scanned the area, seeing several ducks and one loon about at the dropoff near Stan Kimmel's place. I saw the loon dive but with very choppy water couldn't see any other loons...so I brought out my spotting scope. With great relief I could clearly see the whole Gorham Beach family! Things, including my breathing, were back to normal...two adults feeding two hungry chicks. The eagle must have snatched a dark colored fish dangling its tail...whew.

While I have your attention...a couple of observations from yesterday...Andy Hickman spotted the family in the south end and that chick is doing well...the Gorham Beach family was out in front at about 5:30 when one grooming chick rolled over showing a completely white belly. Our chicks are all maturing nicely.

### **7.14.2022 Another quick loon update**

All is well with our two families and our re-nested pair.

The young loon in the far south end is really developing nicely. Its wings look like it may be ready for some test flights before too long. Being the first chick hatched along with having the full attention of two adults delivering plenty of nourishment has pushed its growth well ahead of the Gorham Beach youngsters.

But don't worry about the Gorham Beach chicks. They are both doing well too. They have very attentive parents that make sure neither of them miss a meal. The Gorham Beach family are constant wanderers. While the southernmost family rarely goes north of the big island, the Gorham Beach bunch have been seen on both sides of the lake from the Juracko Lane area to the Recreation Point area. That's a big territory.

We are hoping the pair on the platform near the eagle tree will have a chick or two soon. I'm guessing that if all is well, a hatch should take place around July 20th. Keep a long distance eye on that nest in your travels and let us know if you spot any new chicks. I took a paddleboat ride down there this morning. An adult was on the nest, another adult was near by, a very big heron head above the reeds watched me go by, several swans were around and an eagle in the eagle tree was soon joined by another eagle that flew in fairly low over my head. And no other people were in sight. It was like I had the lake all to myself, sharing it with these amazing birds. My day certainly got off to a good start.

I want to take a minute to again thank Gail and Jamie Junod for planning and executing a fantastic ILA potluck on June 26th. It was a beautiful day, a beautiful setting and the Junod's were perfect hosts.

Which leads me to another, non loon thought...the ILA needs more people willing to step up and help make Association things happen. The membership has increased substantially over the last few years bringing in lots of people with great ideas and plenty of energy that hopefully can be shared within the organization. Those of you that are interested in any way, large or small, should contact any board member personally or through the website to express your interest. Now is a good time to step up in advance of the annual meeting. I know I get great satisfaction from my involvement and I'm sure you would too.

### **7.22.2022 WE HAVE ANOTHER BABY LOON!!**

This is a very exciting event for us loon watchers...and the third of three exceptional events observed by me recently.

After apparently losing a newly hatched chick on or about June 8, the loon pair using the nesting platform near the eagle tree has successfully produced another chick. This may have happened before on our lake but to my knowledge this is the first successful re-nesting attempt. That pair was first reported as being back on their nest on June 26 by Kurt Hochstein and Nancy Davis so the July 21 hatch was right on schedule. Andy Hickman reported seeing the new chick in the water next to the platform shortly after 4:00. A second egg is still on the nest but at this point it appears the nest has been abandoned. That might actually be a good thing for the new baby. With two parents feeding just one chick, the little guy has a real good chance of developing quickly to be ready in plenty of time for a trip south this fall.

The other two events did not involve loons but were also both very interesting "firsts" in my experience.

During an early morning paddleboat ride on July 18, as I cruised slowly along the dropoff, I saw something pretty big just ahead of me in a couple of feet of water barely moving...looked like a turtle with a really big head! But turtles usually submerge and disappear as soon as they see anything strange

(like an old guy on a paddleboat) so I was worried that this one was sick. Wrong again...this big guy was definitely not sick...he was busy...mating with a lady turtle of his same size! Unfortunately, by the time I realized what I was seeing, I was too close to avoid interrupting their amorous activities and they split up and headed to deep water. I'm pretty sure the big guy on top gave me a dirty look as he dove...

Just a few minutes after that incident, a fisherman friend of mine, Dave Bentoski, began waving me over to his boat. He had hooked a really big fish and was hoping to get a picture of it. I'm not a fisherman so it was exciting watching him carefully work that monster to shore. He wanted to lift it out of the water for a picture and then quickly release it. He had been battling it for some time before I showed up so it was tired but still fighting a bit as it got in shallow water. It was a musky that appeared to be three and a half feet long or so. Definitely the biggest fish I have ever seen in this lake. Here's the picture I took for him:



So there you have it! All kinds of interesting, exciting, and even historical, things going on here on good ol' Intermediate Lake. I keep telling you to get out there and see it for yourself...

### **9.1.2022 The end of summer...**

The lake stayed calm so we were able to get both platforms and the rest of the buoys from the south end on dry land.

All of the equipment is now out of the water. All four buoys and three platforms are at Andy's place. The other two platforms are at my place.

We saw a four loon conference on the east side near the big island, a single adult on the west side that hollered at us twice, probably because we unknowingly went between it and a youngster in the reeds as we approached the eagle tree buoy. That chick is well developed now.

This picture of the two adults with the youngest baby was taken by Julie Gregg on 8.31.22. I think one of the parents from each of our other two families has already left to head south.



### **9.6.22**

Going across the lake to Snowflake Point I saw an adult with two youngsters. First time in a month or so.

### **9.12.22**

A lot has been happening since we put together the loon report for the ILA newsletter, and now it is obvious fall migrations have begun for most of our migratory friends, including our loons. It appears some of the local adults moved out a couple of weeks ago. The last time I personally saw all three of our families intact was on August 15. Since then I have only seen one adult with the far south youngster and one adult with the Gorham Beach youngsters.

This summer was definitely full of loon spottings, with, it seems to me, more than the usual amount of "conferences". An interesting example of that was on August 9th. That morning on my kayak ride at about 10:30 nine loons flew into the sandbar area and put on a spectacular, and loud, show for over 10 minutes. Lots of diving and dancing and wing flapping. Then most of them went scooting across the water in different directions. After several minutes apart they took turns flying away. Amazing to watch. Naturally, I was hoping to see a test flight around the middle of August. With the Gorham Beach family spending a lot more time further north than in past years, my viewing opportunities were limited. Then on August 20th, friends reported seeing a short test flight near Gorham Beach. I missed that one, but the next morning I saw another test flight in the same area...this time for about 100 yards. It barely got its feet tucked in but was definitely off the water and made a graceful landing.

Later that morning, as I was being the spotter for my waterskiing friends, an adult loon was flying parallel to our course and easily passed our boat. According to my GPS watch we were going 27.7 miles an hour...that bird must have been going 35 or more, just cruising by...

While many adults have already headed south, the parents of our late hatching chick are taking their duties seriously. I have attached a picture Julie Gregg took of that family on August 31. Glad to see they are both still helping that chick develop properly. It won't be long before all of the youngsters will be on their own to figure out when to head out on their own migration.

This has been another great year for loon watching...even an historic year with our successful second nesting by the pair near the eagle tree. It will be interesting to see when the last of our loon youngsters is spotted. That usually happens after the first snowfall so we still have plenty of time to enjoy them.

### **9.16.22**

On our last pontoon trip for 2022, we saw one youngster in the middle of the lake off Snowflake Point.

### **9.19.22**

Sue Thomas saw a youngster with one adult in the area of the eagle tree site. The other parent has probably already left.

### **9.25.22**

Dale DeKraker saw a youngster at Gorham Beach at noon.

**9.26.22**

I heard a loon, probably flying, but didn't see it.

**9.28.22**

Spotted an eagle circling over the lake this afternoon. It kept climbing then went out of sight to the south.

**9.29.22**

Pontoon ride to the south end with Andy. Saw an adult north of the sandbar as we left Andy's place and one youngster near the big island. Surprised we didn't see another youngster since it was calm and sunny. The adult was still in the same area when we returned.

**9.30.22**

Saw one youngster just east of Gorham Beach.

**10.2.22**

Andy and Janet got a video of probably the youngest chick making test flights.

**10.3.22**

Launched my kayak at the Maples resort this afternoon.

Saw one youngster south of the big island then saw one in front of Bacon's little log cabin. Didn't see any adults.

At sunset saw a youngster out in the middle towards Snowflake Point.

**10.5.22**

Didn't see any loons on my kayak ride this afternoon, but two eagles were in the tree.

**10.6.22**

Looks like a Gorham Beach youngster right out in front preening at 9:30.

But as I watched with my binoculars the coloring of the feathers were clearly that of a molting adult.

Then I saw a white band on it's left leg. I grabbed my spotting scope and quickly confirmed that. It was at the dropoff, close enough for a good view, but it was overcast, foggy and drizzling, so lousy lighting.

Twice it gave me quick waves with it's right leg that appeared to have two bands...white and a darker color possibly. I didn't get a good enough look to be sure on that. It then started diving and moved off along the dropoff. Definitely not one of our youngsters...most likely a migrating adult stopping by for a rest and a meal.

**10.11.22**

Andy reported seeing a youngster on the far side near the horse farm.

**10.14.22**

Spotted what appeared to be a youngster at the dropoff in front of Bill Bailey's place in Deepwater Point at about 2pm.

**10.15.22**

Saw a beaver swim by this morning. Used my spotting scope to confirm it's beaver head and tail motion.

**10.27.22**

Sue Thomas spotted what is probably our youngest chick in the cove south of the sandbar.

**10.29.22**

Another loon sighted...this time by my neighbor, Julie, out front in the morning fog. She even got a foggy picture.

**11.4.22**

Sue Thomas heard a loon but didn't see it.

**11.17.22**

A snowy report...

As most of you know the leaves are gone from the trees, and now the lake is bordered by a few inches of beautiful fluffy snow...with more coming.

My neighbor, Julie Ebersole, was pretty sure she saw a loon yesterday morning out past the dropoff. I was a little surprised to have one still around this late and she couldn't get a good picture to be sure. But...with my binoculars this morning I spotted a young loon off Snowflake point. To be sure of what I was seeing I got my spotting scope. It was definitely a loon...drifting and preening in the choppy cold water and snow flurries. I watched it for several minutes, then, when it started diving, I went back inside to warm up. I am going home tomorrow morning so this will probably be my last loon sighting for this year...and it better be cuz this guy needs to be heading south.

**11.24.22**

Rich Ceuninck saw a young loon in front of his place this afternoon.

I hope all of you have a safe and healthy winter. Talk to you in the spring.

*Dick*