

Loon Log 2023

Dick West

4.8.23

A pair of loons was reportedly seen at Thurston Park today per Linda Gallagher.

4.9.23

Andy Hickman spotted his first loon and sent a picture. It was kinda far away.

4.10.23

I thought I saw four loons towards Snowflake point but no binoculars and too far away to be sure. An hour or so later two loons came by at the dropoff. My first loons of the year!!

4.11.23

The ice is virtually all gone so Andy and I put a platform out in the far south end. Thanks to Jeremiah at The Maples for the use of one of his rowboats.

Back on shore, that platform was clearly not in the right spot. In fact there was a comment about that to the ILA's social media site. That person also mentioned geese had immediately taken over that platform.

4.12.23

Andy and I put out the other south end platform, again using a boat from The Maples. As we returned the boat we could see a goose on that platform and another near by. While we rowed over to relocate the platform I noticed some splashing going on near the platform. When we approached, the geese left the area but we saw two loons close by. I'm pretty sure the splashing was the loons attempting to chase the geese from the platform. We relocated the platform and the loons stayed close by...hopefully to claim that platform.

4.13.23

A kayak ride to Gorham Beach showed the little island there almost entirely submerged. There is one dry spot about the size of a three foot circle.

After my kayak ride I put the third platform out at the Green's property near the 90 degree turn. (With help from my friend from downstate, Harvey Burns.)

4.14.23

On my paddleboat ride to Gorham Beach this morning a goose was standing up on the dry spot with another goose in the water. They both left as we approached.

During this warm weather I have frequently seen a single loon near Gorham Beach and out front but not a pair except the first day.

4.21.23

Got to the cottage at about 4:00. One loon hanging around out front for quite a while.

4.22.23

Finally! At 8:20 this morning two loons were out in front very close to shore! I am positive it is the Gorham Beach pair coming by to say hello!! I had a nice little chat with them and told them to have a healthy two chick family this year! At 8:45 a third loon was approaching from the north and the pair out in front went out to say hello.

My first loon report for 2023:

Hello fellow loon fans!

There has been plenty of things going on out on the lake already this spring.

I started getting reports of loons being sighted and heard on April 8th. The reports have been numerous ever since. I was fortunate enough to be up here on April 11th when the ice was virtually all gone, so Andy Hickman and I put a platform out in the far south end. Thanks to Jeremiah at The Maples for the use of one of his rowboats.

Back on shore, that platform was clearly not in the right spot. In fact there was a comment about that to the ILA's social media site. That person also mentioned geese had immediately taken over the platform. The next morning Andy and I put out the other south end platform, again using a boat from The Maples. As we returned the boat we could see a goose on the southernmost platform and another goose near by. While we rowed over to relocate the platform I noticed some splashing going on near it. When we approached, the geese left the area but we saw two loons close by. I'm pretty sure the splashing was the loons attempting to chase the geese from the platform. We relocated the platform and the loons stayed around watching us...hopefully to claim that platform.

A kayak ride on April 13th to Gorham Beach showed the little island there almost entirely submerged. There was one dry spot about the size of a three foot circle. After my kayak ride I put the third platform out at the Green's property near the 90 degree turn.

On April 14th I took a paddleboat ride to Gorham Beach and a goose was standing up on the dry spot with another goose in the water. They both left as I approached.

During that stretch of warm weather I frequently saw a single loon near Gorham Beach and out in front of my place but not a pair.

Yesterday I got to the cottage at about 4:00. One loon was hanging around out front for quite a while. The water level has gone down considerably so hopefully the little island near Gorham Beach has some nesting spots available.

Finally! At 8:20 this morning two loons were out in front very close to shore. I am positive it was the Gorham Beach pair coming by to say hello!! When I opened the door to talk to them they looked my way and came closer. I had a nice little chat with them (one-sided as usual) and told them to have a healthy two chick family this year! We will see if they follow my instructions.

Now another waiting game begins to see if our three prime nesting spots will be occupied by loon pairs. Please let us know if and when you see loons actually nesting.

That could be very soon.

5.9.23

Loon update email

And another exciting update it is!

For over a month loons have been being seen on the lake, sometimes in groups, sometimes in pairs and often single loons. On April 11th when we put the platform in at the south end there was a pair of loons watching closely. Since then we have seen pairs of loons in the areas of both the platform near the eagle tree and the little island near Gorham Beach. With the weather not cooperating, we have not been able to make a tour of the lake to be sure how many pairs of loons we were seeing.

That finally changed today. This morning I took a kayak ride all the way down to the south end past Walleye Lane.

I was very disappointed to not see any loons as I went past Gorham Beach. It was a little disturbing to me because I had not seen any loons there for the last couple of days when I paddled by. That pair should have been keeping an eye on the little Island and getting ready to nest. I was beginning to wonder if my buddies were going to be nesting on that spot this year.

As I approached the eagle tree platform I was not disappointed at all. There was a pair of loons hanging out very near that platform. As I watched from a distance they went very close to it and I thought it looked like one of them was going to get up on it but that didn't happen. Nevertheless that pair was definitely ready to use that nesting spot.

The eagle tree was empty so I guess those big birds were off tending to their own nest. I sure would like to know where that eagle nest is.

Paddling the rest of the way down to the far south end I saw a loon hunkered down on that platform

with another loon close by. I'm guessing that pair already has an egg or two that they are sitting on. Andy Hickman told me that he had seen a loon sitting on that nest last Thursday. If they had an egg as of May 4th we could have a baby loon to watch by the first week of June. That would be consistent with last year.

Sticking close to the eastern shore I was happy to see a loon hunkered down on the eagle tree platform. A few minutes later it was back in the water with the other loon. No way to know if there is an egg there yet.

Heading back home I was very glad to see a pair of loons near the Gorham Beach nest site! That means we again have three pairs of loons ready to start families on Intermediate Lake!

While that does make for an exciting day, there is another incident to report on that adds even more excitement to the day...

As the sun was setting this evening I hopped on my paddle boat and cruised down to check on the Gorham Beach pair. There was one loon very close to the little island. No sign of the other loon. I circled way out into the lake so I wouldn't disturb that loon. Then I spotted a second loon moving out from shore ahead of me. At almost that same time I saw a third loon way out in the middle of the lake. Loon number two was heading out towards loon number three. Loon number three was heading towards loon number two so I stopped paddling to see what might happen. Loon number one was still very close to the little island and staying put.

The two loons came right up close to each other and started doing a lot of head dipping while circling close together. Suddenly they both dove. They were underwater quite a while and then popped up with both doing some dancing on the water and then both diving again. After both being under water a while, one of them popped up and started running across the water toward the South like it was going to take off. But after going about 50 yards very quickly it dove and disappeared. I didn't see the other one come back to the surface. The first loon was still staying put near the island. After several minutes I did see the other loon nearly back towards the island. At that point the loon by the island headed out to meet that loon. They calmly came together and slowly headed back towards the island. It seemed pretty obvious to me that the Gorham Beach male had gone out to chase away an intruder.

See what I meant about an interesting update!

I get a real kick out of seeing this stuff. I hope these reports inspire you to get out and see some exciting stuff yourself.

5.10.23

Andy and I put out the warning buoys. Loons were sitting on both platforms...and at Gorham Beach!!

5.12.23

A Special Report

Today provided more good things to tell you about.

It started as soon as I walked out the door to put up the flag this morning. An eagle was cruising by, right along the shoreline and only about twenty feet high. It landed in my neighbor's tree so I watched it for several minutes. I was hoping it would swope down and snatch one of the many suckers I had seen circling around in shallow water getting ready to spawn. Unfortunately, a few little birds, probably nesting in the area, were harassing the eagle so it took off and headed south.

At noon, Sue and I went out for our first pontoon ride of 2023. We saw a loon sitting on each of the active nest sites with another loon close by.

As exciting as that is to see, the biggest thrill hit as we approached the 90 degree turn and the Green's property. I spotted a loon in our path a short ways away. After it dove I saw another loon out in the middle of the lake. With two loons to watch I shut off the engine so we could just drift. The two loons came together looking to me like strangers meeting. They did a little head dipping and circled, then dove once and disappeared! The lake was virtually dead calm but I couldn't see those loons pop up anywhere. After searching for several minutes I finally saw one loon very close to shore not far from the nesting platform. Shortly I noticed the second loon very close to the platform. They came together near the platform and this time started acting like a pair, except they seemed to be spending a lot of time under

water. They were in very shallow water so I don't think they were feeding. It looked to me like they were just checking out the platform. They came up very close to it several times. Sometimes it looked like they were ready to get up on it. Then all of a sudden one of them did! It scooted into the middle of the platform turned around and hopped right back off. Then they continued to go underwater, back up, just seeming to be looking it over like before. Again spending a lot of time underwater but not going far. We spent a good half hour sitting there watching them so I am convinced that this is a fourth pair on the lake getting ready to try and have a family.

I'm not the first person to have spotted this pair. Claude Gilkerson, another loon platoon member, has been seeing what he believed to be a pair frequently this spring in front of his place. He is in what I call Tiki Bay, because that is where Dave Wilson's Tiki Boat is moored...right across the lake from the vacant nesting platform. Importantly, Laura St Pierre reported to us on Facebook that she saw a loon on that platform on Saturday!

While there is no guarantee this pair will successfully nest and produce chicks this year, it does prove the worth of putting extra platforms out. We have always thought this lake can support another loon family. Hopefully, this pair and that nesting platform will team up to do just that.

5.13.23 and 5.14.23

Even though it is a mile away, I have a good view of the nesting platform at the Green's property near the 90° turn with my telescope. I have looked at that spot several times each day and have yet to see a loon on the platform or near it since I saw them on the 12th.

5.15.23

It was only 40° at 7:30 this morning but sunny and dead calm so I decided to bundle up and take a quick kayak ride before we had to go to Gaylord. I'm sure glad I did.

While still off Deep Water Point I stopped to check out the Gorham Beach nesting site. As I reached for my binoculars I saw a bunch of splashing near the little Island. It was three loons. They were circling and head dipping, then two of them dove. Suddenly, one of them popped out of the water and ran across the surface for 50 yards or so to take off. It flew off towards the north. There was no loon on the nest so the Gorham Beach pair were obviously out to chase away an intruder. Since it was quite chilly I was sure one of those loons would head back to the nest...and one did at a fairly quick pace. I watched it scoot up onto the nest, check the eggs and settle down. The other loon went in close to the little Island.

I stayed way out and started paddling by. The loon in the water, which I'm pretty sure was the male, was looking at me, dove and then came up slowly heading my way. I just stopped to watch and it dove again, popping up within 20 ft of my kayak! It was very quiet and calm. Naturally I said hello and started a one-sided conversation about the good job he had done chasing away the intruder and asking him if they had one egg or two. He dove again but came up quickly and almost in the same spot. He then made two very quiet sounds. He was not yelling at me to get away or acting agitated at all. You and my wife will probably think I'm crazy as usual, but I think that loon was telling me they have two eggs! He then dove down just a couple of feet under and swam completely around my kayak, very close by, within 5 feet, circling in front of it and then surfaced 20 yards or so away. I love watching loons swim underwater. They look so huge all stretched out and scissor kicking their feet seeming to steer with their beak. It was so calm this morning it was like watching through a glass bottom boat.

I continued my ride for just a little ways and on my return trip he stayed in close by the nest and I just paddled on by. This whole kayak ride took just an hour but I was sure glad I made the effort to get out there.

5.17.23

Yesterday was very windy with big waves out of the North. I took a walk down this morning to see that the Gorham Beach nest appears to be okay. There was a loon sitting as usual. Hopefully those eggs stayed dry. Didn't see the other loon in the area.

5.22.23

Beautiful chilly morning but leaving so no time for a ride. So I took my spotting scope out on the dock. Still no action near the Green's but Gorham Beach was busy. Saw two loons in shallow close to the nest. Figured I was just in time to see a changing of the guard. But both loons were slowly moving out towards deep water, which, in that area, is quite a ways out. Occasionally one would dive but both were calm and quiet, still slowly moving out. I thought that was unusual since I figured one should be heading back to keep the eggs warm. Then suddenly both loons ran across the water and took off at the same time squawking like crazy. Hey! They never both fly away from any eggs and leave them exposed...this looks like a chase! And it was! I tracked them way towards the north, both staying close together flying fairly low to the water and still squawking until I lost them far to the north. I turned back to look at the Gorham Beach island and saw nothing. After maybe three minutes I heard a loon calling as it was flying back from the north. I didn't see it land, but shortly after it stopped calling I spotted it swimming towards the little island. Then I saw the loon sitting on the nest! It had been hunkered down there the whole time, out of sight in the weeds! Obviously, I didn't know what I was watching in the beginning...and how an intruder got that close to the nest site in the first place is a mystery...but it was a chase...and I was right about the loons not leaving the eggs unprotected for so long on a chilly morning.

5.31.23

Took a pontoon ride at about noon to check on the three nests. Temperature in the 80s. A loon was sitting on each nest. Only saw a second loon at the far south nest...just diving and hanging out. That nest could have a chick any day now I think.

6.1.23

Made the Loon Loop ride again this morning...this time in my kayak. Each of the nests had a loon sitting with it's mate on guard close by. My Gorham Beach buddy was quite a ways away but it dove and came all the way over to pop up about 15 ft from my kayak. It was very calm and quiet. It dove and came up on the other side of my kayak still calm and quiet. Naturally I chatted with it for a while but didn't get any estimate on when a chick might hatch. I told it I was just going to keep paddling on so it dove and popped up about halfway to the nest. I'm sure these birds know what I'm talking about! On my way back from the south end there were two Eagles sitting in a dead tree not far from the Openo Road launch site. As soon as I got close enough to try and take a picture one of them flew to the eagle tree. Must have been camera shy.

6.2.23

I made two pontoon rides to check on the loons, in the morning and at sunset. All nests still have a sitting loon with a mate close by.

6.3.23

Made the loon loop after skiing. All still sitting. Too windy in the afternoon to go out.

6.4.23

WE HAVE A CHICK!

Early this morning Sue Thomas was able to get this cell phone picture of our first loon chick of the year.



The First Chick Award for 2023 goes to the pair on the platform near the eagle tree! Sue was still in the area while I was with my waterskiing friends going fast past that nest site. Using my new image stabilizing binoculars I spotted the chick on the adult's back. On our slow return trip we watched the family for several minutes. We did not see the chick get in the water and did not see a second chick.

Loons are still sitting on the other two nests. We will be checking those nests later today, hoping to see more chicks. I have to go downstate tomorrow so I hope we hear from anyone else spotting chicks in the next couple of days.

Took a windy Loon Loop pontoon ride at about 3:00.

Saw the family close to shore on the west side...their normal nursery area. Still only saw one chick...and not in the water. The other two were still sitting.

6.5.23

The Eagle Tree pair has two chicks!



This fantastic picture was posted to the ILA's Facebook page by Bilindas Dolinski with the comment "6:30 pm Monday" at their address on M88.

Social media postings such as this are greatly appreciated.

That spot is in the area of the "nursery" for the pair using the platform near the Eagle Tree. This is especially interesting since other sightings, mine included, had only seen a single chick on an adult's back, none in the water. The second chick must have been hidden under a wing.

I had seen a sitting loon on the Gorham Beach nest from my kayak this morning and saw one sitting on the southernmost platform from The Maples at about noon when I was heading downstate. Hopefully, we will get news of chicks from those nests in the next couple of days.

6.7.23 11:40am

Two more loon babies!

The Gorham Beach pair has just taken their newly hatched chicks away from the nest for their life on the water!

Dave Egert has a good spotting scope view of the Gorham Beach nest site. He saw a loon on the nest at 9:35 and the family was in the water at 10:30.

We are hoping for a report about chicks from the far south end nest soon. If anyone gets down that way today please give us an update on that nest.

6.8.23

Loon update...

When we returned from downstate last night there was just enough daylight left to stop at The Maples to check on the southernmost nest. There was a loon still sitting.

With our furnace running during the night I was in no hurry to get up and out on the lake. But a little after 8:00 I grabbed a kayak and paddled down to check on the Gorham Beach family. I quickly spotted them hanging out close to their little island. All is well with that gang...and so nice to see the two little day old chicks.

At about that same time, Sue Thomas sent the attached 24 second video of the Eagle Tree family taken right off her dock. Hopefully you will be able to view this video. They are doing well and the chicks are growing fast.

Once I was back at the cottage, I threw another kayak in the back of my car and headed to The Maples again. I was hoping that family had left the nest so I would have to paddle out to find them. No such luck. A loon was still sitting there. While that was disappointing, I decided to take a ride down the river to Bellaire. That is a really nice kayak trip. Very easy to paddle both ways with such a gentle current and no obstacles. As usual I enjoyed the quiet solitude along with the wildlife seen along the way...a couple of deer, a good sized beaver, two sandhill cranes, lots of big turtles, plenty of fish and crayfish...but the most impressive thing I checked out (other than Mandy and Duane Bush's new house of course) was the

kayak dock/ramp at Richardi Park. That is really a nice set up. Very easy to pull you and your kayak safely out of the water and just as easy to launch...all without getting wet or feeling unstable. If you are a kayaker, or just like well designed stuff, go check it out. I'm asking for one of those for my next birthday! But I digress...

On my return to The Maples a loon was still sitting on the southernmost platform. I am getting concerned about that situation. Those eggs should have hatched by now. That pair won the prestigious First Chick Award the last couple of years and were the first pair to sit on a nest this year. Are they sitting on infertile eggs? Certainly a possibility at this point...eggs generally hatch in 28 to 30 days...they have been sitting for 35 days already. We will keep watching.

And watching is what I did this late afternoon and evening. When we returned from running errands the Gorham Beach family was right out in front...the youngsters being fed and practicing their getting up on mommy and daddy's back skills, often without success...giving us some good entertainment. At sunset they were still close by having moved only a few cottages down.

There was also a non loon show right after sunset...a mallard duck brawl was going on! I've seen lots of duck chases and quick fights, but this was a big one.. Two groups of baby ducks with their mother were close to shore along with some random males. Suddenly a couple of males started chasing each other, then the other males, then they even attacked some of the ducklings, driving the little ones under water! It was pretty violent but only lasted less than a minute. Then two males took off in a chase that lasted a long time. They would circle out of sight and then come roaring back almost hitting the cottage, trees and boats. I've never seen a chase go that long and keep circling back to this spot. In the meantime the duckling families lined up behind their mother and paddled away. The chasers landed in the water a couple of times, kept chasing, came up on the lawn, still chasing, then finally chased off out of sight and the show was over.

And so is this rambling report...about more than just loons.

If you can handle all the exciting stuff going on, get outside and see it for yourself.

6.9.23

Since I saw the Gorham Beach family moving west last night and didn't spot them from the dock this morning, I took my paddleboat east for a short ride. As I was almost back I got hollered at! The family was in front of the Browns and heading toward deep water. I don't like those little babies out there tempting the pike and muskies...so I slowly headed way out to hopefully coax them back closer to shore...and it worked.

At 5:30pm drove to The Maples to check the southernmost nest. Still sitting.

6.10.23

After skiing we spotted an adult with two chicks in the usual nursery area for the eagle tree pair, very close to the wooded shore. The adult was relaxing and preening while the little ones were diving and chasing stuff like crazy...acting like two frisky kittens! Would love to have gotten a video of that.

6.12.23

Can this be true?!

After all these years of putting out extra loon nesting platforms it looks like we actually have a fourth pair of loons trying to raise a family on Intermediate Lake!!



Meg Costello sent this great picture of a loon sitting on the platform at the Green's property near the 90 degree turn of Intermediate Lake Road taken yesterday, June 11th, by her son-in-law. He also took a picture of another loon swimming close by.

Then this evening, Ken Freeman reported seeing a loon on that platform and also another loon close by. This is an exciting and historic event for Intermediate Lake!

If you recall, my wife and I saw a pair of loons closely inspecting that platform on May 12th, with one of them hopping up on it for a moment and then sliding back off. I personally watched that platform closely for several days after that without seeing any more activity there...and now this fantastic report from Meg...with pictures yet!...and right away confirmed by Ken.

Let's keep our fingers crossed that this pair will be successful in hatching a chick or two. While they are about a month behind our other two families there is still plenty of time for that to happen and for any chicks to be ready for a trip south this fall.

Remember to give all of our loons plenty of room as you cruise around the lake, and remind others to do so as well.

Also today, Mandy Bush reported seeing a pair of trumpeter swans with five cygnets near her place at the end of the river in Bellaire. That also may be an historic event.

6.13.23

After running errands on a cold rainy morning, we took a car ride around the lake. Saw a loon sitting on the platform at the Green's property, with another diving close by. History in the making!

Went into The Maples to see a loon still sitting on the southernmost platform. Disappointment in the making!

6.14.23

Andy and I moved the warning buoys from the eagle tree platform to guard the newly occupied platform at the Greens property. In our travels, we saw the eagle tree family in their normal nursery area and an eagle in the tree. When we arrived at the Green's property there was no loon on the platform but one was swimming close by, slowly heading out to meet another loon. Those two did a lot of head dipping and diving more like strangers do when they meet rather than a pair. We watched that for quite a while before one of them headed out deeper and the other dove and came up close to the platform. Apparently we were watching a changing of the guard. We took advantage of them busily communicating to place one buoy to the right of the platform. Then we backed off to wait for a loon to get settled on the nest. At one point the returning loon dove while close to the nest and then popped up very close to our pontoon boat. Just checking us out I guess.

It remained calm and quiet so I chatted with it for a moment before it dove again and went back close to the nest. Just a few minutes later it hopped up on the nest, checked the eggs a couple of times and settled down. We went slowly out and around to place the other buoy on the left side. Mission accomplished.

At about 7:30 the Gorham Beach family was at the dropoff in front the resort for their evening feeding.

6.16.23

At 9pm using my spotting scope I was able to see a loon sitting on the platform! There is usually too much surface distortion to be sure of what I'm seeing.

6.17.23

On my new paddleboat ride at about 8:30am as I rounded Snowflake point there was a single loon fishing the dropoff ahead of me. I followed it for several dives before it moved out and I passed it closer to shore. At the same time I was watching for loons on or near the platform. I didn't see any and the lake was like glass. If any were there I should have seen them. Just as I passed the single loon I spotted a pair heading our way just out from the dropoff. I stopped to watch the three loons come together and interact...for a good half hour! After much non aggressive circling and diving, only two popped up. The other disappeared. I finally saw it way out heading towards the platform, but it dove and I didn't see it again. All that time I was frequently checking the platform...no loons on or near it. I'm thinking this must be the pair from the platform. No way to know of course. As they slowly headed south I went across the lake towards Costello's still watching for loons around the platform and not seeing any. I took my time heading that way and around the platform...no loons...for at least an hour no loons on the nest...too long for eggs to be unattended in my opinion.

Just after 11am I was home and got a call to go skiing. We skied in the south end, saw the family in their nursery area and then headed north to check that platform. On the way we spotted the Gorham Beach family on the east side at the dropoff just north of Tom's place. When we got to the Green's property, still no loons to be seen. I'm convinced those eggs are gone and the nest abandoned.

But wait...there's more...

At about 8pm Andy Hickman and Paul Winkler came by with their spouses after passing by the Green's property on a sunset pontoon boat cruise and reported seeing a loon on the platform with another close by!! Can they be trying again? At the same time the Gorham Beach family was hanging out at Deepwater Point.

6.18.23

Went for a quick car ride around the lake to check our sitting loons at 7:30 this morning. Both spots were occupied. Still a mystery as to what was going on with the pair at the Green's property yesterday. Took a pleasant two hour pontoon ride this afternoon. Saw both families and again two sitting loons.

6.19.23

After all these years of watching eagles in the eagle tree and wondering where their nest is I finally found out!

Leslie Myers had told me where the eagles nest is, so I took a break from loon watching and went on a kayak ride below the dam towards Lake Bellaire. I found the nest on the right hand side where she had described it would be. That thing is huge! And was complete with two young Eagles! I watched them for almost 2 hours. They are adult size and able to fly from one branch to another above the nest. I'm guessing they will be leaving the nest very soon.

6.20.23

Took a paddleboat ride to the drop off this morning. Didn't see the Gorham Beach family but the eagle tree family was hanging out near the sandbar. The chicks and mama quickly headed south when they saw me, but big papa came over close to me squawking loudly until I moved further away, even though I was nowhere near the family. They do not like my paddle boat!

6.21.23

Took an 8:00 a.m. kayak ride up the west side to Claude's place, then across to the barefooters, who were just going out to put on an impressive show! Then to the Loon platform. The empty loon platform. I spotted a loon not far from shore about at the Green's beach area. Then I saw something that appeared

to be swimming just under the surface about 50 yards ahead of me. Thinking it might be a loon I stopped, and sure enough it surfaced about 20 yards ahead of me squawking like crazy, even though I was sitting perfectly still. It dove and came up about 20 ft from me, still squawking. Then it dove and swam right under my kayak and surfaced about 20 yards from me again. It was still squawking and the other one, having come closer but not real close, started squawking too. The one close by was raising a very emphatic fuss. It even started dancing on the water while squawking and doing a quick dive only to come up and dance and squawk some more. To me that was major overkill for a guy sitting quietly in a kayak a long ways away from the nest. But it soon calmed down remaining close by as the other one came up very close. Both were quiet. Then the other one dove and swam around my kayak within just a few feet so I could watch it swim underwater, then surfaced right next to the first loon. That was the first time I had ever seen two loons swimming underwater at almost the same time. Life is full of surprises! As I slowly paddled my way across the lake, they remained quiet but they too swam across the lake. It seems pretty evident that pair does not have any eggs. Maybe they are just practicing being a pair and will get down to the serious business of raising a family next year on that platform.

6.22.23

After our skiing trip we took a cruise to the south end. Saw an eagle tree adult with the two chicks in their nursery area. Those youngsters are definitely more than a mouthful now. Also too big to be getting any more taxi rides on an adult!

(Copied log entries from 6.13 to here for an email update to the Loon Watchers.)

Linda Gallagher saw a loon sitting on the platform at the Green's this evening. I wonder why they keep coming and going.

6.23.23

The Gorham Beach family was feeding along the dropoff at 12:30.

Andy reported seeing a loon on the Green's property platform on their sunset cruise.

6.24.23

Loon still sitting on the southernmost platform at 8:30am.

6.25.23

The Gorham Beach family came by at 3:15 heading east along the dropoff feeding the whole way. The bellies on the chicks are now white.

6.26.23

This evening Linda Gallagher saw a loon on the platform at the Green's with another close by.

6.27.23

Nancy and Kurt saw the Gorham Beach family at about 4PM at their place on the east side.

6.28.23

Took a pontoon ride at about 2pm and saw both families on the west side, one near Snowflake and the other in their normal nursery area. The two platforms had a sitting loon...I'm not sure why.

6.30.23

On our pontoon ride there was no loon on the platform at the Green's property, and none in sight, at 3:45.

7.2.23

On my 7am paddleboat ride, almost to the sandbar, I saw two loons flying north. And an eagle in the eagle tree. Just past the sandbar I spotted two babies and an adult at Jay Hutchings' dock. The adult parked the babies, dove and went out to join three other loons for a conference. I watched for 15

minutes or so as they did their routine diving and circling. Then my binoculars picked up a flying loon circling to land close to the conference area. As it was heading straight towards me I had a nifty view of it's seaplane landing. Now there were 5 loons in the conference, all slowly heading my way. They quietly passed a fishing boat, some water skiers and me. They were almost to the sandbar when suddenly all 5 started squawking and diving and running across the water and dancing on the water in different directions. They were going nuts! Then they all dove and disappeared. In a few minutes two of them were together heading calmly back to the still parked babies. Two others were soon seen further across the lake heading south...roughly in the direction of the family. I had been gone too long to stick around to see if there was any further interaction. I never did see what happened to the fifth loon.

On my way back, Meg Costello sent an email reporting they were anchored across the lake near Richmond Brown's place watching the Gorham Beach family during feeding time.

We passed the Green's property at about 2:00 with no loon sitting and none in sight.

At about 8:30 the Gorham Beach family was near Kimmels heading toward Snowflake. They do get around... even with all of the 4th of July traffic on the lake.

7.3.23

The Gorham Beach family was just this side of Snowflake Point at 7:30am, close to where I saw them last night. As I paddled past Snowflake the pair from the platform at the Green's were cruising the dropoff. With them there, I didn't expect to see loons around or on the platform, and there wasn't. Had a nice chat with Jenny (Green) at their beach.

On our afternoon pontoon ride saw a loon still sitting on the southernmost platform. None seen around the Green's property. Interesting that 6 boats were anchored on that sandy area but all were outside the boundary of the warning buoys.

7.7.23

One mystery solved...

The pair of loons using the platform at the Green's property near the 90 degree turn of Intermediate Lake Road has had us scratching our heads with several questions:

Do they have eggs?

If so, are the eggs fertile?

Why are they off the nest for long periods?

Is there still time for any chicks to hatch and fully mature in time to migrate?

Do they even know what they are doing??

Well...after having nobody reporting seeing a loon on that platform for several days, I sat in my kayak watching the area for over a half hour and spotted no loons. Being confident the coast was clear, I paddled over to and around the platform...and voila!...mystery solved! There are two egg sized stones in the nest bowl!!



Our rookie pair was tricked into thinking they had eggs to sit on, even changing the guard and tending the "eggs" as Andy and I observed when we put the buoys there.

One stone looked so much like an egg it fooled me until I saw it from another angle.

You are probably wondering how could those stones get there? That answer is obvious to me. When I placed the platform there in the spring, I put straw on and then shoveled sand from the shore on to it to help keep the straw from blowing away. I paid no attention to what was in the mix of sand and gravel thrown on. While shaping the nest bowl, the loons apparently scooped up the two stones and started tending to them as if they were eggs. Unfortunate but not unheard of since chickens sometimes sit on strange things and don't lay eggs. Anyway, it is a lesson learned for me...don't shovel any stones onto the platforms.

At least we are sure of one thing...we do have four pairs of loons on Intermediate Lake for the first time. Our two loon families continue to do well. But our southernmost pair continues to sit on eggs that aren't going to hatch. (Hmmm...they better not be sitting on stones...)

Meg Costello saw a loon on the Green's platform later this evening. She had also seen one sitting on it last night around 8pm.

7.8.23

On our afternoon pontoon ride the Green's platform was empty with two loons in the area.

7.9.23

Another afternoon pontoon ride and we spotted the Gorham Beach family near Tom Berry's place, an eagle in the eagle tree, a southernmost loon still sitting and the eagle tree family in the middle of the lake north of the weed bed. As we approached Al's point the Gorham Beach family was crossing back to this side of the lake and getting a lot of respectful attention and staying calm.

7.10.23

A blustery kayak ride. Heard some loons hollering as I left but didn't see them. Soon after, I saw two loons flying...and calling. Watched them land at Snowflake Point. When I got over there the Gorham Beach family was all together. The adults must have parked the babies and I saw their returning flight. I don't usually see them coming back together.

I paddled over to check the Green's platform. It was empty with no loons around. The "egg stones" are still in the nest. One was more buried in the straw.

Meg Costello reported she has not seen any activity on or near the nest in a few days. That pair seems to

spend more time across the lake.

The Gorham Beach family was at the Travis area on my return trip. Then they all came by our place at about 11:30.

At 12:53 I got the following text from Dave Egert:

Here's what Ken just told me:

"You missed it. An eagle came down and grabbed one of the loons off the lake right in front of the house".

I spoke with Ken in the evening and he isn't sure a loon was grabbed but it most likely was. The eagle dove a couple of times right at the loon family. It grabbed something and went into the trees. The loons headed out, probably across the lake. He couldn't see the chicks in the choppy water.

7.12.23

Took an early paddleboat ride to look for the Gorham Beach family. Was relieved to see all four across the lake by the three flag poles.

7.14.23

In the evening Andy saw the southernmost platform vacant and two loons the other side of the weed bed. It appears that pair has finally abandoned their nest.

7.15.23

After skiing we confirmed the southernmost platform is abandoned. We went over to it close enough so I could get a good look with my binoculars. There is at least one egg on the nest. Glad to see they weren't sitting on stones.

We saw the other two families in their usual nursery areas...and a huge turtle.

7.17.23

I went out on the end of the dock to watch the Gorham Beach family coming by during their 5:45 p.m. feeding. All is well with them.

7.18.23

Took a kayak ride from Bellaire and collected the infertile egg from the southernmost platform. It is very light weight, like it is completely dried out, but it does roll unevenly so something is in there.

7.19.23

Sent this email in the morning...

In case you were wondering...

All is well with our two loon families. Each of the four chicks are the size of a mallard duck already, with plenty of white feathers on their chest and slowly developing wings. While they are frequently diving for snacks themselves, they obviously prefer room service so the feeding process is still a joy to watch. If you have decent binoculars you might agree with me that currently their back feathers look kinda like a moth eaten fur coat, but that won't last long. Maybe that makes them less appetizing to an eagle, but I doubt it...those eagles will eat road kill.

The two chick-less pairs have both abandoned their nests. While the historic fourth pair never really got the whole thing figured out, they got in plenty of practice to hopefully return next year and get it right. We will be sure not to leave any stones on the platform to confuse them.

The southernmost pair abandoned their nest on about July 14...that's around 68 days of sitting on an egg that should have hatched in 28 days or so. I said "an egg" because after waiting four days to be sure the adults were gone I paddled out to inspect the nest and collected the one egg. If you haven't seen a loon egg, it is another of Mother Nature's works of art. I will bring it to the Forest Home Township office on August 19 for the scheduled presentation by Damon McCormick of Common Coast at 10 am regarding his many years of studying loons, and specifically the loons in our area. It promises to be a very interesting and informative event. I hope to see all of you there.

By the way, if you get down to the south end of the lake, I don't recommend dangling your toes in the water too long. My water skiing buddies, Christina and Greg Bellopatrick, and I were there the other day and spotted what looked like an alligator floating in the water...nope...it was a humungous turtle! Yesterday I saw it again, as did two fishermen and two paddle boarders. We all agreed it is at least three feet long. Another spectacular natural wonder you might see if you take a little time to get out and slowly explore our fabulous Intermediate Lake.

Just before noon Andy and I retrieved the four warning buoys and stashed them at his place. Saw both families.

7.20.23

Got an email from Damon stating that he unfortunately has to cancel the August 19 presentation.

7.25.23

On my 8am paddleboat ride saw the Gorham Beach adults coming to unpark their chicks from in front of the three flagpoles...then hollered at my paddleboat before calming down and letting me go by. Saw two eagles in the dead tree near the launch site.

At about 12:30 it looked like a lone chick cruising to the west out past the dropoff. Didn't see where it went.

7.27.23

Returning from my kayak ride this morning I saw a lone chick at Derek's dock slowly diving along the dropoff. Like on the 25th there were no other loons in sight. This one has very well developed wings now. Seems strange to me that this youngster is spending so much time alone.

At 8:30 pm the entire Gorham Beach family was out in front fishing along the dropoff.

7.30.23

An adult with one chick out at the dropoff at 7:10pm. Watched them for 15 minutes out on the end of the dock. No signs of another chick. Julie saw all 4 out front at 7:50.

7.31.23

One lone chick cruising slowly West just before 6pm. Not diving much. But definitely alone. Hung out past the dropoff in front of Lewis' for a good half hour. Still there alone at 6:55. Feeding now.

8.1.23

9:30am that youngster is out in front by itself again. Relaxing and preening like an adult.

8.7.23

Big day today!

As you know, I spend a lot of time watching the Gorham Beach family. Those youngsters are nearly the size of adults and I've noticed their wings have been looking well developed.

This morning at about 8:15 I finally saw one of the Gorham Beach chicks taking some test flights! A landmark event for our loon families. Seeing the little guys literally stretching their wings is always an exciting event. I watched it take three test flights of maybe 30 or 40 yards each. It sort of got airborne but its feet barely left the water before it came gracefully back down. It definitely is getting to know how to get up off the water. I expect all the chicks on the lake are at this same stage so they will all have plenty of time to practice before they make the long flight South this fall.

I was disappointed I couldn't make the ILA annual meeting on Saturday. Glad that those of you that were there had a chance to check out the loon egg. That was the infertile egg that the southernmost pair sat on for so long. Hopefully they have better luck next year.

I'm looking forward to seeing more test flights by our young loons in the next few weeks. I hope you will all get a chance to see some of that action too.

8.8.23

But wait!...There's more!

Just after I sent my email last night, I got a response from Mike Wallace who just happens to be Meg and Jim Costello's son in law and a darn good photographer as well. He sent the attached pictures of exactly what I was talking about in my email. [\(Click on the thumbnails to enlarge.\)](#)



These were taken Sunday morning of one of the eagle tree youngsters making a test flight...proving what I had guessed, that each of our young loons are ready to fly!

Thanks to Mike for adding such great photos to our latest loon update.

8.14.23 - See my 8.17.23 report:

8.17.23

A rainy morning...

So I figured I might as well pass along my last couple of log entries regarding the loons and the hummingbirds. If you aren't already bored with this gray morning, you probably will be after reading this... 😊

8.14.23

All is quiet on the Loon front. The weather hasn't been real cooperative for getting out and checking on them much, but I have seen the Gorham Beach threesome of an adult and the two youngsters off and on. I and other loon watchers have seen several loon conferences around the lake recently, but I have not seen the entire Gorham Beach family together in quite some time. Has one of those adults already started wandering south?

While the loons are quiet, the hummingbirds on the other hand are going crazy! For at least the last week and a half they have been zipping around our feeders all day long. Seems to me they spend a heck of a lot more time chasing each other than they do feeding. I've got three feeders out so there's no reason to chase each other but they sure don't see it that way. Today though was a first for me. There were four hummingbirds on one of my feeders at the same time! I don't recall ever seeing three on there at a time let alone four. That didn't last long because two more hummers came along to attack the ones calmly feeding and away they all went. I think they're going to wear themselves out before they head south.

8.17.23

At about 930am as the thunderstorms cleared the area at least temporarily, I spotted a young loon

straight out about a third of the way across the lake. It was doing some preening but started holding its head high making me think it might make a test flight...and it did! It was another short, barely off the water practice flight of 40 or 50 yards, kind of back in my direction. It sat preening for several minutes and then dove. I kept my eyes on the area waiting for it to pop back up. Unless I missed it, which I think is unlikely, that little guy stayed underwater well over two minutes before popping up at the drop off right out in front. If I'm right that was a good hundred yards underwater and darn good breath control! It must have seen me watching cuz for the next hour, even while I'm writing this, it entertained me by staying out in front and making repeated short feeding dives, coming up, staying very low in the water and diving again. Last night on my evening paddleboat ride, I saw the two Gorham Beach youngsters with an adult right near their nesting site. But this morning, this youngster was all by itself, no adult or other youngster in sight.

While this loon show was going on, the hummingbirds were continuing their voracious attacks on each other and our feeders! I have seen three of them on a feeder at once several times now, but not four again. It's interesting to note that with all this chasing going on, I don't see the hummers "pin" each other to the ground or a bush like they do during mating season, they just chase.

Geez, as much fun as this is to watch, and in fact the little loon is right now in very close right next to our dock (now I'm sure it knows I'm watching), I'd better get up out of my easy chair and try to be productive. Good thing I'm retired or I would get fired for sure.

Dick West

At 11:45 I saw it take two more test flights. The first was a little farther and definitely got off the water but not for long.

8.19.23

Andy and I removed the two platforms from the south end.

(My frequent wandering on the lake to watch our loons has been significantly limited due to my efforts to empty our 75 year old family cottage in preparation for it to be torn down to make room for a new lake house. Demolition took place on 9.11.23.)

9.21.23

Removed the platform from the Greene's property. A young loon was watching me.

9.23.23

Got this great picture below from Pat Crawford.

A beautiful ending for my 2023 Loon Log since it is now 10.4.23 and I haven't seen any loons lately.

10.18.23

Just because I haven't seen loons for a while doesn't mean there aren't some still around. The fact is I haven't been able to get out on the water to see them. On his final pontoon ride today, Andy Hickman spotted a young loon near Gorham beach. Probably one of our youngsters still waiting to figure out what nature has in store. I'm quite sure other youngsters are still around as well...so keep watching and listening.

11.11.23

I have appreciated getting several reports of loon sightings and loons calling over the last several weeks. Sue and I spotted a lone youngster feeding along the drop off at the 90° turn yesterday afternoon, 11-10-23. I think it was one of our local offspring still hanging around trying to figure things out, but no way of knowing for sure.

Earlier in the day while heading to Bellaire along M88 past Recreation Point, I thought I saw two loons. But circling back and using binoculars, those birds were actually mergansers, and there were three of them. It is always best to use binoculars to confirm what you are seeing. I know I am often guilty of "seeing what I want to see" just like this sighting.

Keep your eyes and ears open and let me know what you experience loon-wise yet this fall. They won't be sticking around too much longer.

