

**Loon Log 2024**  
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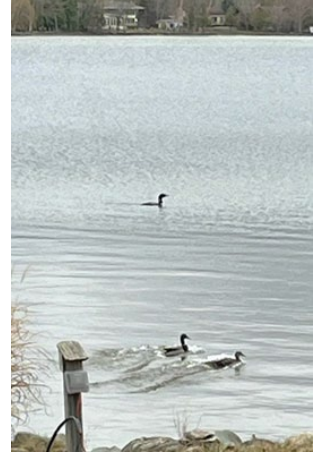
**4.18.2024 MY FIRST LOON REPORT OF 2024**

Greetings...and welcome to my first loon report for 2024.

This is my first loon report but certainly not the first report of loons on Intermediate Lake.

The first reported sighting confirmed by a picture that I got was on April 4 from Roseann and Paul Winkler. They sent this picture along, which certainly made me jealous as well as excited to know our loon watching season has begun.

That same loon then made its way across the lake to say hello to my fellow Loon Platoon member Andy Hickman. (I think it must have been one of the eagle tree pair cuz if it was one of the Gorham Beach pair I'm sure it would have stopped by to see me first!) That same day, Pat O'Connor spotted a loon by their place on Walleye Lane.



While I was at the lake at that time I had to wait until this trip up to make my first sighting. I got up here yesterday and Andy and I took advantage of an unexpected break in the windy, rainy weather to launch the two platforms in the south end...and there it was! As we rowed the platform out to its spot at the weed bed near the eagle tree, a loon was watching us...my first loon of the year! In fact, there THEY were...a pair of loons!! It's always fun to see your first loon of the year and extra fun to have a pair escorting us as we put their nesting platform in position. This is my first loon. You can see how close they were while we rowed the platform out to their weed bed.

Again this year we want to give a loud thank you to Jeremiah at The Maples Resort for providing a row boat to get those two platforms in place.

Andy took this picture of me yelling at him to quit taking pictures and get in the dang boat so we can get the job done and I can get my dinner!...or something like that...

Today I hope to get the platform out at the Green's property near the 90 degree turn of Intermediate Lake Drive. We are keeping our fingers crossed that the pair practicing on that one last year will return to it and get the job done properly.

The natural nesting site near Gorham Beach is high and dry at the moment. With the mild winter and early thaw the weeds in that spot are still present above water. That is not usually the case and should be an advantage for our pair that nest there. I just hope they don't nest in a spot that gets flooded if the water level comes up too high. Time will tell.

And of course, time will tell how many healthy chicks will be raised this summer...and if will we be privileged to have four loon families to watch.

Stay tuned...



## 5.9.2024 AN INTERESTING AFTERNOON CRUISE

At about 4:30 yesterday Andy Hickman took me for a very successful loon spotting pontoon ride. He told me he had seen a loon sitting on the southernmost nest on May 1st and a couple of times since but none on any of the other nesting sites.

Now things have changed.

As we headed south we saw a loon sitting on the eagle tree platform with another loon fairly close by. The sitting loon had its head high and panting in the sunshine, even though the air was a chilly, to us humans, 54 degrees. Things are looking good in the eagle tree neighborhood!

Then we spotted two loons on the west side of our path north of the big island. I made the comment that they seemed to be acting like a pair.

As we traveled the rest of the way to the south end we were surprised to see the platform empty and no loons close by. The pair north of the island were the closest we could see and they were a long way away. Having seen a loon sitting on that platform more than once the assumption was there was an egg or two in that nest. We slowly cruised toward the platform constantly scanning all around for more loons. (By the way, we were pleased to see that plenty of straw was still present on both of the platforms even after lots of wind and rough water.) After fifteen minutes or so of not seeing any loons in the south end, and the pair we passed still in the same general area they were and not heading south towards that nest, we decided to drift over to take a look at it...rather confused at not seeing loons nearby. At first glance we could clearly see a nicely formed nest bowl and, as I was beginning to suspect, no eggs. But wait! As we moved closer to and around the platform, there they were...two eggs!! So why were that pair of loons we passed, if in fact they are the southernmost pair, not heading back to tend those eggs?? It was a fairly chilly day with more clouds than sun and those eggs have been exposed for over twenty minutes...not including the time it took for the pair to get north of the island. We have a mystery on our hands. Thinking back on the scene at the nest, I did notice the two eggs were not close together and neither one was in the bottom of the bowl. That is not the normal position for eggs being incubated. They should be right close together and in the center of the bottom of the nest bowl. Does that mean these are infertile eggs?...or is that a rushed opinion by a non-loon observer? Time will tell I guess. But in the meantime, as we cruised back north and the two loons were still hanging out north of the big island, things are not looking very good in the southernmost neighborhood.

While we were scratching our heads about the mystery in the south end, the weather was improving...more calm and more sunshine...so on we voyaged, not faltering in our quest to quench our never satisfied thirst for more loon sightings on good old Intermediate Lake!

And we weren't disappointed.

Heading next to Gorham Beach, sure enough, one of my buddies was hunkered down on a nest there. The nest certainly looked high and dry enough at the moment...but just barely. We are concerned that any upward trend in water level or big waves could be a problem. Again, time will tell. For now, things are looking good in the Gorham Beach neighborhood.

Trekking diligently onward we headed across the lake and north towards the platform at the Green's property. Lo and behold there was a loon sitting on that platform!! Hurray! We really do have four pairs of loons wanting to raise families on our precious lake!

We excitedly spotted a second loon close by, completing that pretty picture. As we trained our binoculars on the sitting

loon, it was clearly moving straw around working on shaping the bowl. But it didn't sit there long before it calmly slid off the platform. We decided to leave those two new lovebirds alone and turned back toward home port...confident that things are looking reeeeeeally good in the Greens neighborhood.

I can't wait to get up here and settled in for the summer so I can keep a closer eye on all of our loons...and bore you with more reports of what I see and hear.

With that in mind, get out and make your own observations, and please let me know when you spot anything interesting on or around the lake, especially updates on our nesting loons. Perhaps by the first week of June or so we could have chicks to watch.

### **5.10.2024 ANOTHER FIRST FOR ME!**

Check this out!

With the mystery of what is going on in the south end of the lake nagging at me all day, at about 6:25 yesterday I drove down to the Maples to take a look.

Talk about perfect timing!

When I got there, a loon was on the southernmost platform and another loon was very close to the platform. As I watched with my binoculars, the loon in the water climbed up on the nest and mounted the sitting loon, obviously mating with it! I was actually seeing a pair of loons mating...something I had not seen before!

That lasted less than 30 seconds then the male slipped off the platform back into the water. The female stayed on the platform at that point. It looked like she was sitting on the nest on eggs as usual. The male went away, came back, dove under the platform, stayed close, and then wandered further away towards the east shore. At 6:35 the female left the platform. Both loons wandered slowly towards the east shore, never being close together, each diving occasionally. At 6:40 the male was very close to shore apparently feeding while the female was about halfway from the platform to the shore just preening not feeding. By 6:50 it looked like things were back to normal...both feeding and preening. They sure weren't in any hurry to get back to that nest to tend any eggs.

My unscientific opinion is that the two eggs we saw on Wednesday are infertile and the pair is already working on a second try. Let's hope they are successful.

But what another exciting observation for me. After all these years of watching our loons I'm amazed that I still get opportunities to see them doing things I've never seen before. Of course I like sharing the stuff I see...but more importantly, I hope my reports encourage you to take some time to slowly wander around this wonderful lake and surrounding areas to enjoy firsts of your own. You won't be disappointed.

### **5.18.2024 A SPLENDID SATURDAY MORNING**

And now it's time for an important loon report.

I set out for my first kayak ride of the summer at about 7:30 this morning. Of course my first destination was to check on the Gorham Beach pair. As I had hoped, one loon was hunkered on the nest with the other loon close by. When I say "hunkered", that bird was flat down with its head almost in the water and its big body and wings completely covering the nest. It looked huge in that position. Of course I stayed way away watching in my binoculars. The other loon came

towards me but didn't get real close. It was close enough to have my usual one sided conversation, during which it stayed calm and quiet. The lake was like glass and I was hoping that loon would swim out and under my kayak but that didn't happen.

I paddled on and made it to Andy Hickman's place near the sandbar. He was out working in his yard and decided it was a better morning for a pontoon ride than working...so off we went on his pontoon boat.

And that leads to the important part of this report.

We saw a loon sitting on each nesting site with another loon close by. That is a strong indication that we have four pairs of loons sitting on eggs at the same time...a first in the history of Intermediate Lake to the best of our knowledge!

Not only that, but Andy and I were privileged to see two changing of the guard episodes during this cruise. What we call the changing of the guard is when one loon returns to the nest to let the other loon have a break from sitting on the eggs. The first seen was at the platform by the eagle tree. But very importantly, the second was at the platform at the Green's property near the ninety degree turn. We clearly saw the returning loon raise up and tend to an egg or two before settling down to continue incubating. That is strong evidence that that pair has figured out how to start a family and is doing it! (I was very careful not to put any stones on that platform this year so I'm sure it was tending to the real thing, not a stone or two.)

Now that we have four active loon nests we will have to wait and see how many chicks will be produced. I'm hoping for eight.

With this excitement, keep in mind that a busy holiday weekend is approaching. We have to be sure that all of us and our guests do not bother these loons. If you see people getting too close, politely tell them to stay away.

Another thing to remember is the upcoming Intermediate Lake Association members dinner on June 1st. Be sure to RSVP by May 25th. If you aren't a member, hurry up and join so you can enjoy this complementary member dinner celebrating the ILA's 25th anniversary. It is an event worth celebrating and will be an entertaining evening. Go to the ILA website for details.

I hope to see you all there...and lots of baby loons on the lake very soon.

### **5.28.2024 WE GOT SOME RAIN...**

As most of you know, it rained here pretty much all day yesterday. Enough rain so that the lake level has gone up at least 6 inches from where it had settled in at the "normal level" for summer as of last Friday.

With that in mind, this morning I headed out on my paddleboat to check on the Gorham Beach nest. I was not happy with what I saw. That nest appears to be in trouble. I didn't go anywhere near the nest because I could see a loon sitting on it working on moving nest material around. At one point the loon got off the nest but just for a few minutes then back up on it to continue working on the nest and apparently tending to the eggs. I watched for several minutes and the loon was constantly working on the nest, but still looking like it was sitting on an egg or two.

As I started writing this report the rapid rise in the water level seems to be slowing. However, I expect it will continue to creep upward for the next couple of days...not a good trend for the Gorham Beach pair. They have dealt with water level fluctuations before so hopefully they can protect those eggs this time.

I took a drive down to the Maples to see that the southernmost nest looks normal...one loon sitting with the other close

by. On my way back I stopped along M 88 and could easily see a loon sitting on the Eagle tree nest, but did not see another loon nearby at that moment. When I got back, with my binoculars I could see a loon sitting on the platform at the Green's property.

So all three nests on platforms look good but the natural nest at Gorham Beach is a concern. Hopefully the water level will start to go down and that nest will be OK too.

Let's hope for the best. I will keep you posted.

## **6.2.2024 HUGE NEWS BULLETIN!!**

**THE GORHAM BEACH PAIR HAVE TWO BABIES!!**

After all of their struggles, they have successfully hatched two chicks...and in doing so have captured the coveted First Chick Award for 2024!

This is certainly good news for all of us loon watchers. As you know, I had serious doubts that they could protect those eggs with the high water recently. At 8:30 this morning I took my paddleboat out to check on them. As I rounded the bend of Deep Water Point and the nest site came into view, I saw a loon just beyond the little island and the other loon in the water right at the nest. I figured I was watching a changing of the guard. But as I looked through my binoculars, I could see slight ripples next to that loon. That told me a baby had to be in the water next to the loon. Sure enough the little guy swam out around the adult to say hello. What a thrill that was to see after all of the anxious, disturbing time I spent watching them struggle with keeping the nest together and dry enough. Then, as that adult started moving slowly away from the nest, there was chick number two!! I'm quite sure those chicks were just getting off the nest as I stopped to watch. The other loon came back in to complete the family portrait. I didn't have a camera, but, although I was a long way away, my image stabilizing binoculars gave me a very sharp image of the family that is now etched in my memory.

I finally tore myself away from that spectacular show and headed back to see if the trusty old pontoon boat would fire up and take me around to check on the other nests. It was my first time starting the boat this year and it didn't disappoint me. It purred off toward the south end, stopping along the way to pick up Jan and Andy Hickman as additional loon spotters. Our efforts were rewarded by seeing loons on each of those two platforms with another adult nearby.

Cruising back to the north we saw an eagle fly into the eagle tree, only to be harassed by a few smaller birds. Those little birds were not letting the eagle relax at all.

To complete our loon tour, we checked on the loon diligently sitting on the platform at the Green's property. We didn't see the other loon in the area this time.

During our cruise, the Hickmans related their exciting observations from last evening. One of those was spotting something unusual moving in the water in front of their place. It was a deer swimming down the lake and out of sight. That is a very rare sight. Another rare sight they saw last night was a female wood duck with her entourage of seven or eight newly hatched ducklings in tow. As Andy went to try and get a picture, mommy wood duck went into distraction mode to lead him away from the babies which quickly disappeared into the weeds.

Soooo, lots of excitement with the wildlife on and around Intermediate Lake for us all to watch. Get moving to see what you can see! But move slowly and keep well away from any nesting or young animals, especially our loons! We should have more baby loons to watch very soon. Please let us know if you see baby loons from the remaining three nesting platforms.

## 6.2.2024 LOON FAMILY UPDATE...



The Gorham Beach family is already moving beyond their immediate nursery area by the little island. They were still close to the island at about 8pm when I checked on them.

Then at 9:16 I got this [very nice video](#) from Bill Bailey whose cottage is about six lots west of the little island.

## 6.4.24 MORE GOOD NEWS!

The pair on the nesting platform near the eagle tree have one chick!!

At about 1:30 this afternoon I drove down to check on that nest and the southernmost nest. A loon was on the southernmost nest as usual. Then from the shore along M88 using my nifty image stabilizing binoculars I could easily see a loon in the water with a chick on its back. The other adult was still sitting on the nest. That means another chick could hatch soon. But apparently not very soon. I hung around watching until 3:20. The sitting loon did get up and check the egg a couple of times but still no second baby. I went back down there at 4:30 to find both adults on the platform. The baby was probably back up there too but I didn't see it.

Not knowing if the second egg would hatch in two minutes or two days, or not at all, I left.

I went back at 7:50 to see a loon still sitting and the other loon out past the buoy with their first youngster on its back. From my vantage point I could see a loon still on the southernmost platform and at the same time Meg Costello reported a loon on the platform at the Green's property.

I will check again in the morning and let you know what I see at some point.

## 6.4.24 SOME EXCELLENT PICTURES!

These were taken yesterday morning of the one day old Gorham Beach babies by Mike Wallace. Mike is Meg and Jim Costello's son in law. Thanks to Mike for sharing them. Click on the thumbnails to enlarge.



## 6.5.24 AND MORE GOOD NEWS!

The pair on the eagle tree platform does have two chicks!!

When I checked this morning both adults were in the water near the platform so I assumed the other baby had hatched. I couldn't see any chicks because they were behind the weeds.

But, when I went back this evening the two adults were very close to shore at Steve Bacon's place where I pulled in. In fact the adults both were hollering at me for sneaking up on them even though I was probably 75 yards away or more. Each of them had a baby on its back. One I could see right away and the other soon popped its little head out to see what all the fuss was about. As I stood still the adults calmed right down, slowly moving away. After just a few minutes both chicks were in the water.

Always a pretty picture seeing two tiny just hatched baby loons flanked by their parents. We are hoping to have eight loon chicks to watch this summer and we are half way there!

Loons were still sitting on the remaining two nests at sundown today working to give us their contribution to the goal of eight youngsters.

I'm guessing the nest at the Green's property should have a hatch any day now since we know they were sitting by May 8. Based on my seeing the southernmost pair mating on May 9, they should have a hatch around June 9 or 10. These are just guesses...but if those eggs are healthy we should have more chicks very soon.

Be sure to let us know if you see baby loons near those two platforms.

#### **6.12.24 FROM KURT HAGEMEISTER**

Great news! One chick observed this a.m. at the Green property platform. Parents and chick were swimming around close-by. Will try to get pictures.

#### **6.12.24 END OF DAY REPORT**

Another historic day.

Hopefully you all got the email this morning from Kurt about the chick that had just hatched on the platform at the Green's property. So exciting to finally get another family after all these years of putting out extra platforms in various areas.

Naturally I went over there to see it for myself.

Kurt was back checking on the family and Meg Costello also came by along with a few other loon watchers. The adult on the nest was frequently standing up to tend to the remaining egg. We were hoping that meant the second chick was about to hatch. But it didn't. After watching for over a half hour we all left. I drove down to see that the southernmost nest was still being tended to.

At about 8:00 this evening Meg reported a loon is still sitting on the Green's platform. Maybe we will have another new chick in the morning.

#### **6.14.24 HOORAY!!!**

**WE HAVE TWO CHICKS AT THE GREEN'S PROPERTY NEST!!**

They were spotted by Kurt and Meg first thing this morning and I am sitting here looking at them as I write. Meg's son-in-

law said he saw a loon still on the platform this morning when a couple of other loons intruded on their territory, so I'm quite sure the second chick just left the nest this morning.

This is very exciting news to get two chicks from a brand new pair of nesting loons on our lake!

The southernmost pair were still sitting as of last evening. Hopefully we'll have chicks from there very shortly.

#### **6.16.24 GORHAM BEACH NEST CONSTRUCTION**

While we anxiously await chicks to hatch on the southernmost platform, I thought you might be interested in what happened to the nest near Gorham Beach during the tense days of high water.

At around noon on June 11, I paddled down to the Gorham Beach nest site. With the family nowhere in sight I moved in to look at the nest. (Click on the thumbnails to enlarge.)



The water level was back down to about normal at this point. You can see the dark older nesting material at the bottom of the nest is just barely above water, which is just the way they originally built it. Then as the water rose over seven inches, they kept adding the new lighter colored material, over seven more inches of it, during the next few days, all the while moving their eggs up out of the water. An incredible engineering feat! They were obviously driven to save those eggs rather than abandon them to the rising water. Nature can be astonishing.



#### **6.19.24 FOUR FOR FOUR!!**

They did it!!

The pair on the southernmost platform has hatched a chick!...and they are still sitting on another egg.

So all four of our history making pairs of loons have successfully made a family. To complete the sweep, the southernmost pair had to overcome the disappointment of laying two infertile eggs, move those aside and try again.

Over the past two weeks or so Andy Hickman, Sue Thomas and I have been keeping close watch on that nest, checking it twice most days for the last week. We were not sure when those eggs were laid so we couldn't predict when they might hatch. Personally, I was beginning to think too much time had passed. Especially after I checked the nest at 11am today and nothing had changed...a loon sitting with the other loon nowhere in sight.

As my wife and I returned from town at about 5:00 today we stopped in at the Maples. Of course I had brought my trusty binoculars along. I immediately saw what I thought was a chick on the corner of the platform. But the other loon was nowhere to be seen. That's not right. If a chick has hatched both adults should be there...one sitting on the second egg and the other tending to the baby.

Being almost positive I was seeing a chick, I gave Andy a call. He offered to take us down on his pontoon boat to get a closer look. So he, his wife Jan and I cruised on down. On the way down the west side we did not see the eagle tree family or the second loon from the southernmost nest. In fact, after confirming the chick on the platform, we went up the east side to the big island and still did not see the second loon. As we moved back close to the platform, an eagle circled by and the sitting loon raised the alarm...and suddenly up popped the second loon, right next to the platform. It had been doing a great job of hiding somewhere. We watched the family for a while and the baby did not leave the platform, so we headed back north. This time we did see the eagle tree family close to shore on the west side. And we saw an eagle in the eagle tree.



Jan took this picture of the new family. (Click to enlarge)



Pretty darn good for a cellphone picture. If you zoom in you can clearly see the baby next to the sitting loon. We will keep watching that nest and report the outcome.

While I have your attention (hopefully you haven't dozed off reading this) I want to share two pictures Mike Wallace took of the day old chicks at the Green's property last weekend.



Thanks Mike...we can never have too many baby loon pictures.

The Gorham Beach family is doing very well. They have been spending a lot of time along the shore near my place. Always a treat to see.

Now that we have four loon families on the lake we need to be extra vigilant to not disturb them as we play in their yard. Take binoculars and view them from a distance. If they approach you, quietly enjoy the spectacle.

#### **6.21.24 SAD NEWS FROM THE FAR SOUTH END**

The baby loon that hatched on Wednesday on the southernmost nest is missing.

I spent over an hour and a half last evening watching what was going on with loons in the far south end and trying to see the new chick.

At 7:45 PM I was at the Maples. A loon was sitting on the nest with its back to me. I couldn't see the baby or the other loon. Thinking the other loon and baby could be close to shore on the west side where I couldn't see them, I drove around to Walleye Lane. Sure enough, a loon was close to shore on the west side preening and diving...but no chick. And from this new viewpoint I still couldn't see a baby on the platform or the nest.

There was plenty of loon activity in the area to keep me entertained while I kept trying to see the baby. Adult loons, up to four in sight at one point, were flying in, circling and head bobbing and wing flapping and diving and disappearing, to pop up someplace else. The sitting loon left the nest at one point to join a conversation but soon went back to the nest. While it was gone I didn't see the baby. Very strange. As the light faded making it hard to see details I headed home.

This morning after a skiing trip with Christina and Greg Bellopatrick, Greg and I cruised down to the south end. We saw an eagle in the eagle tree and an adult loon preening and diving just south of the big island...clearly without a chick. As we got close to the southernmost platform the sitting loon stood up to check the egg. Being close to the nest, standing up in the boat and using my good binoculars I still was not able to see a chick. To convince me further, a fisherman was very close to the platform too. He had been there for some time. He said the loon left the nest for about twenty minutes and he didn't see a baby loon or a head popping up.

With all that effort to prove otherwise, I have come to the conclusion that we have lost that precious baby loon. Along with that disappointment, I am very concerned about the viability of the remaining egg. It should have hatched by now. Of course there is a chance I am mistaken on both counts. If you are in the south end in the next few days, I would be very happy to be proven wrong.

#### 6.25.24 A CUTE VIDEO...AND AN UPDATE

[This video](#) was taken by Kurt Hagemester's daughter, Carolyn, this morning of the Green family hanging out in front of their place.

#### 7.9.24 A Pre-Potluck Update

And it is almost all good news.

The only negative thing loon-wise is the southernmost pair continuing to sit on a bad egg. Not being a loon, I don't understand how they had previously this year abandoned two eggs they apparently determined to be bad, and now continue to sit on another egg that is obviously not going to hatch. Add to that the fact that they quickly lost a chick that did hatch and that pair is having a bad year.

Our other three families are doing very well. All six chicks are as big as adult mallard ducks now and they continue to be fed endless snacks by their doting parents. Their little wings will soon be growing feathers suitable for flying but test flights are still a few weeks off.

Another bit of interesting news is that on our pontoon ride around the lake on July 6, we saw two adults with one chick north of the nature preserve at the Arnold property. I'm guessing that family is the one from the river just before Hanley Lake. I wonder if they will hang out in Intermediate or move back upstream to their home waters. If you spot a one chick family on your travels in the north end or in Hanley Lake please let me know. (dnswest@netzero.net)

It certainly has been an exciting start for our loon watching season. With lots of feeding and growing and test flights ahead I'm sure it will continue to be entertaining.

I hope all of you will get out and enjoy the show.

In the meantime I look forward to seeing you at the ILA potluck tomorrow afternoon.

#### 7.22.24 Abandoned Egg

I checked the southernmost nest this morning. The abandoned egg was off the nest. (Click to enlarge)

It is interesting to see how the loons kept all the straw tucked tight around the nest bowl.

I collected the egg but cracked it as I was getting out of my kayak. No embryo so that egg didn't develop much. I'm surprised they sat on it so long.



As I returned via the east shoreline I watched seven adult loons congregate. I ducked into a shady spot close to them and watched them circling and diving and head dipping until suddenly they all began vocalizing and dancing...later I sent this email...

#### Loon conference...

All three of our loon families are doing well. The six youngsters are thriving under the close attention and frequent feeding by their parents. Their dark fluffy baby feathers have given way to white chest feathers and maturing wing feathers. It won't be long before we start seeing test flights.

In the meantime the adults often take time out to socialize and, I think, discuss territorial issues with other local and wandering adult loons. During my kayak ride to the south end this morning I was able to get [this video](#) of a conference of seven loons just as it was coming to an end...in very dramatic loon fashion! Be sure to turn the sound up so you can hear all the closing comments and emphatic wing flapping. You also might want to view the video in full screen mode... zooming in to see some of the details. It is quite a display.

#### **8.2.24 A big conference and a very close encounter!**

I haven't had anything exciting to report for a while...but that changed today.

I've seen all of our three families in their areas of the lake on our rides lately. The six young loons have grown nicely. They are big enough now with developed wing feathers to make it hard to tell them apart from the adults at a distance. I have yet to see a test flight but I'm sure the young ones are flying by now. Some of the youngsters are definitely spending more time on their own. I haven't seen a complete family of four in over a week.

During our skiing run this morning we spotted a group of 11 or 12 adults where the big part of the lake starts to narrow, with another group of 5 adults just a short distance away swimming towards the larger group. I think that is the largest group of loons I have seen. I think it is too early for migrating birds to be stopping by so these might all be from fairly local lakes....but who knows. Unfortunately we weren't able to stick around and watch how that conference turned out. (One of us on board still has a real job.)

At around 3:30 this afternoon I was lounging on my floater under my dock. I do that often to be in the shade while floating. My dermatologist nags at me about too much sun exposure so I grab shade where I can. Anyway, the kids had just left to go in and I spotted a Gorham Beach adult with one chick feeding along the dropoff heading my way. Naturally I stayed put to watch them. Try to picture this...I'm on my back on a floater, under the last section of my dock, with my feet sticking out not far from the dropoff. When the adult saw me it obviously became curious about what that strange thing was. It stopped diving and headed slowly toward me, with the young one tagging along. As it got 15 or 20 feet away it started squawking at me as if I should go away...and it kept coming closer. I was talking to it but it kept on hollering and moving back and forth some...and getting even closer. When it got to within five feet away I actually became concerned it might come over and give me a poke with that sharp beak!...it didn't...but it sure was close...and the youngster was right with it! After a few minutes of a close, noisy examination, it quieted down and they moved slowly back out to the dropoff. At the same time, the other youngster was joining them. I have had many close encounters with loons over the years but never one this close...and never one while I was in the water with them. Another exciting, unexpected first for me.

I hope to report on seeing a young loon's test flight soon. In the meantime, get out and enjoy this peak of summer weather and check out the ongoing loon activity on the lake. There is plenty to see this year!

#### **8.9.24 It's official!**

I finally saw a test flight! The first I have seen in 2024...but not just one...four test flights within five minutes!

I paddled my kayak to Gorham Beach this morning to report for spotting duty for my waterskiing buddies, Christina and Greg Bellopatrick. On the way I got sidetracked trying to convince a lone cormorant to look for other fishing territory and leave these fish for our loons. I don't think it got the message cuz I saw it come up twice with some tasty morsels before it flew off to the west. As I passed the Gorham Beach launch site one young loon hunkered way down trying to become invisible. It was very effective at hiding in plain sight. Another youngster was diving at the dropoff and also hunkered

down as I paddled by. As we returned from our waterskiing session both young loons were still in the area. The wind had picked up making mildly choppy conditions but the perfect setup for test flights. And sure enough...one of them took off into the wind, getting airborne very quickly, followed immediately by the second youngster! They didn't fly far, but shortly after landing they both took off again for another short flight.

It was an exciting ending to that skiing trip. We had mentioned on our cruise back in that we hadn't seen any test flights but the youngsters wings certainly looked well enough developed. The two Gorham Beach young ones proved that to be true...with us seeing not one but two test flights each! From what I have seen of the other four young loons on the lake, they should be flying by now as well.

### **9.1.24 Yikes! It's Labor Day Weekend!**

Of course our loons don't know that but they are definitely noticing a lot more boat traffic on the water. We humans have to be sure to be on the lookout for them and give them plenty of room. Spread the word fellow Loon Lovers!

All six of our young loons are doing very well. They are increasingly independent, although an adult will still be coaching them and providing snacks frequently. Usually it is the adult male that sticks around later in loon season while the females have probably already taken off for their trip south. There is still plenty of loon watching to do and fun things to see them doing.

Speaking of Loon Lovers keeping an eye on things, I want to pass along my latest entry into my Loon Log for 2024 which I did yesterday. It shows the importance of having caring eyes all around the lake reporting what they are seeing...and it might serve to explain one loon activity you may see in your travels...

I got an email yesterday about a loon in distress in the north part of the lake. This was the third such report. The first was a phone call on 8.12.24 from one of my neighbors reporting a loon in trouble near Gorham Beach. The second was a message to the ILA just yesterday from the south end of the lake near the big island. All three reports described almost identical situations.

My neighbor called me in a panic, because it appeared an adult loon was trapped in some fish line or something, and couldn't shake it loose. I hurried down to his place, and by the time I got there, the loon was acting normally. Of course I was still glad to get the report because you never know.

The second report stated "I am hoping someone can assist. There is a loon at the South end of the lake in distress. It is currently near the island. It will not dive, it is flapping its wings, and appears to be trying to get something off it. I am not sure what to do for him. Can someone help?"

And the third report said "Hi Dick

There is a loon in distress north end of the lake. Looks like it maybe wrapped in fish line. Called DNR and holiday w/o many officers on duty. Said we could try to catch it but not sure we can do it! Contacting you !!"

My response to the third report was...

"Were you able to see the loon start acting normally again?"

I have had other reports in the past describing what you were looking at, and it turned out that there was nothing to worry about.

Hopefully all is looking well at this point. Let me know what the status is currently.

I appreciate you getting in touch with me."

To that she replied "Hi Dick,

The loon acted like he was trying to fly but looked like his wings were caught in something. He could float just fine. After about an hour it finally calmed down and was much less restless. Then it started to dive and stay under the water like they do. It soon acted normal and stayed in the area for about another 1/2 hr. I don't see it now but I think it's better."

What those people were seeing was disturbing to them and I am impressed that they each made an effort to do something about it. One of them signed off as a "Loon Lover" ...and that is true for all three of them!

Fortunately, what each of them saw was not a loon in distress...it was actually a happy, relaxed loon taking a bath!

I have watched that process many times. It can go on for quite a long time with the loon rolling, and flopping its wings, and kicking its feet, and rubbing its head back and forth...a big bird doing all that makes for a lot of splashing that certainly gives the appearance of a problem. Occasionally during all this, and then at the end of the "bath", it will raise up and flap its wings to shake off the water.

A fun process to watch if you know that what you are looking at is routine grooming.

Again, we are very fortunate to have these birds in abundance on our lake and just as fortunate to have so many observers looking out for their welfare.

#### **9.14.24**

After remarking to several people that I had not seen an adult with a youngster in over a week, after 7pm I watched an adult with two youngsters moving north in the middle of the lake for over a half hour. I'm guessing that is the Gorham Beach bunch hanging out together.

#### **9.25.24**

My year end loon report for the ILA newsletter:

Intermediate Lake continues to be a great spot for loon watching again this year. I say "continues to be" because, even as our adult loons have apparently headed south, our six youngsters are still around to entertain us. Spring and summer of 2024 provided more than the usual excitement for us loon watchers. For the first time in anyone's memory we had four pairs of loons nesting on Intermediate Lake!...pairs on a platform at the southernmost end of the lake, on a platform further north in the south end towards Recreation Point (that we call the "eagle tree" pair), on a natural nest near Gorham Beach and on a platform near the 90 degree turn of Intermediate Lake Road (that we call the "Green property" pair). Not only was this an historic event in itself, but by having a loon family established further into the north part of the lake, more people were able to frequently see baby loons being tended to by their parents. That is certainly a joy to watch.

Adding to the excitement this year, three of the pairs were successful in raising two chicks each. That is the most chicks we can hope for in each family.

Even the unsuccessful pair provided some very interesting nesting activity. That pair were the first to occupy their nesting platform in the southernmost part of the lake. They promptly laid two eggs and a loon was seen sitting on those eggs on May 1st. But by May 8th the pair had for some reason abandoned those eggs. They somehow must have determined those eggs were not developing properly. As sad as that was to see, on May 9th that sadness turned turned to amazement as I saw that pair on the platform mating! They weren't wasting any time making a second attempt. Second attempts are rather rare but not unheard of. Very shortly after mating again they were sitting on two more eggs. In fact one of those eggs hatched on June 19. The joy for that pair again turned to sadness when late on the afternoon of

June 20, there was no sign of their new chick. That chick only survived for about a day. Their other egg never did hatch. They finally gave up on that egg and abandoned it on or about July 10.

Aside from that loon pair's lack of success, the Gorham Beach pair also gave us moments of concern at their natural nesting site. On May 28, after they had been sitting on their two eggs almost three weeks, we got rain...lots of rain...enough rain to raise the water level over 6 inches in just a couple of days. As usual, the Gorham Beach pair had built their nest close to the water just a couple of inches above the water level. When this big storm caused the water to rise rapidly this pair was threatened with losing their eggs. Instead of abandoning the eggs they continued sitting on them and started adding more material to the nest. Over those days of rising water, strong winds and very choppy waves they raised that nest over seven inches higher...and the eggs along with it! It was painful to watch the nest literally bouncing in the waves with a loon sitting on it constantly reaching under water and around the nest for more material. I was very concerned that those eggs could not be kept warm enough to properly incubate. Finally, by May 31, the wind and waves calmed down and the water stopped rising. Then on June 2, the Gorham Beach pair was rewarded for their heroic efforts by taking the First Chick Award for 2024!

Once the excitement of the struggle at Gorham Beach had passed, the eagle tree pair and the Green property pair soon hatched their chicks. And so began our summer of watching those six chicks grow. With three healthy families spread over the lake from north to south we were receiving many more loon spotting stories than usual...a very rewarding summer for the ILA Loon Platoon.

Along with numerous reports on our three families, we were also hearing more reports of groups of adult loons gathering at various spots around the lake. Groups of four to fifteen or more loons were being spotted congregating rather frequently. This frequent activity also was unusual compared to previous summers...and very entertaining. It appears to me that Intermediate Lake may be turning into the Las Vegas for loon conventions! Let's hope they continue to use this venue in the future.

With such an historic and exciting loon watching season coming to a close, we are already looking forward to what next year might bring us. Do we dare hope to have five pairs of loons nesting on our fabulous lake??...Of course we do! We are already planning to place an additional nesting platform in the far northern part of the lake. Stay tuned...

#### **9.27.24**

On an afternoon pontoon ride with the Hickmans covering the south and big parts of the lake we only spotted one loon...a youngster in the big part of the lake. I expected to see four young loons on that trip. During my paddleboat ride north into the narrowing of the lake earlier in the day I didn't see any loons. Seems very early for the young loons to be gone...but maybe they are.

#### **9.30.24**

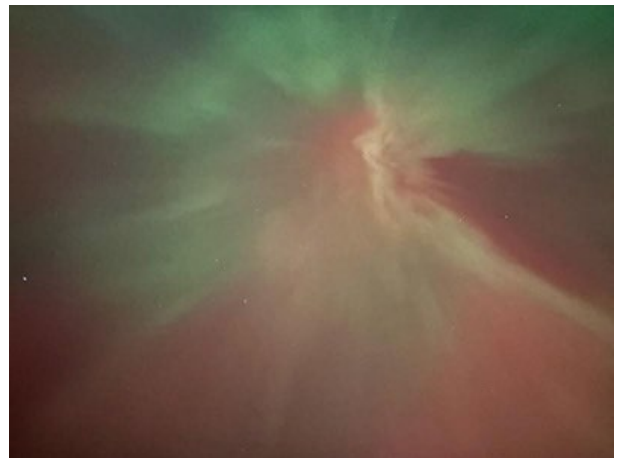
Haven't seen a single loon on my mid day rides since 9/27...until 2:30 today. A young loon is straight out half way across the lake. Just bobbing in the light chop...the breeze slowly pushing it north...doing nothing for well over an hour. No other loons in sight.

#### **10.4.24**

A youngster is diving just beyond the drop off out in front at about 4:20. I only see one. At 4:25 I went out on the end of the neighbors dock and it came in fairly close to say hello. Then it dove and disappeared.

**10.10.24**

We certainly have more than loons to look at around Intermediate Lake and tonight was an extraordinary example of that...amazing Northern Lights! They covered the entire sky. 360 degrees of spectacular color that lasted for hours. I don't believe there has ever been such a dazzling display such as this in my lifetime and probably never will be again.

**10.12.24**

On my paddleboat ride saw a young loon well out past the dropoff preening at about 11:30.

**10.21.24**

Andy saw 2 loons this afternoon. 73 degrees!

**11.16.24**

On my chilly kayak ride I saw two loons near the new sandbar. Were they our Gorham Beach youngsters? I'm thinking they were. They didn't answer when I asked them about it, but they did get pretty close so I think they were my buddies.



**11.29.24**

Duke Busch, one of my fisherman friends, sent this picture, taken in the fall, of one of our young loons swimming under his boat checking out his lure. This is a great picture! Look at the loon's feet and you can see Duke caught the loon in the middle of the scissor kick they use under water.



**12.6.24**

Andy saw a loon in front of his place this morning. Time for that one to head south!

**12.9.24**

Paul Winkler spotted a loon in front of his place north across the lake from the sandbar.

Let's hope all of our loons have safely headed south by now.

I wish you all a happy, healthy holiday season and that you continue so through the coming new year. That is certainly my plan, and with that in mind I hope to have another exciting year to report about in 2025!

*Dick West*