

Loon Log 2026
Dick West
dnswest@netzero.net

5.11.26

A loon was peacefully feeding along the dropoff at about 6:45. It gave me a wave so it must be one of my Gorham Beach buddies heading back towards the nest.

At 8:15 Andy picked me up and we moved the Greenes' property platform a little further from the nearest cottage and a little deeper. Now the pair that nested there last year has a choice to use that platform or the one at Snowflake. They spent a lot of their "nursery time" raising their young chicks last year near Snowflake so I'm curious to see which one they choose.

After a walk along the west shore near the northernmost nest area...without spotting a nest site or any loons...we drove down to Snowflake...and as soon as we pulled in close to that shore and spotted the platform we had our answer...a loon was on the platform!! Hurrah!! It was very exciting to see that. The other loon was right next to the platform.

Apparently the Greene property pair is now the Snowflake pair.

The loon slipped off the platform so we quickly left them to their nest building. Both loons were right at the platform as we drove away.

At about noon I drove down M88 to check on the eagle tree nest. Still empty. After scanning the area for several minutes I did see two loons very close to the platform. I watched for over a half hour. A few times one of them headed up to the platform as if it would hop up on it...but never did. At one point a cormorant landed close to them but on the other side of the weed bed. Both loons seemed to head toward it but the cormorant didn't stick around long.

At about 6:00 I went in to town and stopped to check the platform again. There was a loon resting very close to shore. As I got to the shore I scared off a small flock of ducks but the loon stayed right there. It even came a little closer to me for a chat. It gave me no information whatsoever but it did listen to me encourage it to get out on the platform. I didn't see the other loon. It did look to me like the straw on the platform had been rearranged some. When I came back a few minutes later the loon by the shore was gone and the platform was still vacant. Maybe tomorrow...

So at this point we have three pairs of loons nesting...the southernmost pair, my Gorham Beach buddies and the Snowflake pair...and hoping to have two more confirmed soon.

5.10.26

We got up to the lake for the summer yesterday...finally!

Saw my first loon way out in the lake at about 8:45 this morning.

On my noon walk I saw there is a loon nesting at Gorham Beach on the almost submerged little island. I didn't see another loon in the area. A resident there mentioned the loon and nest were bouncing in the waves yesterday and today but hanging in there. Luckily the water level continues to slowly go down so that nest should be ok.

At 2:30 I took a ride around the lake to check the platforms.

My first stop was along M 88 near the eagle tree platform. It was empty, but there was a loon further to the north preening. I only saw the one loon there. The south end was all pretty choppy so it would be easy to miss any loons in the area.

My next stop was at The Maples. The southernmost platform was empty, but I did see a cormorant and a small flock of diving ducks in the area. After a few minutes, I also saw two loons close to the west shore having a conversation. One of them soon flapped its way across the water towards the north and stopped after a short distance. The other loon dove. I didn't see the one that scrambled away leave the area, but it did disappear. After watching a few more minutes I did see a loon on the

platform! Also, there was another loon preening about halfway between shore and the platform. Looks like things are normal at the southernmost nest.

I drove down Walleye Lane to get another good view of the southernmost nest. Of course the loon was still sitting on the platform and it was good to see the other one very close by. I took a look at the Eagle tree nest, which is quite a distance, but it was clearly still empty. The water was much too choppy to see any loons in the water at that distance.

I stopped at the Openo launch site to see if I could see the eagle tree platform from there. The dock wasn't in the water yet so I was able to walk up on that to get a decent view at the empty platform. Didn't see any loons in the area this time. Just a pair of Merganser's close to me.

The platform at the Greenes' property was also empty and no loons in sight. I glanced across the lake with my binoculars and it appeared the platform at Snowflake was also empty.

I drove around to the public access at Snowflake Road and that platform definitely is empty. Again no loons in sight.

5.5.2026 A QUICK UPDATE...

The nesting platforms are all in place.

Thanks to the diligent efforts of Andy Hickman, Bill Bailey and Tom Senecal yesterday morning, the last of the main four platforms was placed in the far south end of the lake.

Tom sent this picture of Andy, closest to the camera, and Bill as they pulled away heading back to the Maples.



Thanks, again, to Jeremiah at the Maples for the use of a boat and the launch site to get that job done.

The Loon Platoon was very fortunate to have added to the crew last year...and as you have read, the ranks swelled further this year. In fact, shortly after the platform was put in place at Snowflake we were told that it wasn't in the best spot. Jim O'Neal contacted me to discuss that platform. But believe me, Jim was not just calling to complain...he was prepared, willing and able to get that thing relocated...just didn't know how to handle the platform. Right away, Andy met Jim and Jim's brother Bob at Snowflake and moved it. Jim and Bob had a boat and trolling motor ready to go by the time Andy showed up. This is Jim, closest to the camera, and Bob after completing that project.



Two more Loon Platoon crew members!

So the platforms are in place and the loons are on the lake. Now we sit back and watch the show. Hopefully that show will include five pairs of loons raising ten healthy chicks.

To refresh your memory and help you keep an eye on the action, our five active nesting sites last year were:

The northernmost nest - located on the west shoreline hidden in thick weeds at the cleared industrial site.

The Greenes' property platform - on the east side near the 90 degree turn of N. Intermediate Lake Rd.

The Gorham Beach nest - on a small "island" just north of the public access site.

The Eagle Tree platform - mid lake next to a large weed bed south of Recreation Point near the eagle tree.

The southernmost nest - mid lake next to weeds almost at the end of the lake.

There is a very good map of these locations on the Intermediate Lake Association website under the "Loon Platoon" tab. That map was put together by Ken Freeman who also maintains an excellent website at Kencam.net which has a large amount of local information. His site has a "Loon Logs" tab that will also take you to the map.

Please observe the loons and their nests quietly from a distance. Remind your guests that loons hate jet skis coming anywhere near them.

When you do see action by the loons, especially now as they hopefully start using the platforms, please let me know what you see.

4.28.2026 SPRING HAS ATTACKED!!

And it has not been a fun thing to see...

Greetings Loon Watchers,

Most of you are aware of the high water level and flooding that occurred in mid April. That unprecedented event has caused major disruption and significant property damage in our area.

As the flood waters slowly recede we are starting to attend to the usual post winter activities we are accustomed to...including wondering about our loon friends and hoping for a productive spring for them and all other living things.

With that in mind it is time to give you an update. Following are the entries I have made to date in my Loon Log for 2026 regarding the status of the lake, the loons, the Loon Platoon and other general comments.

It begins...

Very heavy snow this year, including into mid March. 18 inches to plow on March 16 after plowing on the 14th, per Dylan Buffman.

From here on, I'll list my entries in reverse chronological order for ease of scrolling.

4.30.26

Andy Hickman sent a [very interesting article](#) that he saw in today's Record Eagle about the loons residing in the Seney National Wildlife Refuge in the UP. Our loon advisor, Damon McCormick, has been studying those loons for many years. That, along with more action by the Loon Platoon, makes this email worth sending so y'all get the news "hot off the press"!! Hopefully you can zoom in on that article for the details. Exciting loon news for sure! We are especially happy to have our friend Damon continuing to report it.

4.29.26

Even though conditions weren't ideal, Andy, Rich and Bill Bailey got the eagle tree platform in place.

This is Bill and Rich ready to shove off...



Then...success!



Andy's friend, Luke Hocking, provided the boat and the dock to launch from.

Having Bill's small outboard motor was a huge help.

Another job well done...with one more platform to go...the southernmost one. Could be several days before that gets handled.

4.28.26

I received an email from Tim Cripsey who, with wife Teresa, lives on the river below the Bellaire dam. They were sitting in the bullseye of a disaster if the dam would have failed, no doubt sweating every minute while the water was rising. Their dock is still under water but they did not suffer any significant damage. As a bonus to us loon watchers, they took a kayak ride on the river from their place before the flooding and got this beautiful picture of an eagle sitting on its nest.



I highly recommend taking a cruise on that section of the Intermediate River below the dam to Lake Bellaire and check out that huge nest. I'm amazed that skinny looking tree survived the winter...but there it is.

As always, your comments and input are appreciated...now and throughout the year. Feel free to send me an email any time to dnswest@netzero.net.

4.27.26

The water level is still over 8.6 and boating on the lake is still discouraged but the weather was decent so three Loon Platoon members...Andy Hickman, Duane Bush and Rich Ceuninck...donned waders and put out two nesting platforms. One at the Greenes' property, shown in these pictures



And one at Snowflake, shown here



There was a loon close by watching the operation going on at Snowflake.

Good work guys!!

I wish I could have been there to help out.

Later in the evening I received the following picture from an anonymous citizen showing our three stalwart Loon Platoon warriors belly up to the bar at Short's in complete disregard to the standards of conduct expected of Loon Platoon members!



Yep, that is clearly Rich, Andy and Duane celebrating their successful mission.

Geez, I turn my back for one minute and discipline completely falls apart...

Oh well, at least they didn't go to Short's before their mission. Who knows where those platforms would have ended up if that would have happened...

With chilly weather in the forecast for the next week or so it is hard to tell when the two platforms will be launched in the south end of the lake.

Let the loon watching season begin!!

4.16.26

At mid day the gage was at 10.43!!

Emergency precautions were taken at the Bellaire dam. 24 hour watch in place for several days. Some leaking was spotted with fill added to that area and sandbags put all along the earthen portion.

Evacuation procedures put into effect for areas below the dam.

Thankfully the dam held and a potential disaster was averted as the water level peaked and started to recede on April 16.

Unfortunately, many properties in low lying areas of the chain did suffer significant flooding.

All access points and boat launches on the chain in Antrim County were closed until the level recedes significantly.

For comparison, the court ordered winter level is 6.54 until May 15 or when the ice clears, so the peak was about four feet higher than it should have been! That is a lot of extra water!! It took until April 21 for the level on the gage to drop a foot to 9.43.

It only took about three short days for the level to jump up four feet...and five long days to go down one foot. Obviously, more rain will slow the decline.

4.13.26

The ice cleared today.
Snow was melting fast.
Along with heavy rain...
From Andy, April 13 at 7:21 am:
"3.1 inches of rain in the last 24 hours. 9.37 on the gauge at 7:20am"
And the water continued to rise...to dangerous levels...

4.12.26

Andy Hickman sent this picture of a pair of loons at his place at Recreation Point.



He said they told him they noticed I wasn't at my cottage yet so they were hoping he might get their nesting platform ready to launch. Andy assured them he was on it.

4.8.26

First loons confirmed in the open water south of the Central Lake bridge.