



**WHITE LAKE** Property Owners Association  
Environment Volunteers



## 2023 White Lake Loon Report

We are happy this year to have multiple inputs into our annual Loon Survey Report. All of the participants are naturalists and/or photographers and know loons and their behavioural habits very well. The reporting is 'in their own words' and are interesting to read. The last section details the cause of death of a loon found on White Lake this year.

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### 1. **Loon Report and Wildlife Observations: July 1 to 8, 2023** Joyce Bentham and Robert Carrière

Our annual visit to White Lake was pleasant with good food, good friends and lots of Loon photographic opportunities. After the paralyzing heat wave of June, we were pleasantly surprised by wonderful weather; warm and moderate. This year the northeastern forest fires left a light haze above the lake which was occasionally accompanied by the smell of a camp fire. The air was particularly calm with two or three days of perfectly still water with barely a ripple.

We noticed that aquatic plants in the lake appeared to be denser and more prolific than in previous years, particularly in Sunset Bay. In fact, we also observed a greater density of aquatic vegetation in the area below the Hardwood Island chain of small islands, (shown on map below as #1) also in Eggshape Bay and the far reaches of Three-Mile Bay. These plants often necessitated their removal from our propeller by partly lifting the engine and/or running it in reverse.

The good news is that after a few years of not sighting any loons in Sunset Bay, we did notice on different occasions, two or 3 single loons swimming within the Bay area.

It should be noted that this year we did not venture into the more remote areas of White Lake such as Hayes and Bane Bays.

Even though we were focussing primarily on Loons, it was a pleasant surprise, on a few separate occasions, to observe a young doe browsing in the tall grass on the eastern side of the island below Hardwood I. ( #5 on the map). It reminded us warmly of our first visit to White Lake where a doe was observed swimming and island hopping in the same area.

Our reporting on loon populations in White Lake over the years indicate that the loon population is holding with some yearly fluctuations. No doubt the increase usage of the lake and recent new cottage constructions on its shoreline will continue to challenge loons trying to build a safe and secure nest. Ornithologists have noted that loon populations in North Eastern America are decreasing partly because of increased recreational access and use of our lakes and rivers resulting in loss of habitat.

## **Detail of Loon and Wildlife Observations**

*Note: The numbered comments below correspond to identified sites or locations shown on the map attached below.*

After leaving the marina on the northeastern shore of White Lake, we were greeted by the first sighting of loons as we entered the Kitty Island/Ryans Point area. A single loon, near the grassed area off the western shore and two more adult loons just before the rocky islands were observed. More single adult loons spotted near Stanley Island. Our first outing took us to the south end of the lake at map point one.

1. The large grassed area at the Broad Brooke inlet produced one pair of adults and one chick; very small but actively fed by the adults.
2. The small bay located near the Sunset Bay channel (Burnt Point) had two adults with a single chick. We ventured into Sunset Bay and found 2 single adults swimming independently and one more adult near the boat launch area. We made repeated visits but never could find a nesting site or adults with chicks. On the west side of the lake near and across the last island of the Hardwood Island chain, three to four adults were observed in late afternoon actively diving and feeding.
3. A blue heron was spotted feeding on the rocky shoreline.
4. On the eastern shoreline two adults were feeding next to docks and rocky shore. No chicks were observed. Four adults we seen at the entrance to Three Mile Bay in the centre of the bay.
5. Majestically situated on the tallest tree at the entrance to the channel between two of the Hardwood Islands, is the Osprey nest as active as it was last year; two very noisy chicks begging for food keeping parents active in and out of the nest. They were trying out their wings but had not left the nest yet. Directly below them, in the small cove, was a loon nest active in 2022 but empty this year.
6. We visited the old loon nesting site on the northeastern tip of the island at the entrance to the shallow channel. The nest was partly flooded and not in use. Our activities there disturbed an adult duck with 5 little ducklings were weaving in and out of the tall grass.

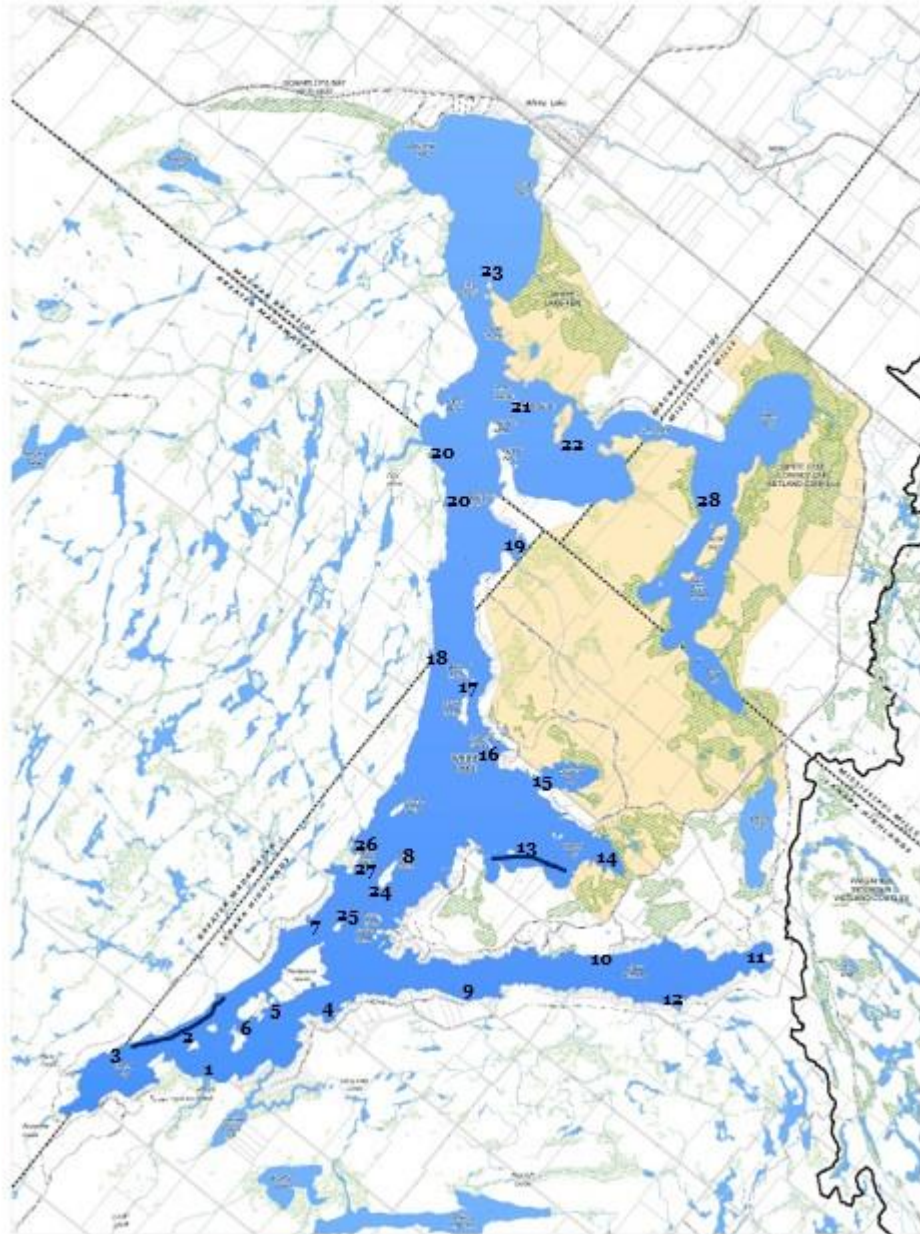
7. We frequently observed two adult loons in and around the small bay on the western shore opposite McLaughlin's Island. This area appeared to be a meeting place for adult loons in late afternoon. We did not find a loon nest in the area but did startle a small fox.
8. Except for the occasional lake gull, this site was otherwise vacant.
9. Along the south shoreline of Three-Mile Bay we spotted adult geese with at least 15 goslings following in tow. One of the few large bald eagles seen was observed high above the Bay circling but giving no clues as to where his/her nest might be. Three or four adult loons were observed feeding in the centre of the Bay totally unnerved by the fact that they were sitting on the main channel used by boaters.
10. Across from the Cedar Cove Resort beach, a single adult loon was swimming near the southern shoreline and was so close to the shore that it may have been guarding a nest or female still brooding.
11. The far end of Three Mile Bay was deserted of loons. In past years, we remember spending hours at this location logging the activities of a pair of loons with chicks. This location has now been emptied of loons for 3 years. The water there is loaded with vegetation and clouds of green nuisance algae floating just below the surface.
12. Moving west on the south shore of Three-Mile Bay 2 adult loons and one medium size chick were spotted.
13. Towards Pickerel Bay, at the entrance to the south cove, we searched for the nesting site on a small island with an apparently abandoned cottage. The nest was found, in good shape but vacant. We did observe 2 adults with one medium size chick who evaded us by going into the bay. The eternal Osprey nest in the centre of Pickerel Bay was quite active with two chicks flapping their wings in preparation of fledging. Repeated visits to the area produced sightings of 3 single adult loons swimming at the entrance to Pickerel Bay. On Tuesday of our week at the lake, we observed (for three hours) two adult loons actively feeding two larger chicks.
14. The far end of Pickerel Bay was very active in previous years, but was very quiet this year with no loons observed.
15. Eggshape Bay was very congested with plant life. In some of the shallow areas where we once could clearly see the bottom is now totally grown over such that we needed to clear the propeller a few times.
16. Exiting Eggshape Bay and heading north, there is a shallow cove with some rocky islands. As was the case in previous years, the area had two sets of adults with two chicks each.
17. Stanley Island, yielded one adult loon. The eagle's nest behind the cottage on Stanley Island seems abandoned and in disrepair. The north end of the island produced a duck and six ducklings swimming within the rocky outcrop. One single adult loon and a pair of adults with two small chicks were observed twice

but must have moved on and were not seen again in the same area during the rest of the week. A Blue heron, very intent on feeding, near the large rock outcrops was oblivious to our presence. The lake, being very calm, allowed us to be stationary for quite a while.

18. Except for the occasional Blue Heron, which flew from cove to cove while feeding along this stretch of shoreline, this location was devoid of loons.
19. In the large bay, south of Deadman's Island, two single adult loons were observed swimming independently. The Osprey nest near the cottage was gone as the tree was damaged but there appeared to be a new nest further inland. We could see the adult Osprey flying in and out but the nest was beyond our line of site. Near and just below Deadman's Island, were a couple of adult loons with two chicks. The Channel leading to White Lake Marina was relatively quiet mid-week. A few single loons patrolled the area of Andrews Island and Myrtle Island and were sighted repeatedly.
20. More Blue Herons were observed fishing off the western shoreline just below the entrance to Fish Creek. We ventured deeper into Fish Creek Bay using our electric trolling motor but did not discover any loons. We did observe during late afternoon or early evening groups of 5 to 7 adult loons assembled at the entrance in the shallows in what appeared to be a social feeding ritual.
21. North of Myrtle Island, along the shoreline towards the White Lake Marina, a previously very active area, we spotted a couple of adult loons actively feeding their two small chicks.
22. We did not venture deeper into The Channel, for fear of fouling our propeller in the dense weeds along the shore.
23. This location was not visited this year.
24. The eagle's nest behind the cottage on Birch Island is no longer occupied and in disrepair. However, on the backside of Birch Island was an adult Osprey feeding two junior Osprey that had fledged. The chicks were flying from tree top to tree top while being fed but we could not figure out where the nest site was located. In the north end of Birch Island, we observed 2 adult loons and two chicks.
25. In the open area between the east side of McLachlin's Island and the entrance to Three-Mile Bay, there were late night gatherings of loons. Loons flew in and out and mingled before calling out at night. These are most likely the same loons previously observed during daylight hours tending to the chicks in other nearby bays. The bay at the northeast end of Hardwood Island was harboring a couple of loons with two chicks but were observed on only two occasions, having no doubt moved to a better feeding area.
26. Curley's Island had a vacant eagle's nest and we are not sure if it was used this year.

# Loon Observation Sites

July 1 – July 8, 2023



## **2. White Lake Loon Report: July and September 2023**

-Brian Houle and Nora and Donnie Gordon

This survey (BH) was conducted over the month of July and included most of White Lake. A supplementary survey was conducted on a single day on September (N&DG) and included all parts of the lake.

The time of year for taking loon surveys is important. Early in the season, it is possible to miss chicks which have not yet hatched and later in the summer, some of the chicks may have been lost to predation and/or boating encounters.

Perhaps the most difficult population to monitor is the single adult or young adult. Lone birds on the lake or loons engaging in group communal feeding may be part of a nesting pair located in another part of the lake.

Care should then be taken when tallying up the total number of loons on the lake. From past experience, it is reasonable to assume that there are at a minimum ten unattached loons on the lake at any given time during the summer months.

This year we are fortunate to have three sources of data on the loon population of White Lake. The numbers counted for nesting pairs and chicks are close and so in this case, the higher number is accepted as accurate. Statisticians know that when counting objects, such as loons, cottages, boats, etc. the more accurate the count, the higher the count number will be.

Note, that early in the June survey, 2 loon chicks were lost. In the September survey, it was found that an additional 2 chicks were lost. It is not uncommon that only 50% of the chicks produced in a given year survive to adulthood.

<b>2023 White Lake Loon Survey Results</b>	
Nesting Pairs	19
Chicks	22
Total Adults	48

The results in the above table compare very well with the best seasons we have recorded since 2013. Clearly, White Lake is great habitat for loons. White Lake is a shallow and very productive lake producing a good supply of feeder fish for all aquatic species, both fish and fowl.



## **Deceased Common Loon on White Lake**

On May 23, 2023 we received a report of a dead loon on White Lake. Two observant residents of the lake spotted a loon thrashing about as though it was in distress. Located near Hardwood Island, the loon soon died. Two additional loons stayed with the dying loon until it died.

On the advice of the Canadian Wildlife Health Cooperative the loon was recovered in a manner that would not expose anyone to possible pathogens. The loon was picked up and sent to a laboratory for analysis.

The final diagnosis was death by severe aspergillosis. Tests for avian influenza were negative. The internet provides the following information on the fungal infection:

*Spergillois is an infection caused by Aspergillus, a common mold (a type of fungus) that lives indoors and outdoors. Most people breathe in Aspergillus spores every day without getting sick. However, people with weakened immune systems or lung diseases are at a higher risk of developing health problems due to Aspergillus. The types of health problems caused by Aspergillus include allergic reactions, lung infections, and infections in other organs.*

Between 5 and 10% of loons die from this fungal infection

## **Conrad Grégoire and David Overholt**

*Environment Volunteers, White Lake Property Owners Association*



January 12, 2024