



WHITE LAKE PRESERVATION PROJECT

White Lake Loon Survey and Wildlife Observations

Saturday, June 25 to July 1, 2016

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Although at times the wind hampered our observations, the weather was relatively calm during most of the time we surveyed White Lake for loons.

This year we found the water significantly cleaner and clearer with increased visibility at greater depths. There was an abundance of smaller fish as witnessed during the feeding of chicks by the adult loons. Loons were plentiful in most of the usual parts of the lake and absent in others as noted below. Some of the chicks were small constantly riding on the backs of adults while others were more mature and diving for food. This indicates that loon eggs hatch over a several week period.

Blue Herons were in abundance in the usual places and again most were gulping down fair-sized fish from the rocky/grassy Northwest shores of the lake.



All sightings referred to below refer to locations identified on the map shown above.

Observations:

Site 1: Again this year we observed two adult loons with one healthy chick. Adults were very tolerant of our presence and constantly fed the chick. Small fish seemed to be very abundant as the adults would

dive and return in a matter of seconds with minnows. With the increased clarity of the water this year we could actually see the adults literally 'flying' under water.

Site 2: No loons observed in the Sunset Bay area. In the past, some single adults were seen fishing, but none this year. However, Blue Herons were plentiful along the rocky edge and so intent on feeding that we could get quite close to them before they took flight.

Site 4: Many seagulls were observed on the rocks at this site.

Site 5: This nesting area was totally eroded and no longer used.

Site 6: Two or three adult loons fishing were usually seen at this site during late afternoon or early evening.

Site 7: The channel of water running from the camping area on Hardwood Island to Birch Island appears to be a gathering and fishing area for adult loons, especially in late evening after sunset. Loons seem to congregate for some cooperative fishing and calling along this body of water. Their numbers can vary from 3 or 4 to over half a dozen.

Site 9: Numerous adults were seen and some with chicks not only near the shore but in the main channel used by pleasure boats. The chicks appear to be very tolerant of the fast boats which may prove to be a danger to their survival.

Site 10: As noted last year the osprey nest is gone with no new nest sightings. The loons with chicks previously observed near the Cedar Cove shallow areas just before the beach were not seen this year.

Site 11: No loon sighting at the far end of Three Mile Bay where in past years we could count on being entertained for hours watching the adult loons and chicks feed in the sheltered bay.

Site 12: Two adults with one small chick observed.

Site 13: In Pickerel Bay, two couples with two chicks each were observed on the South side shallow rocky area. Water level and tricky wind conditions made closer observations risky. The Osprey nest on O'Brien Island was still active with one large chick not yet fledged.

Site 14: The shallow area at the East end of Pickerel Bay, where adults with chicks were observed last year, was empty.

Site 15: Eggshape bay had some Blue Herons drying their wings in the sun but the shallows prevented us from getting close enough to get good photos. However, there were a couple of adult loons with two chicks which kept us preoccupied taking pictures.

Site 15a: In the narrow channel behind Howard's Island, two adult loons and one chick were observed. High winds and lower water levels made closer observation impractical.

Site 16: Two adult loons with two chicks were spotted navigating between Stanley and Waba Islands. One large bald eagle nest was observed on Stanley Island. The nest contained two large eagle chicks flapping their wings but not yet brave enough to leave the nest.

Site 17: West shore above Waba Island: we repeatedly observed Blue Herons fishing off rocky shore line.

Site 18: In the Bay below Deadman's Island we spotted an Osprey nest with very active parents bringing food to one chick which had not yet fledged. Single adult loon observed near the grassy edge.

Site 19: The main channel below Stewart's island and entrance to the White Lake Marina yielded no loon observations since an established nesting area was eroded and abandoned last year.

Site 20: Main channel was very choppy and made observation very difficult. No loons seen.

Site 21: There were no loon sightings in areas 19 and 20. North of Richardson's island we found two adults and two chicks inhabiting the shallow area where the water was teeming with minnows. Both parents would dive for a few seconds and return with fish. Being somewhat sheltered from the wind, we drifted very close to the birds and obtained some spectacular feeding photos. We visited this sight repeatedly with the same positive results. It was particularly interesting to watch the adults dart back and forth underwater seeking minnows. The clarity of the water allowed the white markings of the loons to stand out against the greenish lake bottom. They are so fast and their movement under water is so unpredictable as to be impossible to photograph.

Site 22: Adults with 2 chicks were seen in the shallow area. We avoided the area for further study because the area very busy with pleasure boats pulling floating devices.

Site 23: This site was not visited this year although we could observe the Osprey from a distance spiralling down toward its nest.

Site 24: As in other years, Birch Island had a fantastic Osprey nest with two young chicks which had fledged the nest and were flying from branch to branch testing their wings. We were hailed by the OPP at that site and after a brief explanation of our intent they wished us a happy and safe boating experience.

Site 25: Still a popular sight for 2 or 3 adult loons to feed on the lee side of the island.

Site 26: Two adults and two chicks were observed feeding very close to the shallow grassy area.

Site 27: This site was not visited due to low water levels.

During the 2016 observation period, we counted 32 adult loons on White Lake, producing 11 successful mating pairs with 16 offspring.