

Written by Thom Townsend

28 Days on a Nest

June 29 thru July 26
2015

Section 1 (of 4)

On Sunday night, July 26, the miracle of birth occurred on a secluded nest in Province Lake, near where Hobbs Brook flows into the Lake. Two fluffy chicks hatched during the night and were first spotted on Monday by Steve & Mary Craig. As the chicks conclude their 3rd day of life, some asked how did we get to this wonderful point. The following are based on our daily (and quietly) watching and waiting.

False Start

During the last week of June, the adult loon pair were frequently observed in the area of the nesting raft that the Craigs, often with help from the Townsends, have been putting in the lake for the past decade, following the precedence set by Dick & Blythe Thomas before them. The raft had been in the water since early May, as nesting and hatching is frequently during the month of June. On June 21st I authored this e-mail:

Saturday evening, the two loons were hanging out together in front of our cottage for about an hour, ... and then FLEW (yes flew) off toward the middle of the Lake about 8pm.

This morning (Sunday) they are back here, have been nosing around the nest, and just now (8:45ish) one climbed on, snuggled down and is looking in this direction. The other is within 10 feet of the nest.

Will update later.

I quickly paddled out and put up the "Loon Nesting Area" signs, asking all to stay away.

This was followed by my update just two hours later:

The loons only spent about 10-15 minutes on the nest, then they paddled over toward the Hobbs Brook inlet and just hung out there (in the lake, not on shore or up the brook) for about an hour. Now they are both back out in the lake in front of us. Hmmm?

Little did we know what the next four weeks would bring.

On the nest

The next week, June 22 thru 28 we were off-lake until Thursday, but upon returning we observed the loons at random times and in random places in and among the weeds and open lake. Then on Monday afternoon, June 29th, upon returning from a hike up Copple Crown Mountain with my friend Peter, I first noticed what appeared to be a loon sitting quietly in among the weeds near the mouth of Hobbs Brook. When the loon appeared to be in the same spot the next day (June 30), I went quietly down the shoreline and shot this photo:



To our surprise, the loons, after ignoring the raft nest, had built their own. From that day forward, using binoculars and a spotting scope, we watched as a loon was constantly on (or occasionally very near) this nest. We observed a second loon coming and going a few times per day, but did not see an actual “one off – other one on” exchange.

After a discussion with Steve & Mary, we decided that the best course of action was to keep this all quiet. And we shared with only a few friends that if this was to be successful, a chick would be / could be born on the last weekend in July. (*We never dreamed that there would be two!*)

Waiting and Watching (shhh!)

The sitting loon frequently sat with its mouth wide open, which we learned was a way to cool off much like a dog pants, and it would occasionally call out, which Jan & I came to interpret as a *“Hey, it’s your turn mate, get back here! I’m hungry.”* It usually got results:



We painfully kept quiet, not wanting to attract a crowd of sightseers, and on 4 or 5 occasions rushed out and asked kayakers or fishermen to kindly leave the area, after they had transgressed within the **Keep Away** signs.

We waited, watched, and occasionally put up a step ladder on our dock, climbed up 3 steps, and took a photo or two with our 24x zoomed lens.

(End of section 1)