

Loon-ing on Province Lake

Loon chicks on Province Lake

by Thom Townsend
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Although loons have summered on Province Lake for many years, I have found no records of loon chicks being hatched on the Lake prior to 2015. There has been an adult pair (and sometimes a 'third bird') on the Lake every summer since at least 1994, although not necessarily the same pair.

When we bought our Remick Road cottage in 2004, we "inherited" a homemade loon nesting raft from the previous owners, Dick & Blythe Thomas. The Loon Preservation Committee strongly recommends a raft as the safest location for a loon nest. Although Dick constructed and annually placed the raft out on the lake, the loons did not produce any chicks during his time. I put in and took out that raft for our first few years beginning in the Spring of 2005, which the adults frequently visited, but still no chicks.

In the Spring of 2008, Steve Craig participated in an LPC sponsored "Build a Raft" event, and provided Province Lake with an upgraded raft with canopy, which Steve, I and friends have annually floated and removed. Our usual schedule is to put it on the water before Mother's Day, and then remove it after the breeding season. Even on years of no chick, the adults do visit the raft frequently, and seem to recognize it as a safe haven. During the off-season, Steve frequently makes minor repairs/upgrades.

Then things changed in 2015. Loon chicks!

The raft was floated per schedule, in early May, after we had observed an adult pair on the lake for 2 or 3 weeks. The adults frequently checked it out, but no continuous nesting. Then around June 29, they were observed continuously on/near a tuft of vegetation approximately 150 yards nearer to the Hobbs Brook in-flow than where we had placed the raft.

The following table summarizes the years from 1996 thru 2023.

Loon chicks - Province Lake, Effingham & Wakefield, NH

<u>Year</u>	<u>Chicks ?</u>	<u>Nest location</u>	<u>Comments</u>
1996 – 2014	0	Raft near mouth of Hobbs Brook.	No loon chicks. Loons frequently visited the raft.
2015	2 (Dick & Bly)	Natural vegetation, at mouth of Hobbs Brook	Hatched 7/27 , successful. Considered <u>very</u> late.
2016	0	Raft near Hobbs Brook	Two eggs, but failed to hatch. First & third weeks of June
2017	1 (Indy)	Raft near Hobbs	Hatched July 1 or 2 , Successful. LPC banded the adult pair.
2018	0	Same	Egg laid, but did not hatch in mid-July. LPC collected egg.
2019	1 (Luna)	Same	Two eggs. Only one hatched July 11 Juvenile chick was killed in mid-Aug.
2020	0	Same	1 egg, disappeared over night in mid-July. Predator unknown.
2021	0	Same	No chick, despite frequent visits on nest.
2022	0	Same	No chick.
2023	1 (Bella)	Nested on the island.	Two eggs. One hatched. Hatched 6/19 , successful.
2024	_____	_____	_____

Note: Incubation is 28-29 days.