

# Loon Committee Report 2024

By Amy March

Each summer the Loon Committee does a loon count on Hancock and Sand Ponds. The result from the 2023 count: There were six loons on Hancock Pond, and no chicks. There were four loons on Sand Pond, and no chicks.

The loons on Hancock Pond built two nests but both were abandoned. One egg was discovered in a new place, disappeared and then strangely reappeared. The loons built a dyke in front of one nest, probably to protect from rising water.

The loons on Sand Pond also built one nest which was abandoned. The loons at the south end appeared to be looking for a nest site but did not build one.

Judy Coleman expressed concern that the loon pair at the South end of Sand Pond, who had previously been productive, have produced no surviving chicks for the last four years. We don't know what caused the nests to be abandoned, but severely rising water following several storms and increasing numbers of bald eagles are probably factors.

Also, Micah Miller adds: "Human disturbance cannot be discounted. The high water this year resulted in lots of boat traffic in and out of Sand Pond from Hancock, and potentially greater wave action from either factor or in combination."

## **LEA Loon Project**

Maggie Welch, who heads the Lakes Environmental Association's Loon Project, reported that a loon raft was placed on the west side of Sand Pond, where loons tried to nest the last two years, and a second raft was placed near the islands at the south end, where a loon pair has traditionally nested, but not successfully in the last four years. Neither raft was occupied over the summer.

On Hancock Pond, one nesting platform was placed at Loon Cove. Several members of the committee suggested that the raft be placed near the small islands close to the dugway, where there have been nests in the past.

We were very pleased to welcome Micah Miller to our September meeting. Micah has a summer place on Sand Pond and works for the Biodiversity Research Institute. He is willing to receive calls about injured and dead loons. His organization does avian

rescue work for the State of Maine. He can be reached at (618)-353-4910, or on email at micah.miller@briwildlife.org.

## **Wake Boats**

Members expressed great concern about wake boats and their impact on the loons. The Maine State Legislation is considering legislation to put limits on wake boats. **Please complete the LEA survey to help them support this legislation.**

It was suggested that we place a webcam near an active nest next summer to increase positive interest in the loons and discourage people from getting too close. We should hide it to prevent theft! **Anyone interested is encouraged to do this and let us know.**

**Finally, we should take down the numbers on boats that resist suggestions to stay away from loons. This may serve as a deterrent. Boaters who harass loons can be reported to the Maine Warden Service, at 1-800-452-4664. The Game Warden is responsible for laws and rules pertaining to inland fishery and wildlife resource management and protection.**