

# Loon Committee Report

By Amy March

The annual Audubon Loon Count was held on July 17. On Sand Pond, Judy Coleman reported two pairs of loons but no chicks. There was a great deal of cooing (associated with mating) in the south end of the pond, but no observable nest-building. In the north end, Milo Robinson observed an abandoned nest and egg.

On Hancock Pond, Joanne Webb, Gayle Dangers-Meusel, Mary Stitzell, and Melissa Nairn each took responsibility for one of four sections. They counted six adults and one chick. The loons nested on the small island near the Dugway. Dana Belisle reported seeing an abandoned egg left on the nest.

## A Loon Raft for Sand Pond

The Loon Committee is participating in the Loon Restoration Project, a partnership Between the Lakes Environmental Association (LEA), Maine Audubon, Maine Lakes, and the Penobscot Indian Nation. It is a five-year program to increase loon nesting success and decrease loon mortality. The program is funded by the state, with money from a court settlement as the result of an oil spill in Buzzards Bay off Massachusetts in 2003. The loons wintering in the Bay were badly affected and their population has not rebounded to pre-spill levels.

Maggie Welch, who is overseeing the program for the LEA, says that the project's first goal is to consider placing loon nesting platforms on lakes in our area where there have been few successful chicks in recent years.

After discussions with Maggie, the Loon Committee has decided to build and deploy a modular loon raft at the north end of Sand Pond this spring. We will place it near the site of the failed nest last year. A loon pair built a nest in the reeds, laid an egg and abandoned it. When Milo Robinson inspected it, the nest was flooded - probably due to heavy spring rain.

Judy Coleman, who carefully watches the loons at the southern end of Sand Pond, has noted that although the loon pair there had surviving chicks for several years, they have not successfully nested for the last two years.

The LEA is providing supplies, and David Rogers, Ben Peierls, and I assisted in assembling the raft. We will deploy it with LEA assistance right after ice-out.

There will be opportunities for volunteers to engage in weekly monitoring on both ponds throughout the spring, summer, and early fall. If you are interested in participating, email Amy March at [amymarch852@gmail.com](mailto:amymarch852@gmail.com).

We can consider deploying the old raft on Hancock again. I will leave that decision to the folks on Hancock. My suggestion would be that we don't deploy it again since it has not been successful. It has been home to turtles, and last year the folks that took it out found it very waterlogged. Instead, we could spend this summer doing more careful observations under the leadership of the LEA and plan to place a new raft on Hancock next summer with LEA assistance.

Special thanks to all those wonderful people who have put up signs, repaired and placed the loon raft, and watched out for the loons! Protecting them from all the problems humans create is a team effort!

HSPA members and anyone else interested in loons are invited to join the Committee or the email list to receive updates. Email Amy March at [amymarch852@gmail.com](mailto:amymarch852@gmail.com).