

***First 2014 Report***



**To: BLIA Board & Membership**

**From: Jon Wefald**

**Subject: 2014 Spring & Early Summer Loon Report**

As a designated Loon Watcher for Bay Lake, I have been out to survey the number of loons so far. On June 9, Ruth Ann and I saw 9 loons. On June 17, we saw 10 loons. Last year, for example, on June 13, we saw 13 loons. Then, by the middle of July, 2013, we had seen 25 loons. Hopefully, after the chicks are hatched, I will see 25 loons or so by the middle of July.

I was concerned about the smaller number of loons that I have seen in two different trips in June. Meanwhile, I was talking to a former Minnesota PCA Director under Governor Wendell Anderson in the 1970's, Peter Gove. Peter told me about an AP article that appeared in many Wisconsin and Minnesota papers in the second week of June.

The quotes are from a Michael Meyer, a Wisconsin DNR employee and a specialist on the loons. He and his colleagues noticed in a survey of loon nests in two Northern Wisconsin counties that the loons had fewer chicks by quite a margin this spring. These scientists determined that the black fly population this year was at an all-time high this spring because of the cold, snowy, late winter. They indicated that the ice melted quickly and that soon thereafter the temperatures soared to the mid-80's.

The result: a plethora of black flies this spring--swarming at the loons and forcing them off their nests and into the water to get rid of the black flies pestering them to death. Moreover, they wrote that black flies are especially attracted to the smells, etc. of the loons. The black flies caused the loons to depart their nests more often than usual--which means that the loon's eggs were not hatched in the same numbers as last year.

Thus, by checking the nests of 150 loons in Vilas County, Wisconsin, Michael Meyer and his colleagues believe that there would be a 30% drop-off of loons chicks born this spring. They believe that this trend will basically hold for northern Wisconsin and northern Minnesota for loon chicks this year.

Because of my lower count this June and the article on the decline in the chick population by 30%, I called Kevin Woizeschke, the Loon specialist for the Minnesota DNR in Brainerd. Thankfully, he was cautiously optimistic that the Minnesota state-wide number for the loons in Minnesota IS REMAINING STEADY AT ABOUT 12,000 LOONS. For the 48 states, Minnesota has about half of the 24,000 loons in America. When you stop to consider that there are close to 1 million geese in Minnesota and several million ducks, you can understand just how precious and important our LOON POPULATION OF 12,000 LOONS IS FOR ALL OF US AT BAY LAKE AND FOR OUR FRIENDS ON OTHER MINNESOTA LAKES.

I am ending this email on this positive note. Loons have been on our planet for 10 million years and we all hope they will be here forever.

Your Bay Lake friend and colleague,

Jon Wefald



**To: BLIA Board & Membership**

**From: Jon Wefald**

***Second 2014 Report***

On June 25, 2014, I emailed you and the Board an update on the number of loons on Bay Lake in the early summer of 2014. I indicated that Ruth Ann and I had seen 10 loons in the third week of June. David Devins emailed me that he had seen sometime in June about 10 pairs of loons. In my mind, I think that at least 10 loons or more were sitting on their nests at the time David saw the 10 pairs. Thus, it sounds like Bay Lake has just about the same number of loons in 2014 that we have had for a number of years.

You will remember that I talked about the huge number of black flies plaguing all birds in Minnesota. But, several DNR loon specialists in northern Wisconsin and northern Minnesota have concluded that the black flies have been so aggressive this spring that they drove off many of the adult loons from their respective nests to escape into the water. This problem of the black flies has been so wide and deep this year that DNR loon specialists in both Wisconsin and Minnesota believe that the loon chick birth count for the two states will be down 30 per cent this year.

Today, Wednesday, July 9, 2014, a MINNEAPOLIS TRIBUNE WRITER, Jim Williams, details the consequences of the black flies on the loons. Williams writes: "Black fly numbers are amazing this year. Fly larvae were found 130 per square inch on debris in flowing water. Researchers estimated 1 billion hatchings per day per kilometer of suitable river in season."

Again, the estimate of the decline in new loon chicks this year might be 30% fewer than normal. At the annual BLIA meeting this past Saturday

WITH THAT IN MIND, COULD ANY OF YOU EMAIL ME WHEN AND WHERE YOU SAW LOONS CHICKS ON BAY LAKE SO FAR THIS YEAR? That might give me and us some idea of the number of loon chicks that have hatched so far this year?

Thanks so much for your support of Bay Lake and everything it stands for--including our beloved loons!

Your fellow Bay Laker,

Jon Wefald [jmwefald@ksu.edu](mailto:jmwefald@ksu.edu)

### *Third 2014 Report*



**To: BLIA Board & Membership**

**From: Jon Wefald**

I hesitated to write still another email on the number of loons on Bay Lake in 2014.

But Ruth Ann and I were out on Bay Lake last night between 7:00 p.m. and 9:00 p.m. The trip was all good news. You will remember in my email yesterday where I quoted David Devins that he had spotted on one of his trips around Bay Lake about 20 adult loons.

In my last email, I had only seen 9 or 10 loons in three or four trips around the lake. Well, last night, we counted 21 adult loons and 1 chick. Knowing that you never see all of the loons on any one trip and knowing that some loons were either out of sight or still sitting on a nest somewhere, I can safely say that Bay Lake has well over 30 loons in July of 2014.

I did ask yesterday if any members of the BLIA had seen any loon chicks in June or early July and to email me how many they saw and where they saw them.

Meanwhile, I have received 2 emails from Bay Lakers. Doug and Jean Johnson reported that they recently spotted 2 adult loons and two chicks between Johnson Point and Eaglewood.

Marcus Johnson, who was recently sitting on a Malkerson Island dock facing Ruttgers with his fiancée and her sister, recently saw 2 adult loons watching over a large number of loon chicks. This could mean that on Bay Lake at least that the number of chicks might be quite stable--which is good news.

Thanks for sharing your stories of seeing loons on Bay Lake,

All the best,

Jon Wefald

*Pictures by Wayne Kohnen*