



Out on a limb on East Andover's Emery Pond in late August was this Great Blue Heron, seen here admiring itself in its reflection. According to the Audubon Society's Guide to North American Birds, "Widespread and familiar (though often called 'crane'), the largest heron in North America. Often seen standing silently along inland rivers or lakeshores, or flying high overhead, with slow wingbeats, its head hunched back onto its shoulders." Caption and photo: Larry Chase

Highland Lake Loon Chicks Continue to Grow and Thrive

Flying lessons begin for flight to the coast

Donna Baker-Hartwell
Loon Preservation Committee Volunteer

As of September 13 our loon chicks are 78 days old. They look almost as big as their parents.

It has been a successful year for our loon family. I have been keeping a record of the nestings on Highland Lake since the year 2000. Over the past 22 years, we have had 15 chicks that survived until their maiden autumn flight to the coast.

I asked John Cooley Jr., Senior Biologist at the Loon Preservation Committee, how Highland Lake compares to New Hampshire's average as far as successful chick production. He replied, "We use pairs, nests, chicks, and chick survival to mid-August as the basic parameters, with the focus on hatching success (chicks hatched per nesting pair) and overall chicks surviving per pair (your offspring success)."

"For the long term (1975-2021), about two-thirds of territorial pairs nest each year (67%); each nesting pair hatches about one chick (0.98); about 3

out of 4 chicks survive to mid-August (77%). So, overall the long-term average is about one half a chick per pair per year (0.51 chicks surviving /territorial pair). Or, since a half a chick sounds odd, about one chick every two years.

"From the year 2000, there's been a pair at Highland every year; a nesting pair in all but four years; and 15 chicks fledged (or surviving to mid-August) over those years. This would give an average of 0.65 chicks surviving per



Loon Preservation Committee biologists banded the female adult loon and one of the chicks born this summer. This will help to track their travel habits, pairing, life span, and other statistics.

Photo: Donna Baker-Hartwell

territorial pair for that pair.

"The statewide average since 2000 has been 0.51 cs/tp (same value as the long-term since 1975), so Highland has been in the enviable subset of relatively productive lakes. These are the ones that sustain the population, really, balancing lower productivity on lakes with less experienced or less lucky loons, or where the habitat is more marginal. So Highland Lake's chick production is above the state average!"

This summer, the Loon Preservation Committee biologists banded our female adult and the larger of the two chicks.

John explains the band color and sequence: "The adult female loon banded on Highland Lake this summer was given a blue band with a white See Loons on page 20



On Highland Lake in East Andover, a loon adult is seen feeding its two chicks.

Photo: Donna Baker-Hartwell



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