



Leigh Webb (l), State Representative from Franklin and president of the Franklin Historical Society, chats with Franklin Mayor Ken Merrifield (r) and Bob Ward, President of FNRT, while Pacey and Sapphira Hosmer stretch the ceremonial ribbon and the crowd waits for it to be cut. Photo: Lindy Heim

## Community Celebrates New Rail Trail To Webster Lake

By Lindy Heim

### Friends of the Northern Rail Trail

About 40 people attended the Trail Extension Celebration in Franklin hosted by the Friends of the Northern Rail Trail in Merrimack County (FNRT) on Saturday morning, September 12 at Lagace Beach, Webster Lake, in Franklin. Folks came from as far away as the Massachusetts seacoast! At least one attendee biked the length of the trail and back.

Lagace Beach was teaming with information. HEAL-New Hampshire, Choose Franklin, Franklin Single Stream Recycling, S&W Sports of Concord, FNRT, and the Webster Lake Association passed out information and giveaways to the soggy but enthusiastic crowd. Politicians schmoozed and helped celebrate some of the wonderful things going on in Franklin these days, including the arrival of the Northern

Rail Trail to their town.

State Representatives David Palfrey and Leigh Webb, also of the Franklin Historical Society, were on hand as were City Councilmen Annette Andreozzi and Bob Sharon. City Manager Elizabeth Corrow also came to celebrate.

Soon, all crossed Route 11 to meet at the new Chance Pond Road trailhead of the Northern Rail Trail. Mayor Ken Merrifield shared the podium with FNRT President Bob Ward at the ribbon cutting, each sharing a few words of appreciation for the job well done.

Finally, the hardy group headed up the trail for a walk with leader Mike Loomis of the Healthy Eating and Living Alliance and FNRT board member, author, and railroad history buff Charles Martin pointing out the highlights of the trail and its history.

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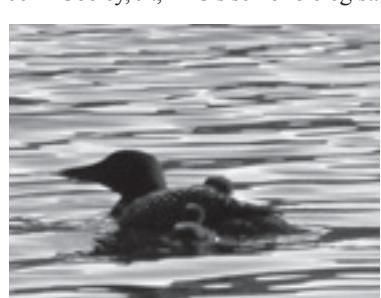
## Andover's Loons Are Sending Mixed Messages

By Larry Chase

### For the Beacon

Andover's Bradley Lake ranks among the top 25 per cent of New Hampshire "loon territories" according to statistics collected over the past 15 years by the Loon Preservation Committee (LPC) in Moultonborough. A loon territory is a body of water that regularly attracts a pair of nesting loons. Rankings are determined by the frequency of nesting pairs and the successful production of chicks.

"The LPC has documented a territorial pair of loons on Bradley Lake in 14 of the past 15 years," according to John Cooley, Jr., LPC's senior biologist.



A loon and chicks on Bradley Lake in 2008. Photo: Larry Chase

Cooley suggests several possible reasons for the difference in chick productivity between Bradley and Highland



An abandoned loon nest on Bradley Lake (2006). Photo: Larry Chase

Lakes. Cooley notes that Bradley Lake is more remote, has more restrictions on swimming and fishing (it's a public water supply), and has more islands (on which loons prefer to nest).

"We'd love to see the Highland Lake figures increase," Cooley says, "especially since historically it's been well known for its loon visitors." The other major bodies of water in Andover – Hopkins (or Adder) Pond, Elbow Pond, and Horseshoe Pond – are likely too small to regularly attract a breeding loon pair, Cooley says.

The LPC gathers loon census data by deploying not only field biologists, but also volunteer observers, sometimes called Loon Rangers. Current volunteers on Bradley Lake are Mary Dowse and Dorothy Skeels. On Highland Lake, the Baker family, including Frank, his daughter Donna and grandson Sterling are LPC volunteers. Additional volunteers are always welcome, according to Cooley.

### Environmental Barometers

"Loons are biomonitoring, meaning that their presence is an indicator of the quality of a lake and its watershed," Cooley says. He cites the LPC Web site ([www.loon.org](http://www.loon.org)) which explains that Loons feed at the top of aquatic food webs, and are at risk from contaminants that enter the food web and bioaccumulate (increase in concentrations in long-lived organisms over time) and biomagnify (increase in concentrations in animals that feed higher in the food web, e.g. fish, loons and humans). A healthy and stable population of loons with good reproductive success indicates a healthy, functioning ecosystem.

Across the state, statistics are sending a mixed message as well: The number of nesting pairs is up this year compared with 2008 (approximately 180 vs. 160 in 2008) but the number of fledged chicks showed a smaller increase (approximately 108 vs. 97 in 2008).

According to Cooley, "Lots of rainfall this year caused many flooded nests, and continues a spate of rainy nest seasons, with a high number of flooded nests in four of the last five years. A long-term increase in the frequency of intense storms is predicted for New Hampshire's future climate, and more flooded loon nests may be one consequence."

### Loon behavior

Seasonal visitors to New Hampshire's lakes, loons arrive in the spring and leave in late fall to spend the winter in the Atlantic Ocean off the New England coast. In small lakes like Bradley and Highland, a single pair – often the same pair year after year – will build a nest and attempt to drive out any intruders. If conditions are right – an absence

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