

Loon Watch Report – Fall 2019

The focus of this report is primarily regarding loon activity observed on Hughes Lake, however, other sightings on Little Hughes and Farm Lake reported by GORA members are also included.

Fall is coming to a close with the colder temperatures already upon us. Autumn leaves cover the ground signaling the onset of the winter months ahead. As confirmation of these changes, the skies no longer come alive with calls from Canada geese crossing in their V formations. The two resident loons on Hughes Lake are now nowhere to be seen. It would appear that one lone loon remained until late October, as was also the case last year in 2018. With the departure of the loons, sea gulls now appear more frequently and an otter has been sighted poking its head up through the icy waters on more than one occasion.

There were no loon hatchlings on Hughes Lake this summer, nor were there any reported on Farm Lake. A drop in the number of offspring has been seen in the past three years of this watch on Hughes Lake, when in 2017 there were two offspring, in 2018 there was one and this year there were none at all. It remains to be seen whether nests were built too close to the waters' edge or whether perhaps predators may have a role to play in the dwindling numbers of offspring we are seeing. There are currently no detailed reports to indicate how the loons might have fared on our other lakes.

Other species seen on and around the lake include the great blue heron which was frequently sited on Hughes Lake. It was seen along the shores throughout the summer and late into the fall. In quieter moments, the heron was seen perched on docks and along the shores in front of properties during the week when most cottagers were away. Several common merganser babies and one adult were reported as having been seen by a Hughes Lake GORA member. It is always such a delight to watch them as they race across the water. Turtles were observed from time to time on all of the above-noted lakes. As always, the white-tailed deer were seen in large numbers. Red-headed woodpeckers, robins, cardinals, blue jays, warblers and sea gulls were also frequently observed in the woods and around the water. However, there were no exceptional sightings as was the case last summer when a double-crested cormorant was seen on Hughes Lake in late August 2018.

It was on a chilly November 4th that all but a single otter was again seen cavorting in the quiet waters of Hughes Lake. Clearly another summer cottage season has come to a close. Here's hoping that 2020 will bring with it more reports of a thriving environment, despite the ever present global climatic challenges. Special thanks go out to my cottage neighbors who have so kindly shared their nature sightings with me. Together we can observe and better monitor wildlife in and around our village, Otter Lake.

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