



A Place Near The Water

Ice-out started today, May 11. Ice still covers most of the lake but the loons are here. The males are staking out their territory with their signature cry – all night long. It's spring and it's time to get moving.

We had to hunt for lake access to launch the work boat and ended up at the golf course. The ice was dark, but still a foot or more thick and the boat landings were not open. On the edge of the ice field, thick, heavy shell ice kept the boat speed slow. We were the first boat on Plum in 2014 and we were in a hurry. Ice-out this late in the year gets everyone's undies in a bundle, including the loons. The new loon platforms had to get in the lake. The piers had to wait. The loons would not wait. By May 15, all three Plum Lake male loons had chosen a nest.



It is now May 25th. I am quietly rowing the sport canoe toward the West Plum loon platform, sneaking up on the loon on the nest. This is not Navy Seal stuff – this is like sneaking up on a rock. I am not exactly impressed with my stealth and I know the loon isn't either. She lowers her head and goes prone. I pretend I don't see her (I don't know why I do this but it makes me feel stealthier). I quickly take some telephoto pics and move on. The goal, and DNR's request, was to get our midlake pair in a safe place for their nest. Last year's nest and the two eggs were abandoned by these two, probably disturbed by

too much human traffic. We gave them a choice of locations – a platform in the NE corner of East Bay behind the rock bars and another on West Plum.

As we both fished - me for pike and the loons for minnows - the pair met at midlake to preen, have a snack and catch up on current events. I resumed my sneaky creeping up on them (which I am sure amused them) and got a look at some leg bands. I saw red on the right leg of one and green on the left of the other. Couldn't see the other bands – each bird has two on each leg – but those colors match my notes for the mid-lake/Star Creek pair.

As I paddled off, a loon popped back up on the platform, adjusted the eggs with her beak and settled in for a nap. Plum Lake has three nesting pairs again.

AJR



SHORT CASTS

- A single loon has been frequenting mid lake, not associated with our three nesting pairs...Perhaps he will meet someone...We will be moving the unused platform this summer to a better spot.
- CBCW interns are again on the statehouse point landing as well as landings on all of the primary lakes in our township, thanks to the State grant program. We received the largest grant in the state last year and the same amount this year. Stop by the landing and thank the intern when you get a chance. A special thanks to Ted Ritter, the Vilas County invasive coordinator, for his irreplaceable work on our behalf.
- We will be working on a new program for woody debris in the lake this year, one each resident can get involved in on their shoreline. We will discuss this at the annual meeting in July.
- DNR responded to our request and will be constructing a bilge dumping area on the boat landing at Star Lake to help prevent transportation of spiny water flea.
- Do your part and pay a visit to your neighbors on Plum—encourage them to join our association. Its very important and you are the best messenger ! I will also be happy to contact anyone to explain the associations work if you will give me a name and phone number and can deliver copies of our brochure for your use as well.
- My thanks to the loon platform team who helped me get these in the water. Jim Schnettler furnished the pads and the pvc frames. They were perfect. When I got them put together, Chris Wise helped me load and provided ballast in the bow as we towed one across the lake—he was dressed like a kid in a stiff 1950 snowsuit (it WAS cold...I don't remember seeing him move)..and Jim Thomas who pulled the West Plum platform into its magic spot—claimed within 48 hours by the Star Creek male.

