

Bruce,

We have some exciting news to report: a pair of loons has chosen to nest and lay eggs on the island that we deployed on Fire Lake!!! I live on Fire Lake and checked the FII island on the evening of Monday, May 30 and observed a loon in the vicinity of the island. No bird was on the island, but when I approached (via kayak), I observed two loon eggs in the nest. The island is in an excellent setting for viewing from shore as it is about 60 feet offshore and the riparian area is a fairly steep wooded hill that offers a "bird's eye" view and relatively good concealment. Given this advantage, I returned to the island yesterday morning at about 0730 hours hoping to photograph the loon(s). The sun was already over the horizon and hitting the island. No loon was observed.

This morning my son, Evan, and I returned with video camera (me) and high quality digital camera (Evan). This time we came early enough so that it was cool (mid 40s) and the sun was not shining on the nest. To our delight, one of the loons was incubating the eggs and allowed us to take a number of images and several minutes of video over the course of about 60 minutes. We were able to approach to less than 100 feet. I've attached some images (with the quality reduced for easier email conveyance). We have some excellent quality images and with care (I don't want to disturb the nest) can obtain some more. I also have some good video of the bird and its mate. As the sun came over the hill and hit the nest the loon slid off into the water (perhaps the sun keeps the eggs warm enough for the bird to feed).

I really can't overstate our excitement. No loons have ever been known to nest on Fire Lake. We see loons on the lake every year. The lake offers excellent habitat, EXCEPT for the absence of a suitable nesting island. Your island was apparently "suitable."

Three images are attached for your review. Dave Tiller examined the images and points out that in constructing the nest, the female loon pulled much of the organic material that Dave introduced during deployment into the middle of the island to form a raised nest. This is why the edges of the island look so barren of material. This was one of the thinner islands. We will plan to check the three other islands in the next few days. The one at Bannan lake is being monitored by the landowner and is not being used as a pair of loons were already nesting on a natural floating island. Next spring will provide an interesting test of their preference.

We will keep you posted on our observations of the nest and will provide information regarding the SCUBA-PHOTO field trip soon.

-Dean

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