

RED-NECKED GREBE

Podiceps grisegenaLocation: Grove at the northwest edge of Lake Henry; Ordway; Crowley County, ColoradoDate: May 8, 13, 14 and 16, 1994

This bird was discovered by someone else.

Setting:

I first heard about this bird from Brandon Percival and Van Truan, who had seen it on May 6 or 7 during their spring big day. I pretty easily found the bird on four consecutive visits to Lake Henry in early May. It swam in the open water on the west side of the lake, between shore and the floating mat of vegetation off shore. I was able to observe the bird as close as 50 yards away in my B & L 10 x 42 binoculars and my scope (Kowa 20-60 X) in a variety of lighting conditions.

Description:

This bird actively dove, feeding underwater.

This grebe was either in dull breeding plumage or was in winter plumage, molting into breeding plumage. Overall the bird was about 18" long, almost the size of a Clark's Grebe. The head, bill and body size were roughly comparable to Aechmophorus grebes but the neck was much shorter, and perhaps slightly stouter. The head was a different shape than the Clark's Grebes too, being sleeker, with a less angled forehead. The bird showed a slightly crested look to the sides of the crown when viewed from the front or back. The bird had a dark brown or blackish forehead, crown, nape, back of neck and upperparts. The flanks and underside were off-white. There was a broad, white "cheek" patch, extending from the bill, past and below the eye, back onto the face and down to the chin. The cheek patch and back of neck were bordered by a dull greyish to orangish-brown foreneck. The bill was distinctive: long and somewhat spear-like; rather stout, slightly droopy and distinctly yellowish at the base and dark at the tip. The bill was stouter and slightly shorter than the Clark's Grebe bill. I saw the bird flap a couple of times and there was an obvious white patch on the secondaries.

Similar Species:

Ducks are ruled out by the spear-like (not spatulate bill). Mergansers lack the white cheek patch and reddish foreneck. Loons are larger, longer and lower and lack the distinctive face pattern. Horned and Eared grebes are distinctly smaller (not approximately the size of a Clark's Grebe) and lack the combination of white cheek, reddish foreneck and yellow base to the bill. The Aechmophorus grebes were in direct comparison, and were much longer-necked, longer and thinner-billed, and lacked the reddish foreneck.

Experience with Species:

I have seen all species of grebes and loons in Colorado and have extensive experience with Red-necked Grebes in other states (e.g. Washington and California).

This report is prepared from notes made during and after observation.

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