

COLORADO RARE BIRD REPORT

Accepted 7-0

RED-NECKED GREBE
Podiceps grisegenaLocation: Lake Cheraw; Cheraw; Otero County, ColoradoDate: May 26, 1996

This bird was discovered by someone else.

Background:

I first heard about this bird on the Colorado Bird Alert telephone hot line. I was birding with Brandon Percival when we observed it. We saw it in the early afternoon, and watched it for about 15 minutes, off and on, in good light at about 200-400 yards. I was able to observe the bird with my B & L 10 x 42 binoculars and my scope (Kowa 20-60X).

Description:

This bird was not very active; mainly swimming quietly with a variety of other waterfowl, including Aechmophorus grebes. It was an adult in breeding plumage. Overall the bird was approximately 18" long, almost as large as a Clark's or Western Grebe. The head, bill and body size were roughly comparable to Aechmophorus grebes but the neck was much shorter, and perhaps slightly more stout -- recalling a cross between a Horned Grebe and Aechmophorus grebe in shape. The head was a different shape than the larger grebes too, being lower and longer 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 waterline were dull white. There was a large white cheek patch, extending straight back from the bill, below the eye, back onto the face and down to the throat. The white cheek patch was bordered at the bottom by an orangish foreneck. The bill was long and pointed, rather stout and barely drooped. It was lighter, yellowish at the base and dark at the tip. The bill was thicker and a little shorter than the Clark's Grebe bill.

Similar Species:

Ducks are ruled out by their 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 memory.

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Mark Janos

COLORADO FIELD ORNITHOLOGISTS - SIGHT RECORD FORM

NEW STATE RECORD UNUSUAL RECORD X*recd 9-5-97 ✓***Species:** Red-necked Grebe (*Podiceps grisegina*)**Date:** 17 May 1996**Number seen:** one**Sex:** unknown**Plumage:** alternate**Locality:** Cheraw Lake**Elevation:** 4130' ?**Nearest town:** Cheraw**County:** Otero**Time observed:** about 7:30 PM MDT**Duration of observation:** about 4 minutes

Description: While scanning Cheraw Lake on a Big Day, I found a single alternate-plumaged Red-necked Grebe. I yelled out to my partners (Richard and Scott) and they looked through my scope at the bird. As we were running out of daylight, we quickly looked at the bird, scanned the lake for other species then moved on.

The bird was a large grebe with a black crown, white cheek patch, yellowish bill, blackish hindneck, reddish foreneck, and dark back. The white cheek patch wrapped around under the chin and separated the reddish foreneck from the bill. The bird was by itself, so there were no birds for direct comparison of size, however, there were waterfowl on the lake within a couple hundred yards of the bird. The closest bird was a female Canvasback that was roughly the same size.

Similar species eliminated: All the small grebe species (Pied-billed, Horned, and Eared) are eliminated or size, facial pattern, and bill size, shape, and color. Western and Clark's Grebes are eliminated by bill size and color and face and neck pattern. Plumage color and pattern also rules out all waterfowl.

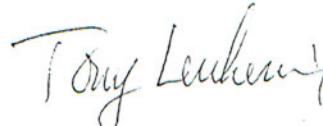
What is your prior experience with this and similarly-appearing species? I am exceedingly familiar with Red-necked Grebe as I have seen in excess of 20,000 of them, mostly at Whitefish Point, MI. I have seen in excess of 2000 alternate-plumaged Red-necked Grebes. I have seen 100s of Clark's Grebes and 1000s of all other Colorado species of grebes.

Light conditions: sun behind us**Optical equipment used:** 7x42 Zeiss and 30x Kowa**Distance, and how estimated:** estimated distance of about 225 yards**Other observers who saw the bird with you:** Richard Bunn and Scott Hutchings**Other observers who saw the bird independently:** many saw it for the following week**If photographed, type of equipment and film:** (How is this relevant?) N/A

List books, illustrations, recordings, other birders, etc. consulted and how this influenced your identification:

a) at time of observation: none b) after observation: none

Reporting observer: Tony Leukering

Signature: 

Address: Colorado Bird Observatory, 13401 Piccadilly Road, Brighton, CO 80601

Date report was written: 20 May 1996 from memory