

Louisiana Ornithological Society's

LOUISIANA BIRD RECORDS COMMITTEE

Report Form

This form is intended as a convenience in reporting observations of species on the Louisiana Bird Records Committee (LBRC) Review List. The LBRC recommends the use of this form or a similar format when submitting records for review (to assure that all pertinent information is accounted for). Attach additional pages as necessary. Please print or type. Attach xerox of field notes, drawings, photographs, or tape recordings, if available. Include all photos for more obscurely marked species. When completed, mail to Secretary, Louisiana Bird Records Committee, c/o Museum of Natural Science, 119 Foster Hall, Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge, LA 70803-3216.

1. English and Scientific names: *Western Grebe*, *Aechmophorus occidentalis*
2. Number of individuals, sexes, ages, general plumage (e.g., 2 in alternate plumage): 3, age and sex could not be determined
3. Locality: LOUISIANA: St. Bernard
(parish)
marsh beside Crescent Acres Dump
(specific locality)
4. Date(s) when observed: 23 December 1995
5. Time(s) of day when observed: 11:00 a.m.
6. Reporting observer and address: Jennifer O. Coulson
2134 Mehle Ave.
Arabi, LA 70032
7. Other observers accompanying reporter who also identified the bird(s): Thomas D. Coulson
8. Other observers who independently identified the bird(s):
Ø
9. Light conditions (position of bird in relation to shade and to direction and amount of light): excellent lighting, sun shining on side of birds facing observers; sun behind to overhead for observers
10. Optical equipment (type, power, condition):
- Nikon Travelite II binoculars, 10x good condition
11. Distance to bird(s): 60 yards
- Selsi 20x scope (hand held -- did not bring tripod)
12. Duration of observation: 10 minutes
13. Habitat: open shallow water in salt marsh

14. Behavior of bird / circumstances of observation (flying, feeding, resting; include and stress habits used in identification; relate events surrounding observation):
3 birds swimming close together with necks extended upward

15. Description (include only what was actually seen, not what "should" have been seen; include if possible: total length/relative size compared to other familiar species, body bulk, shape, proportions, bill, eye, leg, and plumage characteristics. Stress features that separate it from similar species):
fairly dramatic charcoal black dorsal plumage and white ventral plumage; ^{top} rest of head appeared dark while chin, ~~throat~~ throat, and a little of the cheek region were white -- neck very long and upright
these 3 birds were much larger than a nearby pied-billed grebe
(eye color was not determined; beak was yellow)

16. Voice: none audible

17. Similar species (include how they were eliminated by your observation):
a pied-billed grebe was approximately 10 m from the 3 western grebes; long neck and large size clearly distinguished it from photographs or tape recordings obtained? (by whom? attached?): the red-necked grebe. Not positive that beak was yellow - have been Clark's grebe but black clearly extended head below the eye

18. Photographs or tape recordings obtained? (by whom? attached?): none

19. Previous experience with this species:
have seen while landing out west

20. Identification aids: (list books, illustrations, other birds, etc. used in identification):
a. at time of observation:
b. after observation:
Field Guide to the Birds of N.A., Nat'l Geographic Soc.

21. This description is written from: notes made during the observation (date: 12/23/95) notes attached? ☒ notes made after the observation (date: 12/23/95) memory.

22. Are you positive of your identification if not, explain:
yes, no doubt in my mind

23. Signature of reporter: Jennifer O'Connell 12/23/95 4:14pm (date) (time)

2134 Mehle Avenue
Arabi, LA 70032
(504) 279-8549

January 1, 1996

Glenn Ousset
3005 Charles Drive
Chalmette, LA 70043

Dear Glenn,

This letter documents our recent (12/30/95) telephone conversation concerning the three western grebes Tom and I saw during the Christmas Bird Count and the horned grebes we saw at almost the same location six days later. Observations were made on the east side of the B.F.I. Crescent Acres Landfill in the late morning to 12:00 noon.

On Saturday, December 23, 1995 TDC and I observed three western grebes. The only other species of grebe we saw was the pied-billed grebe.

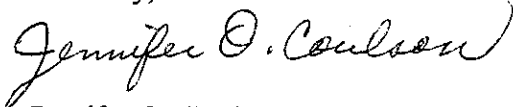
On Friday, December 29, 1995 TDC and I revisited the landfill and could not find the western grebes. We did observe two horned grebes (they were approximately 250 yards from where we sighted the western grebes) and many pied-billed grebes.

I omitted horned grebes from my description of the western grebes because I did not consider them to be similar enough that anyone would doubt our identification. The horned grebe is roughly one-half the size of a western grebe. In fact, the horned grebe is approximately the size of the pied-billed grebe although the horned has a thicker neck and a larger head. As I stated in my account of the western grebes, a pied-billed grebe fed in the near vicinity of the western grebes, and the pied-billed grebe was noticeably smaller. Horned grebes also have black bills while western grebes have yellow-green bills.

Aside from their large size, the most striking feature I observed, that called to mind "western grebe" instantly, was the long, almost swan-like neck. The birds swam with their necks erect. All three western grebes swam so close together that they sometimes appeared to touch each other as they swam. They swam fast, moved rapidly across the water, and changed directions several times as if they were agitated.

When we observed the horned grebes (on 12/29/95), we first observed them with binoculars and then with the scope on low power (20 X and hand-held), in order to duplicate the conditions under which we observed the western grebes (12/23/95). We are thoroughly convinced that we did see and correctly identify three western grebes on 12/23/95 and that these were not simply the horned grebes we observed on 12/29/95.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jennifer O. Coulson". The signature is fluid and written in dark ink.

Jennifer O. Coulson

