

009-02-1997

SPECIES: Eared Grebe (*Podiceps nigricollis*)  
(full basic plumage)

DATE & TIME: 30 March 1997, 8:00-8:45 a.m. (The bird was still present 3/31)

LOCATION: Lake Arthur, Moraine State Park, Butler County  
(Big Run Cove, on south side of lake)

OBSERVERS: Paul & Deborah Hess, 1412 Hawthorne St.,  
Natrona Heights PA 15065  
(observed later that day by Ed Kwater, then on 3/31  
by Suzanne Butcher, Ruth Crawford & Shirley McCarl)

WEATHER AND LIGHT: Temperature in upper 40s; heavy overcast;  
thin fog (not a factor at our distance)

LENGTH AND DISTANCE OF OBSERVATION: 45 minutes at 50 to 150 yards

OPTICS: 8 x 32 and 12 x 50 binoculars; 20x-30x scope

BIRD'S BEHAVIOR: First seen swimming alone at 100 yards, not congregating with a flock of 12 Horned Grebes in the same cove. After about 20 min. it began to dive every minute or so for about 10 min., approaching us as close as 50 yards. Then we lost track of it until it reappeared about 10 min. later 150 yards away, finally joining the Horned Grebe flock.

DESCRIPTION: Classic field marks separated it immediately and easily from the nearby Horned Grebes:

- \* Overall "daintier" jizz, conspicuously thinner neck, much thinner bill (upturned lower mandible toward the tip was not particularly noticeable on this bird), and crown peaking near the forehead rather than at the rear.
- \* Gray extended from upper head down below the eye and across the cheek, conspicuously different from the white cheek of Horned horizontally divided from the dark crown at eye-level. White on the face was confined to the throat, chin and rear auricular area next to the nape in a shallow U-shape. (See sketch)
- \* Neck was pale dusky gray from the throat down to the upper breast, quite different from the white-necked Horned Grebes.

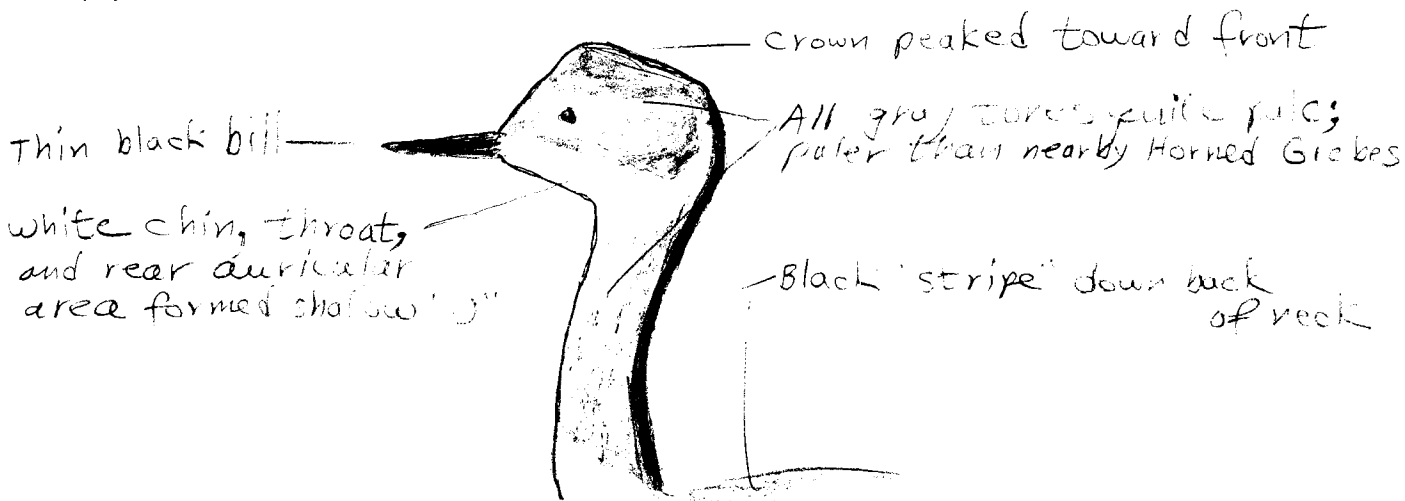
PLUMAGE NOTE: Virtually every text refers to "blackish" gray of basic-plumage Eared Grebe. This bird's only gray that could be called blackish was a narrow strip down the back of the neck. Otherwise all the gray was very washed-out, paler than that of the basic-plumaged Horned Grebes observed in the same lighting conditions -- perhaps indicating extensive wear through the winter. The dusky frontal shade of the neck also had a subtly brownish tint, which Ed Kwater suggests may indicate a first-winter bird.

SEPARATION FROM SIMILAR SPECIES: The above characters readily distinguished it from Horned, a few of which were seen eventually in the same scope frame with this bird. Small overall size and very small bill separated it obviously from Red-necked Grebe.

EXPERIENCE WITH THE SPECIES: Deb and I have seen many Eared Grebes in Colorado, but only in alternate plumage.

EARED GREBE'S STATUS IN SW PENNSYLVANIA: First confirmed record for Butler County and about the eighth record in the southwestern counties. Previous SW Pa. reports, all single birds, were:

- \* April 4, 1976: Lake Arthur, Butler Co. -- ASWP Bull. 40(11):10; (well described but never confirmed for a first SW PA record).
- \* May 16-30, 1990: Yellow Creek State Park, Indiana Co. -- Pa. Birds 4(2):70.
- \* Nov. 25, 1992: Prince Gallitzin S.P., Cambria Co. (A. Beatty & G. Lamer, fide M. Higbee).
- \* April 6, 1994: Trout Run Reservoir, Westmoreland Co. -- Pa. Birds 8(2):104.
- \* April 15, 1994: Acme Dam, Westmoreland Co. -- Pa. Birds 8(2):104.
- \* April 20, 1995: Keystone Reservoir, Armstrong Co. -- Pa. Birds 9(2):87.
- \* April 5, 1996: Jacobs Creek Lake, Fayette Co. -- Pa. Birds 10(2):90.



Description and drawing copied from original field notes and sketch made while scoping the bird.

Paul Hess  
April 1, 1997

*Paul Hess*  
*Debra T Hess*

**Pennsylvania Ornithological Records Committee**

Voting Tabulation - Round # 1 of

Species: Eared Grebe (*Podiceps nigricollis*)

Date of Sighting: 31 March 1997 to 31 March 1997

Location: MORaine STATE PARK

County: BUTLER

Observer(s): Paul Hess

Date of Submission: 1997

Submitted by: Paul Hess

Written Description: YES

Photo: NO

Specimen: NO

Recording: NONE

Member	Class I	Class II	Class III	Class IV	Class V			Abstain
					A	B	C	
F. Haas			X					
P. Schwalbe			X					
K. Parkes			X					
R. Ickes			X					
P. Hess								X
J. McWilliams			X					
T. Floyd			X					
TOTALS			6					1
DECISION			X					

Comments:

Signature (Secretary):

*P. C. Haas*

Date:

4-18-99