

Clark's Grebe  
13 Dec 1997  
Diamond Lake, Poweshiek Co., IA  
\*P/R Allen, \*Proescholdt, \*Overton, \*Kent  
P-0573, P-0578, IBL 68:56, 85

Record Number: 97-50  
Classification: A-P

DOCUMENTATIONS

Pam and Reid Allen, 1601 Pleasant St., West Des Moines 50265  
[\*9/6/98]  
Mark Proescholdt, Box 65, Liscomb 50148  
Michael D. Overton, 1316 S. Duff #93, Ames 50010  
Thomas H. Kent, 211 Richards St., Iowa City 52246  
Phil Walsh, 137 51st St., Des Moines 50312 (rec'd 8 Aug 1998)  
[11/27/98]

PHOTOGRAPHS

Reid Allen (13 Dec), P-0578  
T. H. Kent (14 Dec), P-0573

REFERENCES

Field Reports: IBL 68:56, 68(2) cover  
Records Committee: IBL 68:85

VOTE: 7 A-P

A-P, Orange-yellow bill and white lores clearly visible; eye appears to be mostly within the white area.

A-P, Photo does show orange bill, but location of eye in "black" or "white" is hard to determine.

A-P, Although I feel that this bird may be on the extreme edge for the line of demarcation between black and white, the bill color (considered by many to be the most critical field mark) is definitely on the mark for Clark's. I have been told that the asymmetrical pattern on either side of the face is not unusual for this species but can't find the reference.

A-P, Although the extent of black on the crown and hindneck is ambiguous, the white lores and orange-yellow bill color support Clark's Grebe.

A-P, Although photos show bill with some greenish tints, as mentioned by Overton, this alone is not critical to I.D. Presence of white lores, as on this bird, as well as pale flanks, are strongly supportive of Clark's Grebe.

RE-VOTE (by mail 1998, in response to additional documentation):

5 A-P, 1 A-D, 1 NA

NA, Mr. Walsh's extremely thorough analysis cast a cloud on this record.

A-P, Although the bird displays several intermediate characteristics of Clark's and Western Grebes, as noted in Phil Walsh's documentation, I feel the bird can be safely identified as Clark's. The most important and consistent winter field mark, bill color, is strongly supportive of Clark's. Other features noted by Phil which favor Western, such as cap shape, back color, and hindneck stripe, are much more variable and less reliable indicators.

A-P, Photos show eye definitely out of black on both sides. Bill is yellow.

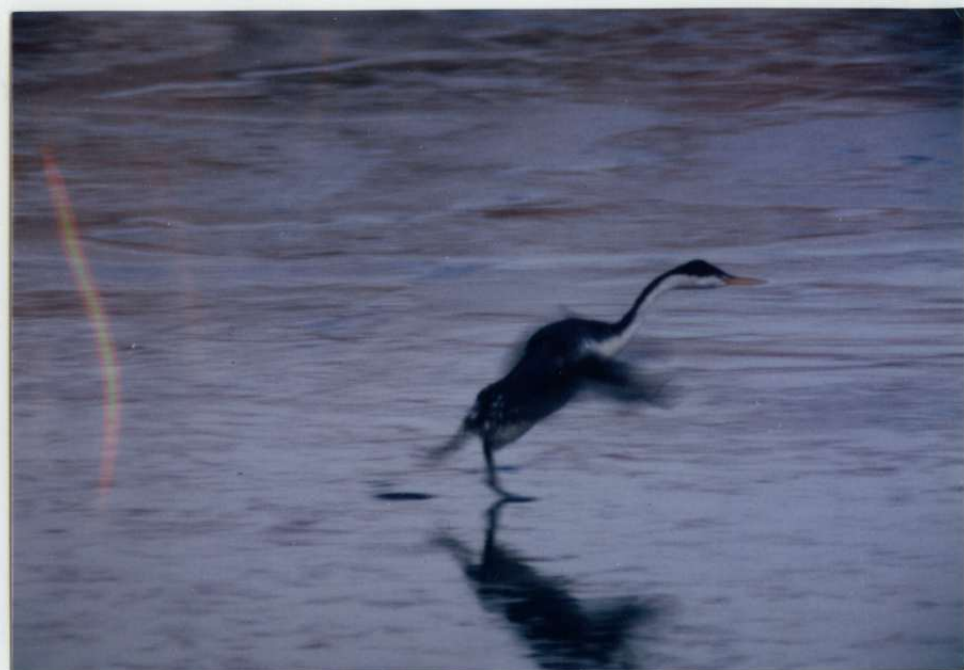
A-D, Conventional wisdom is that bill color is the most reliable character used to separate Clark's and Western Grebes. This particular individual was seen by a number of people in different light and all seem to agree that the bill was bright yellow. Consequently I will stay with an acceptance of this record.

A-P, This bird's cap shape is ambiguous, but outside the breeding season there is variation. I am a little concerned about the thick neck stripe, but that is out weighed by the bill color, lores, flank color, and the paler back visible in the photo.

A-P, I reviewed the photos and a number of articles including the ones mentioned by Walsh. Most consider the bill color alone as diagnostic, and this bird has a yellow-orange bill with thin black culmen that fits Clark's Grebe. Perhaps the second best mark is white lores and white (not gray) behind the eye as this bird shows. The eye is almost completely in the white area on both sides with no gray around the eye. In the photos, I would also favor Clark's based on cap shape, back color, and hindneck stripe. I don't see any features that favor Western. The photos were essential for my analysis--the bird was much more difficult in the field.

A-P, (original vote) I believe the critical points most significant in ID of this species point to Clark's Grebe, although as mentioned by votes on first vote and by Overton in his doc, this is not a classic Clark's. Plumage characters used by Walsh possibly not as diagnostic in Dec as in breeding season.





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P-0578  
Clark's Grebe  
Diamond Lake, Poweshiek Co., IA  
13 Dec 1997 Reid I. Allen

< > 71+00 NNBNN -6AU 0395

P-0578  
Clark's Grebe  
Diamond Lake, Poweshiek Co., IA  
13 Dec 1997 Reid I. Allen



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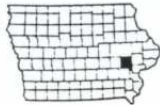
P-0572  
Clark's Grebe  
Diamond L., Mahaska Co., IA  
14 Dec 1997 T. H. Kent



## SUMMER TANAGER WINTERING IN JOHNSON COUNTY

MARY E. NOBLE

On 11 January 1998 a bird appeared at my backyard heated birdbath that I immediately knew was something different, but it would be several weeks before I learned it was a Summer Tanager. This is an urban residential neighborhood; my yard is small with extensive deciduous shrubs, some trees, a brush pile, and several feeders that attract House Finches and House Sparrows in large numbers, but a limited variety of other winter birds. My first impression of this visitor was of a small, thrush-sized bird, with olive back. It disappeared while I was retrieving the camera, but returned intermittently until 6 March. Initially it was attracted only to the water; later it came often to sunflower seed feeders, one of which was attached to my viewing window, so I got close views of its markedly yellow breast and undertail coverts. The back and sides usually appeared to be fairly uniformly olive green or brown, with no wing bars. When seen close to House Finches, it was plainly larger. The bill was thick at the base like finches', but much longer and notched in the side. It had a distinct eye ring, broken front and back, and often showed a flycatcher-like crest. Some weeks and several musings through field guides passed before I finally stopped on the tanager page in the National Geographic guide. My previous experience had been limited to a few views of male Scarlet Tanagers in rural wooded settings, and this generally fluffed-up bird had seemed rounder or chunkier than the field-guide tanagers. I was unsure whether this was a Scarlet or Summer tanager until it perched in the sun with its back toward me and showed such contrast between darker primaries and the back, that I was convinced it must be a Scarlet Tanager and I e-mailed this conclusion to several local birders. I sent several less-than-ideal slides of the bird, taken through my window, to Jim Fuller and he tried to get an in-person look, but the bird didn't appear again for nearly two weeks. When I next saw it on 8 February, I called Jim and Tom Kent and they were both able to see the bird on separate visits the next day. They agreed, and soon convinced me, that the bird was a Summer Tanager.



The following notes from Tom Kent's documentation point out some of the key points in that identification:

"The bird was fairly uniform in color varying from dusky yellow with perhaps a slight greenish tinge to areas with more dark gray brown. The brightest yellow was in the vent area and undertail. The primaries were a dark brown-black, but the wing coverts were dusky yellow brown. There was a faint thin bar on the median coverts and outer aspect of the greater coverts. The head was relatively large and not round as I would expect in a Scarlet Tanager. There was a slight crest on the posterior crown that was not always evident.

- The bill was large, long, and pointed. The lower mandible was flesh colored and the upper mandible was dark. The overall coloration and plainness indicate a female or immature bird. The lack of prominent gray in the auriculars and light bill color argue against Hepatic Tanager. The bill length, head shape, and relative paleness of the wings favor Summer Tanager over Scarlet Tanager. The lack of prominent wing bars appears to exclude Western Tanager. The apparent lack of orange tint suggests a bird from the West or perhaps an immature."

The only other Iowa winter record was a Summer Tanager photographed in Scott County on 2 December 1990. The Iowa City bird showed evidence of an injury in that it would perch at the window feeder on one foot with the other foot, which seemed incapable of gripping, held up against the breast covering a small dark bare spot. Perhaps this might explain its willingness to take up winter residence in this unlikely place?

315 South 7th Avenue, Iowa City, IA 52245

## ✓ CLARK'S GREBE IN POWESHIEK COUNTY AT DIAMOND LAKE PARK

PAM AND REID ALLEN

Early on the afternoon of 13 December 1997 (about 12:15 p.m.), we stopped at Diamond Lake Park in Poweshiek County to look for an Oldsquaw which Mark Proescholdt had seen the day before at this park. Upon arrival, our first words were, "Oh, there's a Western Grebe," as we scanned over the waterfowl present. God only knows what made us take a really good look at this bird, except some "sixth sense" said, "wait a minute--this could be a Clark's Grebe!" This large, long-necked grebe had a long, pointed, bright orangish/yellow bill with a very noticeable black line running along the ridge of the upper mandible. The right eye seemed to be more "in the white" than the left, although both eyes were definitely "in the white." The lores were white as well on both sides of the face. The black cap extended from the top of the bill over the crown and down the nape and along the back of the neck down to the back of the bird. The main body of the bird seemed to be a lighter grayish-black than the back of the neck and the cap/crown, with the flanks showing a much lighter appearance. The bird did not vocalize or fly during the time it was being observed but did dive several times.

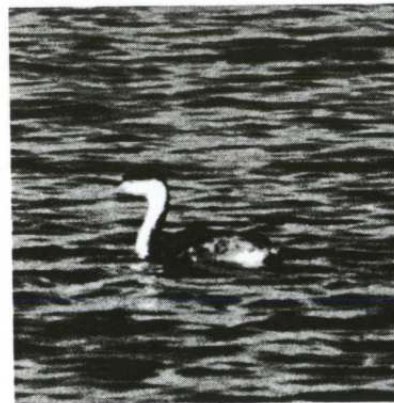
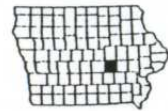


Fig. 1. Clark's Grebe at Diamond Lake. Left: bird on water, 13 Dec 1997; photo by Reid Allen and right: bird taking flight, 14 Dec 1997; photo by Thomas Kent.



✓ We got on the cell phone and called the I.O.U. "hotline" and then Eloise and Eugene Armstrong of Booneville. They came over, along with Mark Proescholdt of Liscomb and Ann Johnson of Norwalk, to see this bird. We all agreed it was a Clark's Grebe, and it was later seen in the day by Mike Overton of Ames and the next day viewed by Tom Kent of Iowa City and others.

This was the seventh record of Clark's Grebe in Iowa and perhaps more will be sighted if birders take an extra moment to look at all the Western Grebes they see.

1601 Pleasant Street, West Des Moines, IA 50265

## RED-NECKED GREBES NEST IN IOWA

STEVE E. FAIRBAIRN

On 17 June 1998, while surveying wetland birds on a 25-acre marsh in the Jemerson Slough Complex in Dickinson County, I saw a Red-necked Grebe preening itself in the middle of the marsh. Later, I saw two grebes in dense emergent cattails within 15 meters of where I saw the first bird. One of the grebes was more brightly colored than the other, with a brighter red neck and whiter cheek. A few minutes later, I found a floating nest of rotting vegetation in a small clump of cattails in 2.5 to 3 feet of water near where I had seen the birds previously. The nest had an outside diameter of 22 inches with a six-inch cup inside that contained four dirty white eggs (Fig. 1), one of which measured 52 by 35 mm.

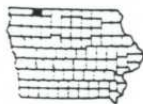


Figure 1. Red-necked Grebe nest at Jemerson Slough complex, Dickinson County, 17 June 1998. Photo by Steve Fairbairn.

After I completed the morning's surveys, I returned to the pond and saw the drabber colored Red-necked Grebe on the nest. Return visits on 20 and 27 June found the same bird on the nest. On 6 July, the less colorful bird was again on the nest, but the more brightly colored grebe was feeding a young that was on the back of the incubating grebe. Forty-five minutes later, the birds switched positions and the brighter bird took over incubation while the other adult started feeding the single young. Twenty minutes later there were two young moving around the nest and on the incubating adult's back. The next morning at 09:30, the brighter adult was on the nest once again, but with three young this time, and one egg still on the nest. Upon

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returning at 15:00, both adults and the three young were in the middle of the marsh and one egg remained on the nest. The next morning the remaining egg was gone, but there were still only three young with the adults. Lee Schoenewe and Doug Harr reported that by 14 July only one young remained with the adults, and no birds were seen on or after 26 July.

This is the first confirmed nesting by Red-necked Grebes in Iowa. While nesting has not previously been verified for this species, in June 1993, a pair was seen building a nest in Emmet County. However, after a storm with strong winds, the birds and nest were gone the next day (*IBL* 63:94). Additionally, late summer records of juveniles in Iowa may indicate that Red-necked Grebes have nested previously in the state (*IBL* 59:8; 61:17). The nearest commonly used nesting areas are in central Minnesota and eastern South Dakota (*Birds in Iowa*, Kent and Dinsmore, 1996).

1627 Kiwi Avenue, Boone, IA 50036

## A SUMMER INVASION OF RED CROSSBILLS

JIM FULLER

It seemed very unusual that the Kansas Rare Bird Alert was reporting Red Crossbills in early July 1996, but on 13-14 July, ten Red Crossbills appeared at a feeder northeast of Iowa City. This was the first indication of a remarkable summer irruption, and during the ensuing six weeks, the Iowa Birdline hosted reports of these birds from 29 locations throughout the state. Subsequently, material submitted with summer field reports identified five additional occurrences. And for this many actual sightings to surface, there must have been a much larger number that were never reported.

Virtually all the reports involved birds visiting feeders, most often those stocked with sunflower and niger thistle, and there were two incidences where birds were observed gleaning the heads of sunflowers ornamentally grown in backyards. Although single birds were reported, most were in small flocks of fewer than ten. There were, however, four groups that ranged from 12-25 birds. It is interesting to note that many of the individual birds were streaked juveniles.

Geographically, birds were reported from every corner of the state, although almost half the sightings were from the northwest and north-central areas. Some birds were seen on only one day, while other flocks persisted at the same location for as long as four weeks. The last report came from Humboldt County on 25 August.

Apparently, the source of the Red Crossbill influx into Iowa, was birds from the southern Rocky Mountains, and was probably due to a failure of the fruit of cone-bearing trees in that area. The irruption seemed to be centered in Iowa, as there were only a scattering of sightings from adjacent states, notably one or two each from Missouri, Illinois, Kansas, and Nebraska. And when the birds left the state, they simply disappeared, as there were no later reports from the Midwest, except for those birds normally found in northern states.

In the northern hemisphere, Red Crossbills are nomads that wander the boreal and montane forests in search of their chief food source, which is the fruit of coniferous trees. They are known to nest in various locations, and at almost any season of the year. Nesting was documented in Des Moines in April 1982 and July, 1986. Small numbers are found in Iowa, usually during the winter months of most winters. They are likely to be seen in cone-bearing trees in cemeteries and parks, and favor the small cones of the Hemlock. Winter irruptions also occur sporadically, when large numbers

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# IOWA BIRD LIFE

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Spring 1998 Volume 68 Number 2



IOWA ORNITHOLOGISTS' UNION



Documentation of Unusual Bird Sighting

97-50

Location: Diamond Lake State Park, Poweshiek County, Iowa

Date: December 14, 1997

Observer: Phil Walsh

Conditions: Clear, sunny, cold; ground mostly snow covered, lake frozen.

Optics: 8x, 42mm binoculars; 25x, 80mm spotting scope

Observations: An aechmophorus grebe. This bird was much smaller than the Canada geese also on the lake. It had a dark cap, a mostly white neck with a dark stripe down the back of the neck, and a dark back. When we first observed the bird it was crouched on the ice approximately 150 yards away; over the next 45 minutes the bird made numerous attempts to take off by running across the ice, and at times it ended up no more than perhaps 30 yards away from us.

The following notes were made at the time: bill is 'field-corn yellow'; eye is red; black cap with straight line through the eye, white lores. Cap, neck, and back color nearly the same dark gray, with cap slightly darker. Some white in the flanks. Hindneck mostly gray. Bill bright yellow. Lower face and cheeks white. Cap shiny black. Lores show clean patch of white, bigger on right side of head.

Additional notes written out later that day, either in the car or after I got home: demarcation between black cap and white face was smudgy, not clean and sharp. Cap extended through the eye and straight across the side of the face to the back of the head, where it curved up slightly. More than 1/3, but less than 1/2 of the head was covered by the cap. Black stripe extending down back of neck was very broad, leaving two very narrow white bands on either side of it when seen from the rear. Top of upper mandible was black--there was clean delineation between black color on top of the mandible and yellow on the side. Lore was larger and whiter on right side of head than on the left. Left lore was light gray, not white.

I also made a sketch in the field, which I used in conjunction with my notes to draw another sketch after I got home. I've enclosed a copy of that second sketch.

Using an article from the October, 1993 issue of Birding entitled "Identification of Western and Clark's Grebes," as well as the chapter on "The Western Grebe Complex" in Kenn Kaufman's Advanced Birding I put together the following table outlining major identification points for the two species, as well as what I observed on the Diamond Lake bird.

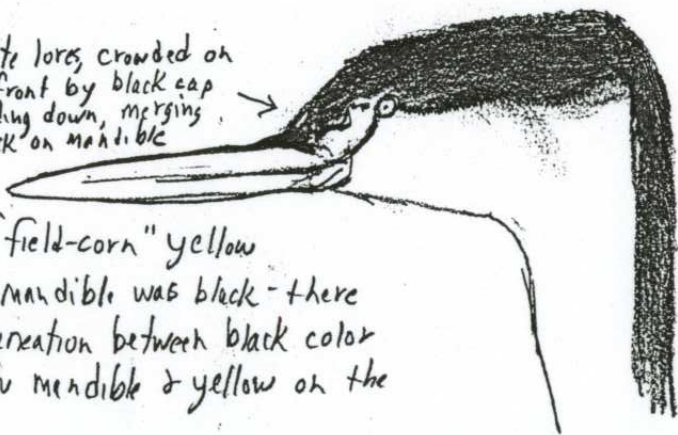
After reviewing the table, my observations lead me to believe this bird was an intermediate individual that cannot safely be called either Clark's or Western.



• lore was larger & whiter on right side of head than left



• white lore, crowded on from front by black cap extending down, merging w/ black on mandible



- Bill color was "field-corn" yellow
- top of upper mandible was black - there was clean delineation between black color on top of the mandible & yellow on the side
- eye was bright red



• black stripe extending down back of neck was very broad, leaving two very narrow white bands on either side when seen from the rear

*Aechmophorus grebe* - 14 Dec 97

Diamond Lake St. PK.

- Phil Walsh

- cap was shiny black; cheeks & remainder of face were clean white
- demarcation between black cap & white face was "smudgy" -- not clean & sharp
- cap extended through the eye & straight across the side of the face to the back of the head, where it curved up slightly.
- more than  $\frac{1}{3}$ , but less than  $\frac{1}{2}$ , of head was covered by cap

[ this sketch made 6 hours later; based on field notes & a sketch made @ the time ]



<u>CHARACTERISTIC</u>	<u>CLARKS</u>	<u>WESTERN</u>	<u>DIAMOND LAKE GREBE</u>
Bill color	Brighter, more orange-yellow	Duller, greenish-yellow	Field-corn yellow (favors <u>Clark's</u> )
Culmen line	Narrow, sharply defined	Wider, diffuse	Sharply defined, narrow ( <u>Clark's</u> )
Facial pattern (adults in alternate plumage--from late April to July)	Black cap ends above the eye; eye completely surrounded by white	Black cap extends to below the eye; eye completely surrounded by black	Black cap extended directly through the eye (in basic plumage, could be <u>either</u> )
Lores	White, in both alternate and basic plumage	Black in alternate plumage; fading to gray in basic plumage	White on right-side of face; smaller and pale gray on left ( <u>either</u> )
Cap shape	S-curve, angling up before slanting back down to base of culmen	Ends in a relatively straight line slanting downwards to the gape	Relatively straight across most of face, with slight upturn at back of head (favors <u>Western</u> )
Flanks	Normally light	Normally dark	Some white in flanks (favors <u>Clark's</u> )
Back Color	Normally light, creating a three-toned effect--blackish hindneck stripe, dark-grey back, and pale-gray or whitish flanks	Normally dark, with hindneck, back, and flanks relatively uniform in color	Dark gray; neck and back color very similar ( <u>Western</u> )
Hindneck stripe	Narrow--only about 1/4 the width of the neck when viewed from behind	Wide--leaving only narrow edges of white on either side of the stripe when viewed from behind	Broad, leaving two very narrow white bands on either side when viewed from back ( <u>Western</u> )



DOCUMENTATION

SPECIES: Clark's Grebe (*Aechmophorus clarkii*)

HOWMANY: 1

LOCATION: Poweshiek County, Diamond Lake Park

DATE: December 13, 1997

TIME & VIEWING CONDITIONS: Approximately 12:15 to 2:10 p.m., C.D.T. Sunny skies overhead (and behind us--we're viewing north). Viewed and photographed from a distance of 65 yards to 220 yards.

FIRST OBSERVATION MADE BY: Pam and Reid Allen

DOCUMENTERS' NAMES & ADDRESS: Pam Allen, 1601 Pleasant Street  
West Des Moines, IA 50265-2331 (written)  
Reid Allen, same address as above,  
(photographic)

OTHERS WHO SAW BIRD: Eloise & Eugene Armstrong, Booneville, IA  
Mark Proescholdt, Liscomb, IA  
Ann Johnson, Norwalk, IA

DESCRIPTION OF BIRD: Our first words were, "Oh, there's a Western Grebe," when we first saw this bird as we scanned over the waterfowl present with our binoculars. God only knows what made us take a really good look at this bird, except some "sixth sense" said, "wait a minute--this could be a Clark's Grebe!" This large, long-necked grebe had a long, pointed, bright orangish/yellow bill with a very noticeable black line running along the ridge of the upper mandible. The right eye seemed to be more "in the white" than the left, although both eyes were definitely "in the white." The lores were white as well on both sides of the face. The black cap extended from the top of the bill over the crown and down the nape and along the back of the neck down to the back of the bird. The main body of the bird seemed to be a lighter greyish-black than the back of the neck and the cap/crown, with the flanks showing a much lighter appearance. This bird did not vocalize or fly during the time it was being observed. It was feeding (by diving) and seemed to be very content. **(See photographs taken by Reid I. Allen which are enclosed.)**

SIMILAR SPECIES AND HOW ELIMINATED: The Western Grebe (*Aechmophorus occidentalis*) has a much duller, greyish-greenish yellow bill and the body and flanks are blacker. Plus, the black cap extends over the eyes and lores, and there is a more solid blackish cast on the bill.

PREVIOUS EXPERIENCE: None. This was a "life" bird for both of us (perhaps a good thing because we took a longer time to study this bird). Have seen many Western Grebes.

EQUIPMENT: Bausch & Lomb Elite 8x42 and 10x42 binoculars (nitrogen-purged models); Kowa TSN-4 spotting scope; photographed by Reid I. Allen with a Canon A2E camera with a 400 mm lens and with an 800 mm telephoto attachment on the Kowa TSN-4 spotting scope.

HOW LONG BEFORE FIELD NOTES MADE: During observation of bird.

REFERENCES CONSULTED: None until after Field Notes made. Then Field Guide to Birds of North America, National Geographic Society, Second Edition, 1987.

HOW LONG BEFORE THIS FORM COMPLETED: February 26, 1998.

What species? Clark's Grebe How many? 1  
 Location? Diamond Lake Co. Park - (Poweshiek Co.)  
 Type of habitat? Small lake that was partly open + partly iced  
 When? date(s): Dec. 13, 1997 time: 1:45 p.m. to 2:15 p.m. approx.  
 Who? your name and address: Mark Proescholdt, Box 65, Liscomb, Iowa 50142  
 others with you: Pam and Reid Allen, Eugene and Eloise Armstrong, Ann Johnson  
 others before or after you: Mike and Dixie Overton, probably Cal + Bernie Knight

Describe the bird(s) including only what you observed. Include size, shape, details of all parts (bill, eye, head, neck, back, wing, tail, throat, breast, belly, under tail, legs, feet). Also mention voice and behavior.

Pam and Reid found this lovely bird! They called and spread the word.

This grebe had a very bright orange bill and it was not yellow green at all. The red eye was in the white plumage of the head and was not in the black plumage on the head. The flank pattern of this bird near the water line was a mottled white and gray and was not black. There was a black line up the nape of the neck. One eye looked a little more into the white plumage of the head than the other eye. It swam with its head tucked on its back and also with its neck straight up.

Similar species and how eliminated:

Western Grebe has a yellow green bill, the eye is in the black plumage on the head, and the flank pattern is blackish.

Did any one disagree or have reservations about identification? No

If yes, explain:

Viewing conditions: give lighting, distance (how measured), and optical equipment:

Sunny with sun behind us or to our side, Distances estimated at 100-110 yards. 8X30 Binocs, 22X Scope, KOWA scope

Previous experience with species and similar ones:

Have seen some Clark's with Westerns in Idaho.

References and persons consulted before writing description: none

How long before field notes made? before this form completed? Dec. 26, 1997  
3:00 p.m.  
on Dec. 13, 1997



## IOWA BIRD SIGHTINGS DOCUMENTATION FORM

**Species:** Clark's Grebe (*Aechmophorus clarkii*) **How many?** 1 adult

**Location:** Poweshiek co., Diamond Lake County Park, approx. 1 mile W of Montezuma

**Habitat:** Partially frozen small lake with numerous hardwood trees in agricultural cropland at edge of urban area.

**Date:** 13 December 1997 **Time:** 4:55pm to 5:05pm

**Observer:** Michael D. Overton, 1316 S Duff #93, Ames, IA, 50010

**Other Observers:** Dixie Overton

**Observers Before and After:** Before: Pam & Reid Allen, Ann Johnson After: ??

**Description:**

**Size:** Larger than Red-necked Grebe, smaller than Common Loon.

**Shape:** General slender look due to long thin neck. Compact body due to very short tail.

**Bill:** Long, slender, pointed, lower mandible distinctly upturned. Yellow ( although we did not note any greenish tint, indicative of Western Grebe, we also did not note the orange tint indicative of Clark's Grebe ) This may indicate a partial hybrid or only be the result of the very poor light at the time of our observation.

**Eyes:** Not noted.

**Head:** Black, white, and gray. Black from the base of the upper mandible over the forehead and crown and down the nape. The black extended down the sides of the head to just above the eye. It did not extend to the auricular or cheek. Auricular and cheek: white smudged with gray.

**Neck:** Nape to back: black. Chin and throat: white.

**Back:** Black.

**Breast:** Upper breast: white. Lower breast: Not observed.

**Belly:** Not observed.

**Flanks:** Grayish white at waterline.

**Wings:** The folded wings were black.

**Tail:** Very short, black.

**Legs/Feet:** Not observed.

**Vocalizations:** None.

**Behavior:** The bird was on the water when observed.

**Similar species and how eliminated:** Western Grebe: extent of black on sides of head especially near eyes, flank color. Red-necked Grebe: Size, head pattern, throat color. Horned Grebe: Size, bill size and shape. Eared Grebe: Size, bill size and shape, head pattern, throat color.

**Did anyone disagree or have reservations about identification?** yes, reservations, re. possible hybrid, and our light was so poor.

**Viewing conditions:** Very poor light due to time of day, approx. 30 yards (estimate), Leupold 12-40x60 @ 30.

**Previous experience with species and similar ones:** Clark's Grebe: sightings in ND, SD, TX, CO, OR, and CA. Western Grebe: sightings in IA, MN, SD, TX, NM, ID, CA, OR, WA. Red-necked Grebe sightings in NJ, DE, MD, VA, NC, FL, MN, ND, OR, CA. Horned Grebe: numerous sightings. Eared Grebe: numerous sightings.

**References and persons consulted before writing description:** None.

**How long before field notes made? this form completed?** None made. this form completed? 3 days.

## DOCUMENTATION OF EXTRAORDINARY BIRD SIGHTING

**Species:** Clark's Grebe; **Number:** 1

**Location:** Diamond Lake, Poweshiek Co., Iowa

**Date:** 14 December 1997; **Time:** 7:10 to 8:00 a.m.

**Name and address:** Thomas H. Kent, 211 Richards St., Iowa City, IA 52246.

**Others before/with/after:** Found by Pam and Reid Allen on the 13th. Jim Sinclair arrived as I was leaving.

**Habitat and circumstances:** Relatively small artificial lake, ice covered.

**Description of bird:** The lake froze overnight. There were about 100 Canada Geese, 1 Snow Goose, 2 Mallards, 1 Canvasback, and the grebe sleeping on the ice when I arrived as it was getting light. The grebe was white below and dark above with a large head and bill. It was dwarfed by the geese, but was obviously a Western/Clark's type. The bill was yellow (I would say slightly orange-yellow) with a thin black line on the top of the culmen. There was no hint of green or dullness to the bill. The black cap just touched the eye; i.e., the eye was 90% in the white area. The eye was red and there was a dark mark from the eye to the base of the lower mandible, leaving a white loreal line between it and the back cap. The sides were white, but I did not see the bird in the water, so comparisons of this mark with my previous experience are uncertain. On the back of the crown there were tiny white specks. The rest of the upper parts appeared dark to me. After a while the bird stood up and flapped its wings, moving a few yards on the ice. It appeared bow-legged. White secondaries were evident. While making these apparent attempts at flight, the bird gradually moved directed toward me and I continued taking photos as the bird moved to within 10 yards of shore and 20 yards from me. It then changed directions and moved up the lake. At this time Jim Sinclair arrived and I left after chatting with him.

**Voice:** Not heard.

**Similar species:** The bill color and eye in the white area are the principal field marks for Clark's vs. Western Grebe.

The overall size and large bill easily excluded Horned Grebe.

**Any one have reservations?:** no.

**Light:** Sun rising behind me; **Distance:** 20 yards; **Optics:** 10 x binocular; 20 x scope; 540 mm lens.

**Previous experience:** I have seen one Clark's in Iowa and many in the west.

**References before/after viewing:** none.

**Time of notes:** While viewing; **Final typing:** 1 day.