

Red-Necked Grebes at Little Wall Lake

On April 12, 1984, I decided to spend my lunch hour at Little Wall Lake in Hamilton County looking at water birds. The trip from Ames was in a driving rain and when I reached the west end of the lake on highway 69 it was still pouring. As I went to the north and eastern parts of the lake, the rain subsided and the water was calm. As I scanned the hundreds of ducks, my attention was immediately focused on a water bird that stood out from the others. Its dark, gray-brown body was the same size as the nearby ducks but its neck was red and it was considerably longer in length than the nearby ducks. The head was held high and erect. Since I did not have my field guide with me, I rushed to the car to get it. When I returned, the bird that had been 40 yards away was now over 80 yards away. I thought this rather strange but did not think anymore about it. A Horned Grebe obligingly swam within five yards of the bird and aided in its identification as a Red-necked Grebe. It was nearly 30% larger in size than the nearby Horned Grebe. The bird was continuously diving and emerging with small fish in its yellow bill. I then returned to Ames and notified other birders.

Hank Zaletel, 715 West, Colo, Iowa 50056

Pete: Hank requested we add the following P.S.:

P.S.: On a blustery Saturday, April 24th, following information on Hank's great find, we had the above Red-Necked Grebe in scope focus (at 40 power) when to our joy another red-Necked Grebe approached. The two raised their bills skyward, paused, and with a special greeting bowed several times to each other, and then continued swimming away in opposite directions. Four other Iowa birders were on hand to observe this happening. Forgetting the bitter wind and weather we did a celebration dance. A warm thanks to all birders helping others locate these extra special finds.

Cal and Bernie Knight.
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