

Endangered Species Report February 2008

Focus this month is on the Red Necked Grebe. State Endangered in 1997. They are swimming and diving birds, smaller than loons. I think we are all familiar with the large Western Grebe seen in documentaries on TV where these long necked birds, in their courting dance, run across the water in a highly visible display. Well, the Red Necked Grebe is the second largest Grebe. It is found throughout the state on ponds and lakes during the summer. The Red Necked Grebe is 13 inches long, with a wingspan of 32 inches. Plumage is gray upper body, white below. The head is black cheeks white, neck is dark red. The black bill is straight, and is yellow at the base, eyes dark brown. Distinguishing features are a stocky appearance, a heavy long bill and tufts of feathers on the top back of its head. Nesting habitat includes floating marsh vegetation, wetlands with patches of open water, and stands of bulrush.

Diet is mostly minnow sand small fish, also crayfish, aquatic insects, tadpoles, salamanders, and frogs.

Nest clutch size usually is 3 to 6 blue/white eggs, laid from May to June. Incubation is 22 to 23 days. They fledge in about 8 to 10 weeks. Wetland habitat loss is the major contributing factor to population decline in Wisconsin. Conservation of large inland wetland complexes is critical to the stability of the Red Necked Grebe population. The largest population exists in Rush Lake, Winnebago County. Range in Wisconsin is generally the west central south central parts of the state. Wait for spring and the return of the Red Necked Grebe.

Respectfully Submitted:

Chuck Matyska, Chair.