

A Red-necked Grebe in Hattiesburg, Mississippi

Larry Gates                      and                      J. Richard Moore

Box 8195  
University of Southern  
Mississippi, Hattiesburg, 39401Box 5087  
University of Southern  
Mississippi, Hattiesburg, 39401

A Red-necked Grebe (Podiceps grisegena) was seen by several observers at the Hattiesburg sewage lagoons during the second week of December, 1978. It was first seen by Larry Gates on 9 December, but was only tentatively identified because of poor lighting conditions. The bird was seen again and positively identified on 10 December by Richard Moore, on 11 December by Larry Gates, and on 12 December by Judy Toups and Bob Wood. The following field characteristics were seen through a 20 x spotting scope and with binoculars. The Red-necked Grebe was seen from as close as 100 m and in excellent light.

Size.-The Red-necked Grebe was larger than a Horned (Podiceps auritus) or Eared (P. nigricollis) grebe. Direct comparisons were made with both Horned and Eared grebes. The Red-necked Grebe's neck was comparatively longer and thicker and its body was longer and heavier.

Head.-The Red-necked Grebe's head was held high and erect and was larger than that of the other grebe species. There was a prominent white patch on the cheek which curled up to the ear region and there was a strong contrast between the white on the face and the gray neck. The head was very triangular. The top of the head appeared somewhat flat because of a lack of curvature to the forehead. The top of the head looked like a black triangle, wide in the back and coming to a point in front.

Bill.-The Red-necked Grebe's bill was yellow and quite large in comparison with the bill of the other grebes.

Wing markings.-There were 2 white marks on each wing: a square patch near the body on the trailing edge and a white line from the wrist to the body on the leading edge. The Red-necked Grebe was seen in flight twice.

Behavior and other characteristics.-The Red-necked Grebe appeared to be in good health. It flew strongly and dove frequently. It swam about surprisingly fast. When it flew and when it swam, the legs were so far back that they seemed to be coming out at the tail. After consulting several field guides, we decided that this individual was remarkably similar to the illustration of a winter-plumaged Red-necked Grebe on p. 21 of Birds of North America by Robbins et al. (1966, Golden Press, New York).

We believe this to be the first observation of this species in Mississippi.