

nearby, they paddled around the nest. However, when an adult appeared with food, they climbed back on the nest to be fed.

One morning, we discovered that the family had crossed the highway and were foraging among cattails on the north side of the road where more food and cover were available. By now the chicks were good swimmers and able to forage by themselves, although they didn't dive and only submerged their heads for brief periods. An adult continued to feed them with what appeared to be large chunks brought to the surface. The chicks seemed able to sense the adult's presence even when still underwater. They began peeping shrilly and as soon as the adult surfaced with food, they were there to grab it. Some of the chicks were larger than others and swam more quickly and grabbed more food. The adult compensated for this inequity by surfacing closer to the smaller ones who had been fed earlier.

Knowing how the chicks fed, it would seem an easy task to spot them, wait for the adult to surface, and photograph them. But feeding was completed before one could focus,

and trying to keep the darting (and very small) young in focus for the few moments they were away from screening cattails was difficult. Finally, we learned to focus on chicks

In their eagerness, the nestlings often slid into the water and while one adult was finding food nearby, they paddled around the nest.

when they began to peep. We would then scan the murky water for signs of the adult's arrival, and then focus again on the chicks. We were rewarded with a very few photographs that weren't fuzzy, and which had the entire adult and nestling(s) in them - about 4 out of 72 slides.

The chicks began losing their down, although they still had the black and yellow striped pattern on the backs of their heads and their beaks. They doubled their size at about two weeks of age and the adults

were feeding them less frequently. Our ability to photograph became more difficult as the young foraged farther away from the road and became nearly invisible behind cattails.

Our observations and photography lasted only a few short weeks. In our eagerness to observe and photograph the grebes, we became aware of temptations to ignore what we all know: do not disturb nesting birds which might cause them to abandon their nest. Watching these grebes nesting and raising young gave us a new appreciation for the amount of energy adults must expend in raising young, and the necessity of monitoring and often regulating our own behavior toward them.



LITERATURE CITED

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Adult Pied-billed Grebes carrying food for young on nest at Crabtree Marsh at Crabtree Nature Center, Cook County, mid-July 1992. Photo by Annalee Fjellberg and Adam Fikso.