

by Sheryl DeVore

Western and Red-necked Grebes: From one slough to another

The Western Grebe, a rare, but regular migrant in Illinois, made some fine appearances in the prairie state during the fall 2006 season. They were found in downstate reservoirs, a typical location for this species in fall, including Crab Orchard National Wildlife Refuge and Lake Carlyle, as well as at Montrose, Cook

County in November (see Fields Notes in this issue for details). But folks living in the Palos, Cook County region had fun observing a Western Grebe for nearly a month. Bob Hughes, Bob Fisher and other birders reported the Western Grebe 7 October 2006 at McGinnis Slough, Cook County. Many birders were able to view the Western Grebe and



Western Grebe at Saganashkee Slough, Palos Hills, Cook County. 22 October 2006. Photos by Jerry Kumery. The photo with two birds shows a Western Grebe and the smaller Horned Grebe for comparison. This was possibly the same bird seen earlier in October at McGinnis Slough, three miles south.

compare it with the much smaller Horned Grebe, as well as another rare Illinois grebe, the Red-necked Grebe that were seen off and on at the same location. On one date, 10 October 2006, Evan Graff saw two Red-necked Grebes along with the Western at McGinnis.

Toward middle October, the Western Grebe appeared to have left

McGinnis Slough. But on 21 October 2006, Wes Serafin found a Western Grebe (possibly the same one) at Saganashkee Slough, roughly 3 miles north of McGinnis. So birders moved their scopes to observe the species there. Photographer Jerry Kumery even caught the grebe in the act of flapping wings and appearing to dance on the water.

It was apparently last seen at Saganashkee 29 October 2006 by Carolyn and Chuck Fields and Pete Moxon. In addition, three Red-necked Grebes were reported at Saganashkee Slough by Walter Marcisz on 22 October 2006, with one still being seen 29 October 2006.

For Say's Phoebe, visit a hawk watch

Matthew Fletcher discovered a Say's Phoebe at 9:10 a.m. Saturday, 22 September 2006 at the Illinois Beach State Park hawk watch pavilion in Lake County. He observed it perched on mullein and blazing stars in a prairie patch. His report brought other birders out to the park that day to enjoy this "casual," formerly "accidental" visitor to the state, based on Illinois Ornithological Records Committee occurrence designations. The bird was last seen at the park around 4 p.m. by Anthony Friend, the next day, Sunday, 23 September 2006, this time just north and west of the Dunes Day Use parking lot.

No one found the Say's Phoebe at the park the next day, but lo and behold while leaving the Greene Valley Hawkwatch in DuPage County for lunch 23 September 2006, Bob and Karen Fisher saw another one.



Say's Phoebe at Illinois Beach State Park, Lake County. 22 September 2006. Photo by Matthew Fletcher.

"I stopped the car just a hundred feet or so from the hilltop parking lot to re-close our rear hatch (the open door light was blinking on the dash)," Bob Fisher reported. He walked back to get into the SUV when Karen said "Look, there's a Say's Phoebe just a few feet in front of the car."

"The phoebe was less than 30 feet away, perched on a clump of grass just off the edge of the gravel road," said Bob Fisher. "The bird was unmistakable with its gray head, breast and mantle; faint wing bars; a rusty/rufous belly and undertail coverts; and a solid black tail. The bird also pumped its tail in typical phoebe fashion."

"What are the odds of two Say's Phoebes showing up in northeastern Illinois in a three-day period?" Fisher mused. "I feel pretty confident the Illinois Beach bird didn't suddenly decide to fly 70 miles southwest on Saturday night," he said. "But you never know..."

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