

**Red-necked Grebe Invasion:** The second documented invasion of Red-necked Grebes (*Podiceps grisegena*) took place on Lake Ontario near Rochester, in April of 1977. This was apparently a repeat of a similar occurrence in April 1958 (see H. Miller, "Statistical Summary for 1958," *Goshawk*, Jan.-Feb., 1960; *Kingbird* 8, 46 [July, 1958]; and *Audubon Field Notes* 12, 349 [Aug., 1958].) The peak numbers reported this year were 415 on April 7 and 1210 on April 10. In 1958 the high count was 1100 at Rochester on April 4. The buildup and decrease were gradual, beginning with two on March 25 and ending with three on May 3. All of the April records this year were from the Lake Ontario shore west of Rochester, while the May records and the 1958 peak were from the east shore area.

While the records received indicate an increase through April 10, and then a gradual decrease, the numbers are not really comparable. To my knowledge, only on April 10 did anyone undertake a systematic count. On that day, R. Clark and C. Perrigo counted the birds along the shore from Braddock Bay to Point Breeze, a distance of about 25 miles, and found no grebes east or west of those end points. Other records represented much shorter stretches of shoreline, and often only single observation points. On several mornings from April 9 to 17, I observed and counted 150 to 200 individuals at single locations near Braddock Bay. On these occasions, at 6:30 a.m. the birds were near shore, calling, courting, and feeding, but by 8:00-8:15 a.m., when field trip groups arrived, the birds were largely a mile or more offshore, much to the frustration of many seeking a life bird. This behavior would certainly influence the accuracy of counts.

At this point it is pertinent to examine the idiosyncracies of the demography, topography and birding coverage of this region in an attempt to account for isolated records such as these with no reports from neighboring regions. First, while a very large percentage of the area's active birders live south and east of Rochester, most will drive 30-60 miles to points on the west lakeshore, particularly in spring, rather than 5-10 miles to points on the east lakeshore. This is mainly associated with the geography and topography of the area. To the west, the shoreline is generally north of Rochester, thus birds moving north and east, which is the general spring flow, tend to be concentrated by the bulge of land to the north and by their attempts to travel around the lake with minimum movement southward. Among the results of this are the major hawk lookout at Braddock Bay, a number of "migrant trap" type woodlots in the marshes along the lakeshore, and the many rarities recorded annually. As an additional topographic factor, the western sections are generally low, flat, and marshy near the lake, while to the east there are moderate bluffs, few marshes, and much wooded or planted land. Considering the demography of the region, the east was settled first, with major roads generally set well back from the shore and the intervening land virtually all privately owned. In contrast, the west has several large shoreline park areas and numerous public roads extending to the shore. In both directions coverage is poor at the edges of Region 2 and into the neighboring

regions; there are few records east from Sodus Bay to at least Oswego (about 30 miles) and west from Point Breeze nearly to Fort Niagara (about 45 miles).

Returning to records, it is interesting that the few observers to the east of Rochester find very large concentrations (of extremely variable magnitude) of Common Loons, Red-throated Loons, and, less frequently, Red-necked Grebes, nearly annually, but in very narrow time windows, often less than a week. Thus, if a few key people can't or don't search for birds for a week's time, nearly the entire passage of these species can be missed. Frequently, tremendous numbers are recorded between Webster and Sodus Bay with little spill-over to the west. Note however, on a map that Rochester is set back in a large southerly dip in Lake Ontario so that birds can move east and west from about Hamlin on the west, to Nine Mile Point in Webster on the east, virtually unobserved by observers on the Rochester shore.

Finally, it has been noted by many observers that standing on the bluffs at Webster Park, or at Nine Mile Point in the spring, one frequently sees birds, particularly waterfowl and shorebirds, in large flocks coming from inland and moving up to a mile offshore before turning west. This phenomenon is not typically noted west of Rochester. Possibly related to this is a small farm pond about three miles east of Fairport and about 10 miles south of these shoreline areas, that has consistently produced numerous shorebird records including a Black-necked Stilt and several Ruffs, with no apparent special attractions. Might this track represent some sort of high-density pathway from points south to points north and west on the Great Lakes? Both Red-necked Grebes and Whimbrels, which are more frequently reported in large numbers from the north shore of Lake Ontario or Lake Huron and Lake Erie, respectively, are most frequently reported in any numbers in the spring from the above east lakeshore points.

From the sketchy and questioning nature of these notes, there is obviously much to be learned. At this point I feel that explanations are speculations. Many more detailed observations and possibly even some well-timed, spring "pelagic" trips into Lake Ontario are needed to shed some light on this aspect of spring migration in this region.

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