

PHOTOGRAPHS OF NEW YORK STATE RARITIES:
29. WESTERN GREBE

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Western Grebe—Tupper Lake, St. Lawrence Co.
August 5, 1978

Tom Davis

The Western Grebe (*Aechmophorus occidentalis*) is a bird of western North America, breeding east to southern Manitoba and southwestern Minnesota (J. Bull, 1974. *Birds of New York State*. Doubleday/Natural History Press, Garden City, N.Y.). The species winters mainly on the Pacific Coast, and is considered accidental in eastern North America. Bull (*loc. cit.*) lists the bird as "hypothetical" in New York, with "at least a dozen sight reports, most of them up-state . . . dates of 'occurrence' range from Oct. 25 to May 21." Elsewhere in the East the species' occurrence is well documented in Ohio, Pennsylvania, Massachusetts, Virginia, South Carolina, and Florida.

On July 2, 1978, a Western Grebe was discovered by the author and her husband near Buoy "I" at Black Point, Tupper Lake. St. Lawrence County. Tupper Lake, (elevation 1554') lies near the center of the Adirondack Mountains. The lake is about five miles in length with an irregular rocky shoreline and several islands of varying sizes. The water in this lake is notably crystal clear.

This Western Grebe remained on Tupper Lake until at least October 7th. During this time it was observed by dozens of persons and recognizable photographs were obtained by Thomas H. Davis, Paul A. DeBenedictis, John D. Delehanty, Dr. Marguerite Kingsbury, and others. During its stay the grebe moved about the southern end of Tupper Lake, also occurring at Buoy "J" near Green Island and near two small marker buoys in Bridge Brook Bay. The bird's preference for buoys was notable, perhaps utilizing these permanent floats in its feeding strategy, and taking cover behind them when boats passed close by. When approached closely the grebe reluctantly, it seemed, edged away from the buoy, or dove, resurfacing 100 feet or more away. It immediately returned to the side of the buoy once the threat had passed. On October 7th, the bird was heard for the first time emitting a sharp, shrill whistle. The black and white photograph accompanying this article does not do justice to the bird's striking red eye, or yellow bill.

I would like to thank Marguerite Kingsbury and Thomas H. Davis for assistance received in the preparation of this paper.

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