A NEW HERRING GULL BREEDING SITE IN SOUTHERN BRITISH COLUMBIA

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The Herring Gull (Larus argentatus) breeds throughout the interior of British Columbia at 40 or so sites from Okanagan Lake northwest through the Fraser Plateau, Babine Upland, Nass Basin, and the Northern Mountains and Plateau region to Kelsall Lake in Chilkat Pass, and locally east through the Liard Basin to the vicinity of Kachemak Bay northeast of Fort Nelson (Campbell et al. 1990). It nests singly, or in colonies (rarely more than 100 pairs), and all sites are associated with lakes with forested and rocky islands and/or grassy and bare rocky islets.

At the southern limit of its range in south-central British Columbia the Herring Gull is known to nest at only two sites; on a bare rocky islet in Okanagan Lake (Cannings et al. 1987) and on a smaller bare rocky islet in Bridge Lake (Munro 1935, Campbell 1968). The elevations at both sites are 342 m and 1,133 m respectively.

In late summer 2004 I received a telephone call from Brian Peters, a sports fisherman at Tunkwa Lake, BC, concerning a “seagull” that had “babies” on a grassy islet in the lake (Figure 1). He described the birds as large and white with black wing tips and pinkish legs and when fishing too close to the island the gulls often dived at him. He noted also that the gulls were nesting on the island among many nesting Canada Geese (Branta canadensis) since at least the early 2000s.

On 15 May 2005 I visited the site briefly and discovered a Herring Gull nest containing two eggs (Figure 2) atop the island. The nest was a sparse collection of grasses, plant stems, a few twigs, a couple of gull feathers, and several small rocks. Both adults were present but not overly agitated. Later in the summer Brian watched an adult Bald Eagle (Haliaeetus leucocephalus) grab one of the young gulls and fly back to its nest where the young gull was plucked and eaten.

The gulls apparently nested in 2006 and 2007 but the number of young raised is not known. I visited
the site on 30 June 2008 and watched two downy young, about half grown, being fed on a small rocky tip of the nesting islet (see Figure 1). During a half hour of watching the gulls, the adults continued to forage, chased an adult Bald Eagle that flew over the islet, and gave alarm calls at campers walking along the nearby shore. Fishermen in boats near the nesting islet were not harassed as long as they kept moving.

Records of isolated pairs of typically colonial-nesting species are noteworthy since they may represent a “pioneering-pair”. Also, the additional location contributes to determining the breeding range for the species.

**Literature Cited**


INTERSPECIFIC FEEDING OF CLARK'S GREBE CHICK BY RED-NECKED GREBE AT DUCK LAKE, CRESTON, BRITISH COLUMBIA

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The Clark's Grebe (Aechmophorus clarkii) was first recorded in British Columbia at Shuswap Lake, near Salmon Arm, in early June 1981 (Campbell et al. 1990). Two years later it was reported breeding at Duck Lake, within the Creston Valley Wildlife Management Area (CVWMA), when a single chick was reared by a female Clark's Grebe and a male Western Grebe (Forbes 1988). On 6 June 1996, the first confirmed breeding of a pair of Clark's Grebes was found at Christmas Island, in Shuswap Lake at Salmon Arm, when a nest with four eggs was discovered (Campbell et al. 2001). Clark's Grebe continues to occasionally breed at this location either as pure pairs or mixed with a Western Grebe (Ted Hillary pers. comm.).

This note describes observations of Red-necked Grebe (Podiceps grisegena) feeding a Clark's Grebe chick during the breeding season of 2000 at Duck Lake, BC. Both Red-necked and Western grebes nest at Duck Lake, a shallow water body situated within the CVWMA in southeastern British Columbia (Butler et al. 1986). Red-necked Grebes arrive on the breeding grounds in early to late April whereas Western Grebes arrive in mid to late May. Early nesting attempts often fail due to summer windstorms so it is not uncommon to find both species nesting later in the season during July and August. Clark's Grebe is an infrequent visitor to the area and a single adult has been observed during the breeding season in eight of 12 years from 1997 through 2008 (pers. obs.; Figure 1).

On 31 August 2000, a Clark's Grebe chick, three-quarters grown, was observed associating with two adult Red-necked Grebes which took turns feeding fish to the begging young. Again, on 1 September, the Clark's Grebe chick was observed calling and begging, and subsequently fed by a Red-necked Grebe pair. The adults would dive in the shallow water, catch a fish and swim over to feed the young grebe. During my last visit, on 17 September, the Clark's Grebe was no longer in the company of the Red-necked Grebes. Its plumage had a more adult-like appearance, and it was observed preening, resting, and diving but was not observed catching its own prey.

Stout and Nuecheterlein (1999) had no confirmed instances of successful interspecific nest parasitism. They did, however, mention an adult Red-necked Grebe that was observed feeding a Western Grebe chick for approximately 20 minutes and another pair was observed in close association with both Red-necked Grebe chick and Western Grebe chick at Lake Osakis, MN.

At Duck Lake, Western Grebes are known to parasitize nests of Red-necked Grebes which are able to successfully incubate eggs and rear the young (Van Damme 2004, 2006), so it is possible that a Clark's Grebe had parasitized a Red-necked Grebe.

Figure 1. After consuming a fish, this Clark's Grebe actively pursued and engaged in a courtship ritual with a Western Grebe during the 2008 breeding season at Duck Lake, Creston, BC. (Linda M. Van Damme). BC Photo 3632.