

RED-NECKED GREBE (*Podiceps grisegena*) IN PASCO COUNTY, FLORIDA: FIRST RECORD FOR THE PENINSULA

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Through 2012, only two verifiable records of the Red-necked Grebe (*Podiceps grisegena*) in Florida were known. Although Greenlaw et al. (2014:48) state that only one Florida record was known, they cite two records: one grebe photographed at Pensacola Bay, Santa Rosa County, 13 December 2000 by Leslie Case (FOSRC #2001-437); and one grebe (FOSRC #2012-945) photographed by many observers at Lake Elberta Park, Tallahassee, Leon County, 13 November 2012–13 January 2013 (Pranty 2013a, Greenlaw 2015, <ebird.org/view/checklist/S12604575>; final date not published previously). A third record (FOSRC #2013-962), which followed the second record by three days, was obtained when John Erickson photographed a Red-necked Grebe at Crowder Landing, Lake Jackson, Leon County, 16 January 2013 (Pranty 2013b, Greenlaw 2015). This grebe may have represented the Lake Elberta Park grebe returning north; the two sites are 11 km apart. Here I provide details on the fourth record of Red-necked Grebe in Florida, based on a bird present in coastal Pasco County during November 2016; this record furnished the first for the Florida peninsula.

Discovery.—During the morning of 13 November 2016, I was birding Robert J. Strickland Memorial Park (otherwise known as Hudson Beach Park) along the Gulf of Mexico at the western end of Clark Street in Hudson, Pasco County, Florida. Hudson Beach is a popular spot locally for observing sea birds; I often conduct Gulf watches from this site. After birding the park on foot, I scoped the Gulf from the southern picnic shelter, beginning at 843 hours EST. The morning sun was behind me, thus providing excellent light on birds to the west. My Eagle Optics Ranger spotting scope provided 25-60 power with a 60 mm objective lens. At 932 hours, I spotted a Red-necked Grebe in largely basic plumage as it dove in the boat channel approximately 200 m offshore. Within an hour, several other birders, including the late Murray Gardler, had joined me in observing the grebe. By 1055 hours, the grebe had swum out of sight to the north. We suspected that it might be visible from Port Hudson Marina, a private location 400 m north of the park, to which Gardler had access. After having received access to the marina by the manager, we relocated the Red-necked Grebe at 1150 hours as it foraged offshore. By 1240 hours, we had lost sight of the grebe and had left the site. Primarily owing to access restrictions, Port Hudson Marina was never again searched for the Red-necked Grebe.

The Red-necked Grebe was seen at Hudson Beach Park daily through 20 November 2016 and sporadically afterward (eBird reports); I observed it on 13, 14, 17, 18, 19, and 24 November, obtaining identifiable photographs on 13, 14, 18, and 19 November. The grebe was last seen by Susan Daughtrey on 28 November 2016 (<ebird.org/view/checklist/S32774350>).

Identification.—The following description was taken from my field notes taken on 13, 14, and 24 November, when I was able to study the grebe in good light for more than 90 minutes of combined viewing time. The Red-necked Grebe was a medium-sized water bird with a slender body, a longish, fairly slender neck, a long, flat-topped head, and a long, slender bill; the length of the bill roughly equaled the length of the head. The crown, nape, hind neck, and mantle were blackish, while the rest of the head was dusky



Figure 1. Two views of a Red-necked Grebe off Hudson Beach Park, Hudson, Pasco County, Florida, 14 November 2016. Photographs by Stephen Mann. This record provides the fourth record of Red-necked Grebe in Florida, and the first record in the peninsula.

with a pale line below the eye that extended diagonally to behind the eye. The foreneck was pale rusty, apparently representing some retention of alternate plumage. The breast and flanks were whitish, and the remainder of the visible underparts were blackish. The bill was yellow with a dusky culmen and tip. When viewed facing away, the grebe's blackish nape was widely separated from the pale diagonal lines on the face, forming a

wide vertical dark line. This nape pattern differed from that of a Horned Grebe (*Podiceps auritus*), which shows a narrow vertical dark line separating the white cheeks. The Red-necked Grebe occasionally flapped its wings, which were dark with a white patch on the trailing edge of the secondaries and a smaller white patch on the leading edge. The grebe was larger than Laughing Gulls (*Leucophaeus atricilla*) in direct comparison, and was much larger than Horned Grebes visible in the same scope view. Owing to the remnants of retained alternate plumage, the grebe appeared to be adult.

Behavior.—The Red-necked Grebe evidently roosted on Gulf waters south of Hudson Beach; when found at the park during mornings (at 932 hours on 13 November, 834 hours on 14 November, 808 hours on 17 November, and 720 hours on 19 November), it was always seen swimming northward. The grebe remained in the Hudson boat channel at distances estimated to be 200-300 m offshore; it was never seen in shallow water outside the channel. When foraging, the grebe would dive and remain submerged for several seconds (often much longer), frequently resurfacing far from where it dove. After foraging for 1-2 hours, the grebe would often preen on the surface for several minutes while drifting slowly northward. I never saw the grebe fly. Owing to the distance offshore, and also likely due to seasonality, the Red-necked Grebe was never heard to vocalize. It was never seen to interact with any of the several other bird species with which it was often observed in proximity, such as Hooded Merganser (*Lophodytes cucullatus*), Red-breasted Merganser (*Mergus serrator*), Horned Grebe, Double-crested Cormorant (*Phalacrocorax auritus*), and Laughing Gull.

Disposition of the record.—At their annual meeting on 8 July 2017, members of the Florida Ornithological Society Records Committee unanimously accepted the identity of the Pasco County grebe as a Red-necked Grebe (FOSRC #2017-1192; A. W. Kratter in litt.), thus becoming the fourth verifiable record in Florida.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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