
Red-necked Grebe

Podiceps grisegena

Aves — Podicipediformes — Podicipedidae

CONSERVATION STATUS / CLASSIFICATION

Rangewide: Secure (G5)
Statewide: Imperiled breeding (S2B)
ESA: No status
USFS: Region 1: No status; Region 4: No status
BLM: No status
IDFG: Protected nongame species

BASIS FOR INCLUSION

Low breeding population in Idaho; disjunct populations and regional threats.

TAXONOMY

No taxonomic note of relevance.

DISTRIBUTION AND ABUNDANCE

Red-necked grebes breed in the northern U.S., Alaska, and western Canada, and winter along both coasts. During the breeding season they are found in isolated, suitable wetland habitats. In Idaho, red-necked grebes occur in the Panhandle, the Upper Snake region (Henrys Lake area), and isolated wetlands in the vicinity of Lake Cascade (C. Moulton, IDFG, pers. comms.). Population size of this species is unknown, although it is estimated that 500 adults breed in the Northern Rockies Bird Conservation Region (BCR-10; Ivey and Herziger 2005). Of these, approximately 100 breed in Idaho at 4–6 different locations, including Henrys Lake and Hayden Lake.

POPULATION TREND

The population trend for this species is currently unknown. No statistically significant changes have been detected by Breeding Bird Survey (BBS) data in the U.S., western BBS Region, or Idaho (Sauer et al. 2005). However, BBS data for this species is likely unreliable due to low detection rates along BBS routes.

HABITAT AND ECOLOGY

Similar to other grebe species, red-necked grebes are known for their complex, highly ritualized courtship displays. During courtship, and on the breeding grounds in general, this grebe species is particularly vocal (Stout and Nuechterlein 1999). Nest site selection, which may be initiated by the male (Chamberlin 1977), is influenced by availability of nesting material and anchorage for nest platforms, proximity to open water, and protection from wind, waves, and land predators. Both sexes incubate the clutch of 4–5 eggs, for approximately 23–30 days (Stout and Nuechterlein 1999). Once the eggs have hatched, the young are carried and brooded on the back of the adult.

ISSUES

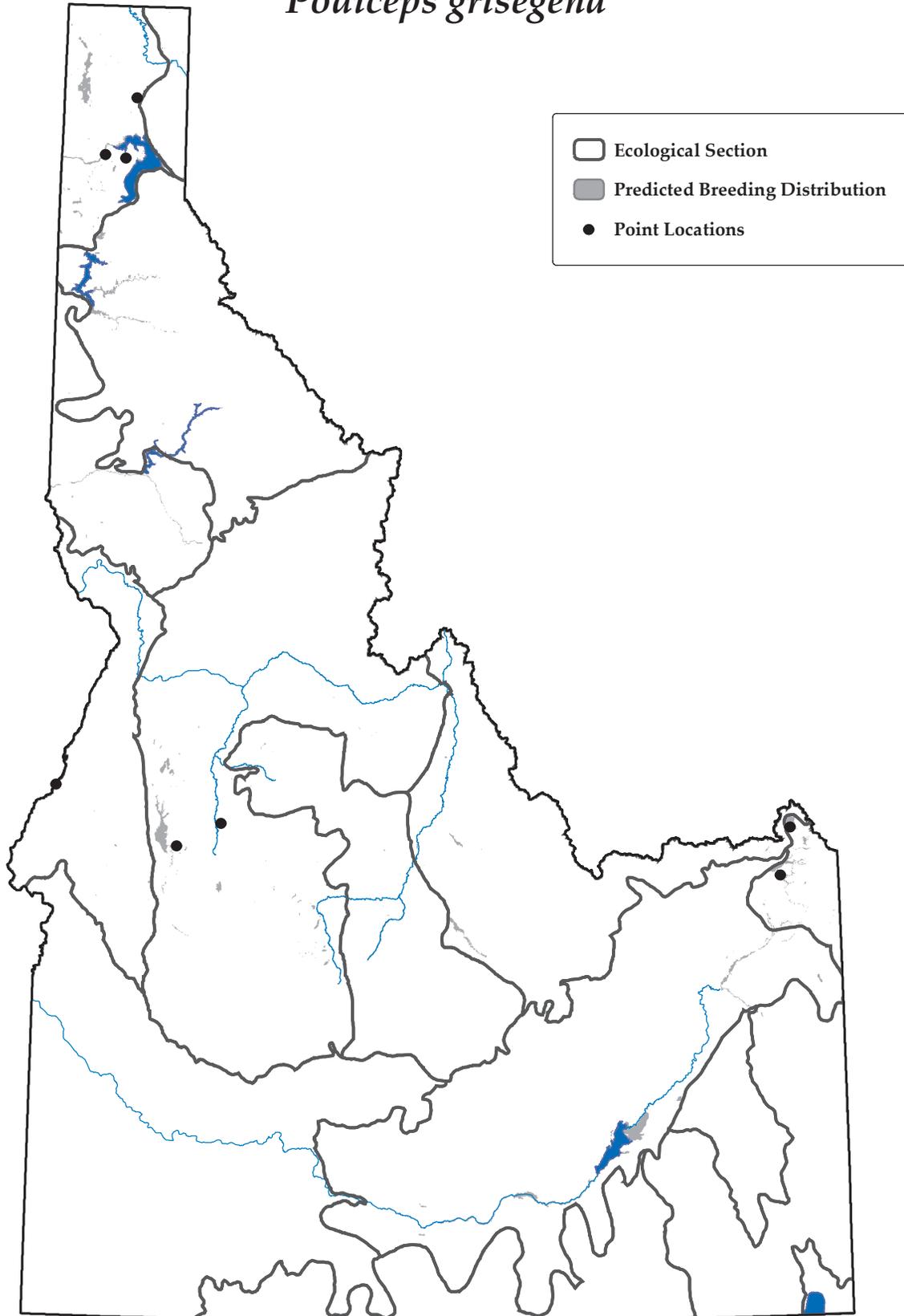
Highly susceptible to pollutants, as heavy metals are often detected in adults, eggs, and young (Faber and Hickey 1973, De Smet 1987). Bioaccumulation appears to occur mostly on wintering grounds (Riske 1976, De Smet 1987). Susceptible to disturbance by recreationists during nesting, both from exposure of nests when birds are flushed off nests and separation of young from adults when rapidly approached by boats (Stout and Nuechterlein 1999). Because of their reliance on wetland habitat, draining of wetlands and/or drought are potentially serious issues for this species in Idaho.

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

Basic population size and trend information is needed. Nationwide monitoring has been proposed (De Smet 1982), but has not been implemented. Closing off important breeding areas to recreational activities during nesting period would help alleviate disturbance pressures. Grebes can become acclimated to human presence if disturbance is minimized during incubation and early brooding (Stout and Nuechterlein 1999). Red-necked grebes readily use artificial wetlands, and would likely respond favorably to wetland restoration in appropriate regions of the state.

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Map created on September 21, 2005
and prepared by Idaho Conservation Data Center.
Sources: Point data are from Idaho Conservation Data Center,
Idaho Department of Fish and Game (2005). Predicted distribution
is from the Wildlife Habitat Relationships Models (WHR),
A Gap Analysis of Idaho: Final Report. Idaho Cooperative Fish
and Wildlife Research Unit, Moscow, ID (Scott et al. 2002).
Predicted distribution is approximate (for more information, go to
http://www.wildlife.uidaho.edu/idgap/idgap_report.asp).

