Western Grebe  
(Aechmophorus occidentalis)

How to Identify:
- A slender bird with black-and-white feathers, a yellow bill, and red eye.
- Western Grebes are Crow-sized.
- The head and most of the face are black, with white below the eye.

Habitat:
- Western Grebes nest on large freshwater lakes and marshes lined with reeds and rushes, and occasionally on rivers.
- Lake Cascade supports the largest number of nesting Western Grebes in the state.
- In 2017, 1,278 nest structures were counted in the colony at Lake Cascade.
- Floating nests are built in shallow water.

Did you know...Grebe feet are set far back on their bodies, and because of this they can't walk on land easily like a duck can.

Explore Idaho with Scout the Fox!

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More Fun Facts!

- They are famous for a ballet-like courtship display in which male and female “run” across the water together, their necks curved in an S-shape.
- Western Grebes swallow their own feathers as they preen. These feathers end up lining the stomach, where they may help protect against sharp fish bones.

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Help Protect the Western Grebe

- Western Grebes are a Species of Greatest Conservation Need in Idaho
- Help with recycling of fishing line to avoid birds being entangled
- When boating on lakes, stay 300 feet away from nest colonies and watch your wake to avoid swamping nests
- Minimize use of pesticides

**ACTIVITY TIME**

Look for information on the history of Western Grebe feathers being used in the past to make coats, capes, and hats. How did that impact their population?

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Watch a video of Western Grebes *dancing* during courtship. How would you describe the *dance*?

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VOCABULARY

• **Habitat**: the natural environment in which an animal or plant usually lives

• **Reeds and Rushes**: wetland plants

• **Conservation**: careful preservation and protection of something

• **Regurgitate**: bring food back up from the stomach before it has been digested

• **Pesticide**: a chemical preparation for destroying plant, fungal, or animal pests

NOTES

Thanks to the Idaho Department of Fish and Game for wildlife information.

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