

**LOUISIANA BIRD RECORDS COMMITTEE
RARE BIRD DOCUMENTATION**

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Species: Western Grebe, *Aechmophorus occidentalis*
Location: Cutt Pointe, False River, Pointe Coupee Parish, Louisiana
Date: 8 March 2020
Age and sex: Unknown
Molt status: Unknown
Number of individuals: One
Other observers: Andre Moncrieff, Eamon Corbett
Original observer: Van Remsen

Circumstances: This bird was found by Van on 6 March 2020, and the three of us chased it a few days later. We arrived at Cutt Pointe and started scoping the water. Eamon found the bird fairly quickly after we arrived and we watched it for most of the time that we were there. It was actively diving among ducks and other grebes out in the False River. Initially quite distant, but it slowly got closer as time went on, and towards the end we managed to get some quite good looks through the scope. The sun was behind us, which made for great lighting. Temps in low 60s, sunny, light breeze. Poor photos digiscoped by Oscar. Andre also got some distant photos with his nice camera. Our eBird checklist is here: <https://ebird.org/checklist/S65567750>
As far as I know, this bird was last reported on 12 March 2020.

Description: Written shortly after seeing the bird. A rather large and very long-necked grebe, contrastingly black-and-white overall (*i.e.* clearly an *Aechmophorus*). The back was dark gray, and the flanks only slightly pale, though mottled with white. The neck was white in front, with a broad black band on the rear. The crown was black, contrasting with white side side of the head and the throat. The eye was entirely encircled in the black of the crown such that the eye did not stand out. The bill was yellowish-green, and not as bright yellow as that found on a Clark's. At some angles the bill took on a very green tone lacking much of any yellow at all.

Discussion: The long neck and overall pattern were typical of an *Aechmophorus* grebe. The only real identification challenge is separating this bird from a Clark's Grebe or a hybrid. I believe that the characters visible on this bird were all consistent with a Western Grebe and inconsistent with a Clark's or a hybrid. Namely, the hind-neck band was too broad (narrower in Clark's or hybrid), the flanks were dark blackish lacking any pale

coloration, the dark coloration on the face extended below the eye and lacked any visible white in front or above the eye, and the bill color was an olive green with only a slight hint of yellowish color as is typical of a Western Grebe. I have seen many Clark's and Western Grebes, and a few hybrids, in the western United states and am very familiar with the identification challenges of this group.





