



# Horned Grebe

## Summary of COSEWIC Assessment and Status Report (2009)

### SPECIAL CONCERN



#### What do Horned Grebes look like?

- Small waterbird
- Length 31–38 cm (12–15 inches), weight 300–570 grams (0.7–1.3 pounds)
- Short, straight bill with a pale tip
- Patch of bright feathers behind the eyes that contrasts with its black head (breeding plumage)
- Back is black in colour, other parts of the body are chestnut-red

#### Where are Horned Grebes found?

- They breed from the Yukon and British Columbia in the west to northwestern Ontario in the east.
- The breeding range includes the extreme southern part of Nunavut.
- They winter along the Pacific and Atlantic coasts of North America.
- They generally nest in freshwater (e.g. small ponds). They build nests in the shallow water within areas of vegetation for shelter.



#### Why are Horned Grebes being proposed to be listed as Special Concern?

- Monitoring has shown a population decline of 45% (on the wintering grounds) and 66% (on the breeding grounds) since the mid-1960s.
- Over the last three generations (12 years), monitoring has shown a decline of 14% (wintering grounds) and 47% (breeding grounds).
- No evidence of decline in the NWT.

#### What are the main threats to Horned Grebes?

The cause of population decline is not known, but the main threats to this species are:

- Permanent loss or degradation of wetlands due to agriculture and urban development.
- Temporary loss of wetland habitat due to cycles of drought in the Prairie region.
- Increasing populations of nest predators (mostly in the Prairies, e.g. ravens, raccoons).
- Oil spills on their wintering grounds in the Pacific and Atlantic Oceans.
- Contamination, disease, commercial fishing, and competition with other species.

The entire COSEWIC Status Report is available online at: <http://www.sararegistry.gc.ca>