

Summary of the proposed Management Plan for the **HORNED GREBE** (WESTERN POPULATION)

Under the Species at Risk Act (SARA), a management plan must be developed for each species listed as Special Concern in order to identify measures for the conservation of the species. This document highlights the key sections of the draft management plan.

Species Conservation Status

The Horned Grebe, Western population (*Podiceps auritus*) is listed as Special Concern under SARA (since 2017).

Description and Distribution

The Horned Grebe is a relatively small waterbird weighing between 300 to 570 grams. Its breeding plumage is characterized by a distinctive patch of bright yellow feathers, which extends into tufts behind the eye. Its eyes are red and its neck and flanks are chestnut-red. In winter, the plumage is black (back) and white (belly), while the white cheeks contrast with a black crown.

In Canada, the highest known densities occur in the Prairie Potholes Region in southern Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba. This species is also found in Yukon, the Northwest Territories, southern parts of Nunavut, and east of the Coast Mountains in British Columbia and in northwestern parts of Ontario.

Habitat Needs

The Horned Grebe breeds in small, shallow, and usually fishless, perennial ponds with areas of open water surrounded by emergent vegetation, such as sedges, rushes, and cattails. Horned Grebes are usually solitary nesters, as well as opportunistic in their selection of a breeding site, as they will readily nest in human-created habitat.



Horned Grebe pair © iStock.com/pum_eva

Threats to the Species' Survival

- Habitat loss due to conversion of wetlands to agricultural land, climate change and the development of transportation corridors.
- Decreased productivity due to increased pesticide runoffs, which contaminate wetlands and limit invertebrate prey.
- Mortality from spills associated with natural resource extraction activities, fisheries bycatch during migration and on wintering grounds, collisions with power lines, and from pathogens, specifically avian botulism.
- Habitat disturbance due to increased nutrient and sediment loading from livestock and ranching; agriculture; fire and fire suppression; oil and gas; mining and quarrying; logging and wood harvesting; and the construction of related infrastructure.



Management Objectives

Over the next 30 years, maintain the Horned Grebe population level throughout its Canadian range at, or above, the average population levels of the last 30 years.

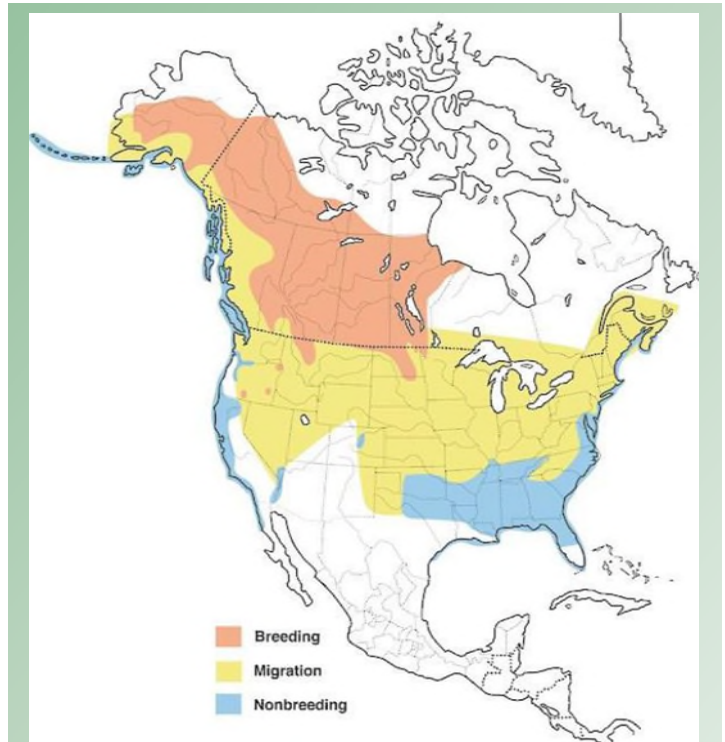
Strategies to Help Meet Objectives

Broad strategies to address the threats to the survival and recovery of the species include:

- Empowering private landowners, through stewardship programs, to conserve and restore seasonal and semi-permanent wetlands;
- Supporting the adoption, implementation and enforcement of wetland conservation policies, particularly for industries in the western boreal forest;
- Developing environmentally-responsible best practice guidelines for crop and livestock management that integrate conservation of seasonal and semi-permanent wetlands;
- Developing breeding habitat restoration guidelines (e.g. borrow pits, farm dugouts and stock ponds), particularly drought resilient habitat;
- Establishing a long-term monitoring program of wetland bird species to track abundance and habitat use throughout the Horned Grebe's range;
- Establishing a monitoring program that compiles incidents, species and number of individuals affected by oil spills, fisheries bycatch, collisions with power lines, diseases and dry landing;
- Conducting research to understand connectivity between breeding, molting, staging and wintering grounds;
- Conducting research to understand the impacts of pesticides on wetland bird species.

How You Can Help

- Learn more about the Horned Grebe, the threats to its survival and its habitat needs at www.canada.ca/en/environment-climate-change/services/species-risk-public-registry.html;
- Practice voluntary stewardship activities and best management practices, for example:
 - Work in cooperation with Environment and Climate Change Canada and/or local conservation groups to conserve essential habitat; and
 - Avoid activities that could harm the species or its habitat.
- Submit observation data to conservation data centres (e.g., eBird).



Distribution of the Horned Grebe in North America (from Cornell Lab – Birds of North America's Website, Stedman, 2018)

For more information, please contact us directly at:

Environment and Climate Change Canada (ECCC) – Canadian Wildlife Service,
Northern Region
Email: Hayley.roberts@canada.ca

You can also visit the following website for more information:
Species at Risk Public Registry (www.sararegistry.gc.ca)

For information regarding reproduction rights, please contact Environment and Climate Change Canada's Public Inquiries Centre at 1-800-668-6767 (in Canada only) or 819-997-2800 or email to ec.enviinfo.ec@canada.ca.
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