

A close-up photograph of a Western Grebe swimming in water. The grebe has a black cap, a white neck, and a long, sharp yellow beak. Its eye is a striking red. The background is a blurred natural setting with reeds and water.

# Western Grebe Recovery and Management in Alberta through Stewardship and Citizen Science

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# Western Grebe Identification

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- Black and white
- Long slender neck
- Yellow pointed bill
- Red eyes
- Diving bird, sit low in water



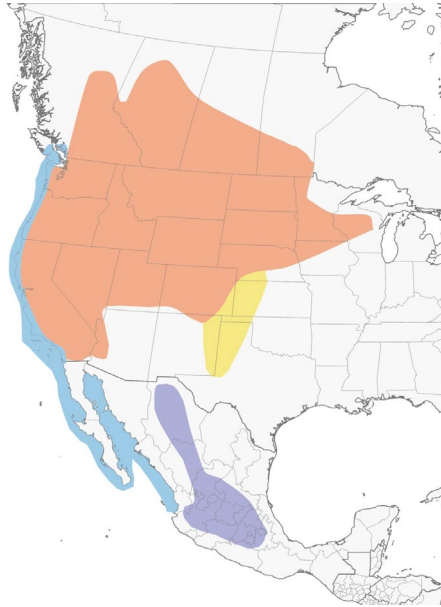
Photo credit: Dave Prescott



Photo credit: Delaney Frame

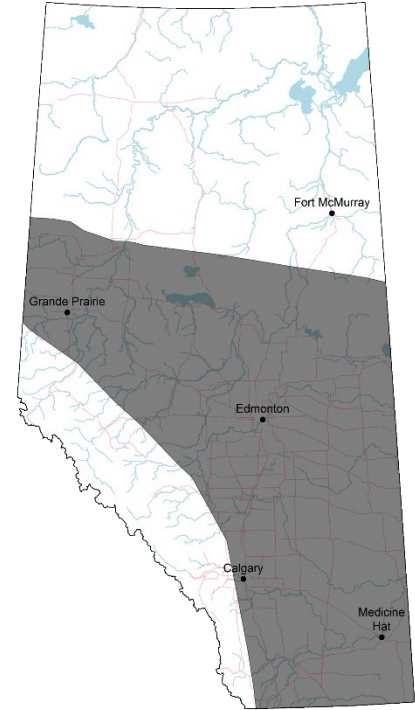
**Red-necked grebe**

# Distribution



- Year-round
- Breeding
- Migration
- Nonbreeding

Widespread throughout Alberta, but there are a few large, key colonies (e.g. Slave Lake)





# Western Grebe Biology



Photo credit: Dave Prescott



Photo credit: Delaney Frame



Photo credit: Delaney Frame



# Important Ecology

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Mating



Nesting



Post-hatch

# Threats – Recreational activities

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- Large wakes
  - Flood nests, wash out eggs
  - Flush adults leaving eggs vulnerable to predation



# Threats – Shoreline Development

- Shoreline and emergent vegetation clearing reduces available habitat
- Additional activity on shoreline and in water causes disturbance



# Additional Threats

- Oil spills
- Boat collisions with birds on the water
- Fishing line entanglement



# Management and Recovery of Western Grebes in Alberta

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# Provincial Recovery

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- In 2014, western grebes were listed as *Threatened* under Alberta's *Wildlife Act*
- Listing based on population declines, colony losses and a reduced extent and quality of habitat in the province

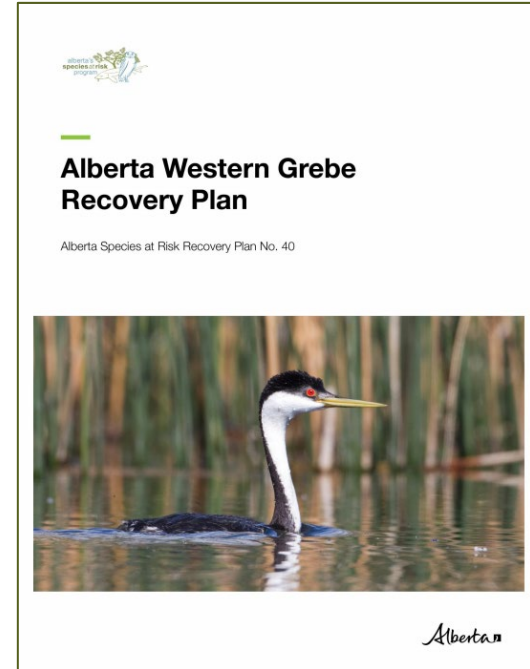


# Alberta Recovery Plan

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## Recovery Goal:

- *To maintain a stable, long-term average population of at least 15 000 western grebes in Alberta with no contraction in the species' distribution in the province.*



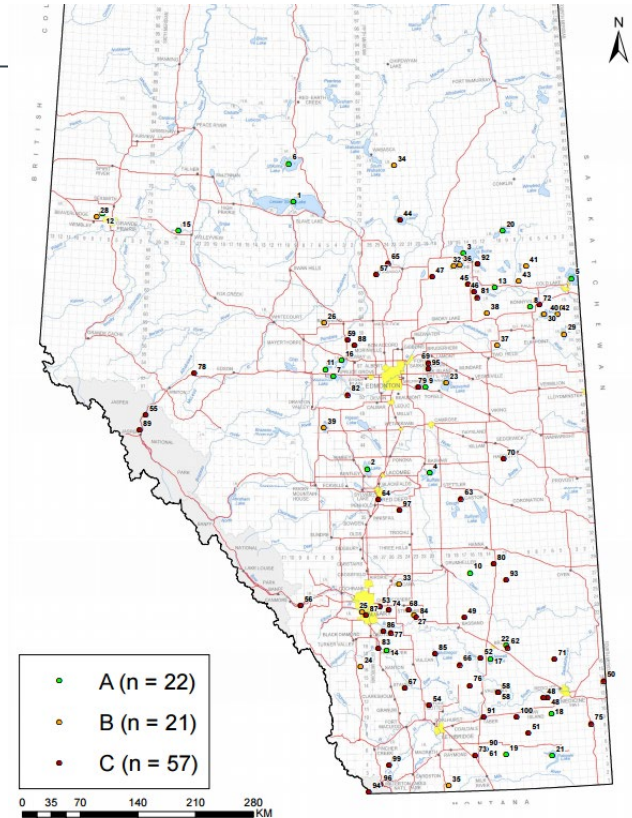
# Recovery Strategies

- **Quantify suitability for occupancy of all current and formerly occupied western grebe lakes in Alberta.**
- Protect nesting habitat
- Develop a standardized monitoring strategy
- **Reduce human disturbance by educating lake users, stakeholders and the public**
- Reduce mortality from anthropogenic sources
- Support research to better understand western grebe biology, monitoring and management



# Key Western Grebe Lakes

- 264 lakes with records of western grebes (most non-breeding)
- 43 lakes are currently identified as priority for management
- 22 “A” (highest priority); and 21 “B” (second highest priority)
- We target these lakes for conservation and recovery actions



# Criteria for inclusion as priority lakes

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	A lake	B lake
Population	>100 in last 10 years	>100 in the last 10+ years
Habitat suitability	High or medium	High or medium

Suitable habitat: extensive and continuous patches of emergent vegetation capable of supporting:

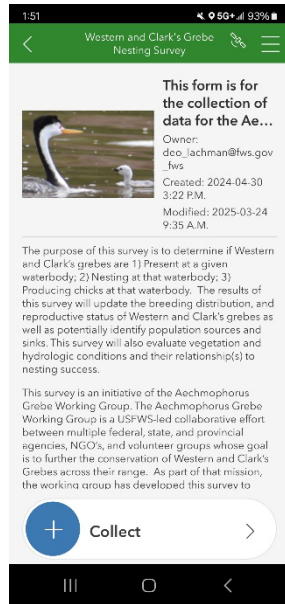
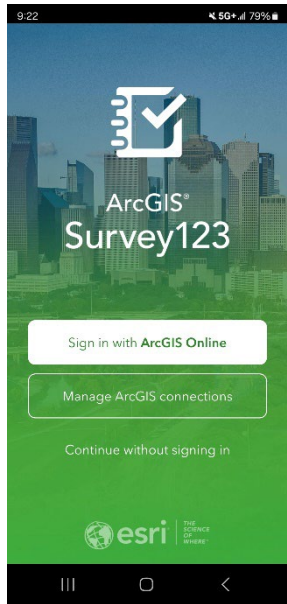
- >100 breeding birds (high habitat ranking), or
- 10-99 breeding birds (medium habitat ranking)

# Opportunities for involvement

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- Western grebes are widespread throughout Alberta, thus making surveying and managing logistically difficult
- Many of the recovery actions can be accomplished through interested stewardship groups and citizen scientists
- Key areas of involvement include lake monitoring, education, and reporting of mortality

# Key opportunities for involvement

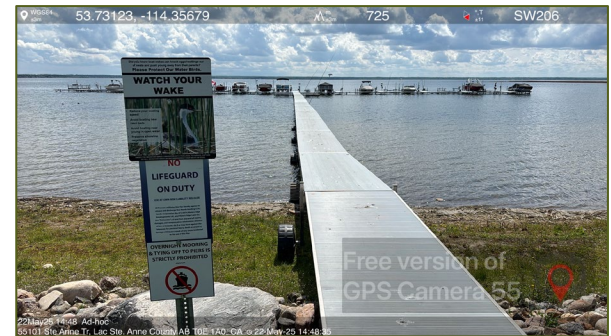
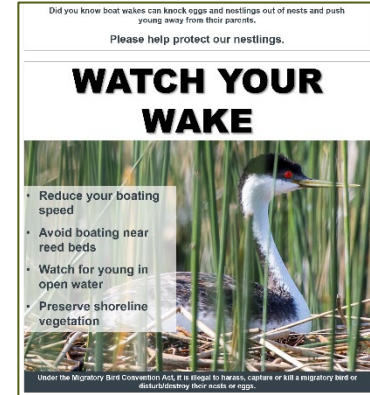


- Lake monitoring
  - Western grebe occupancy
  - Nesting
  - Habitat suitability (intact shoreline nesting habitat)
  - Identify threats

# Opportunities for involvement

## Education

- Erect signage at boat launches
- Integrate western grebe conservation messages into your programming:
  - Social media
  - Brochures
  - Public talks



# Opportunities for involvement



**Alberta** EPA Fish and Wildlife Contact Map

**Contacts for Business, Industry, Resource Research & Planners**

Alberta Environment and Protected Areas (EPA) Fish and Wildlife Stewardship Branch contact map provides contacts for consultants, industry, and Resource Managers who are involved in planning industrial and land use activities. Fish and Wildlife Contacts address needs pertaining to Wildlife Research or Collection Permits, FWMIS Data Requests, and Fish Research, Competitive Fishing Event and/or Fish Salvage Licensing.

**Fisheries and Wildlife Management working area/district by boundary - Click on the area name to view a listing of contact names.**

Information regarding FWMIS Data Requests: <https://www.alberta.ca/access-fwmis-data.aspx>

FWMIS data requests that span across multiple Fish or Wildlife Contact Districts: [EPA.FWDataMgmt@gov.ab.ca](mailto:EPA.FWDataMgmt@gov.ab.ca)

Information on Fish Research Licence(s) in Alberta: <https://www.alberta.ca/fish-research-licence.aspx>

Information on Wildlife Research or Collection Permits in Alberta: <https://www.alberta.ca/wildlife-research-and-collection.aspx>

A screenshot of a web-based map interface. The map shows the outline of Alberta, Canada, with several districts highlighted in red. The districts labeled are: Peace River, Fort McMurray, Slave Lake, Grande Prairie, Athabasca, Edson, Spruce Grove, Rocky Mountain House, Red Deer, Cochrane, and Lethbridge. The map includes a search bar at the top with the text "Find address or place", a scale bar at the bottom indicating 300km, and a coordinate display showing "111.594 54.963 Degrees".

- Report mortality to local Fish and Wildlife biologist
- Search: EPA Fish and Wildlife Contact Map

# In Conclusion

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- Western grebes are an iconic species in Alberta, widely distributed but sensitive to many threats
- Alberta Environment and Protected Areas is actively working on recovery of western grebes
- Many opportunities exist for partnership and collaboration!

# Contact Info/Resources

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- [Delaney.Frame@gov.ab.ca](mailto:Delaney.Frame@gov.ab.ca) 780-962-7412
- [Cindy.Kemper@gov.ab.ca](mailto:Cindy.Kemper@gov.ab.ca) 587-785-6072

Recovery plan:

<https://open.alberta.ca/publications/alberta-western-grebe-recovery-plan>

.....or just google “Alberta Western Grebe Recovery Plan”

