

## Chasing the Pied-billed Grebe

By Dane Anderson

About 3 years ago, I was not very interested in birding. Even though I was not seriously interested in birding, I had an Audubon Society field guide. One day, while I was thumbing through my field guide, I came across a bird that would soon change my views on birding. Yes, this bird is the Pied-billed Grebe. I stared at this beautiful bird for quite some time. Never in my life had I been so amazed by just one bird. I quickly looked at its range, to see if it lived near me. I jumped for joy when I saw that it lived in my area.

Some people would think that this bird is not as attractive as a Wood Duck or any other member of the grebe family, but this particular bird has somehow led me on a journey that is, by far, not over. To this day, I have not seen a Pied-Billed Grebe. I have gotten up early and my mom has driven me down to the park to look for this elusive bird. I even have a local bird book on the birding hotspots in Southern Oregon.

The book has a park that is only 3 miles from me in it. They (the people writing the book) saw the Pied-Billed Grebe eighteen out of twenty-seven counts at this particular park. I have seen it zero out of twenty-seven counts. However, I am not surprised at these statistics. There are three possibilities for these "impossible" happenings. The book was published in 1999, about seven years ago. Perhaps all of the grebes left. Seven years in an awful long time. Also, last winter, we had a large flood here in Southern Oregon. You see, this park's southern boundary is the Rogue River and there was a large inlet along the southern boundary of the park. This flood washed out a lot of the inlet's trees and shrubs, demolishing the Pied-Billed Grebe's habitat. The last possibility is the fact that their counts were a lot longer than my counts. They were there all day; I was there only an hour. After so many unsuccessful attempts, at this park, I asked my father if he had ever seen a Pied-Billed Grebe. He said that he had seen one in a park about thirty miles from where I live. Perfect spot, right?

Well, I went there, one day, and was sure that I was going to see a Pied-billed Grebe. This park has a huge pond and you have to walk a little ways to reach the spot where my father had seen a Pied-Billed Grebe. So, we walked a little ways before I saw something that crushed me. For there were several construction trucks right near the pond. Yes, there was a construction site right at the edge of the pond. I was devastated. How could this happen to me? First a flood, then a construction site? That is beyond belief. But there are still a few places that I have not checked, yet.

There is a lake about one hundred miles from where we live called Klamath Lake. After hours of research, I have found out that this is a place to see a grebe. Not just Pied-billed Grebes, but Horned, Eared, Western, Clark's, and Red-necked grebes, as well. But, you know what? The Pied-Billed Grebe is the most common grebe at Klamath Lake.

So you think that all of those wasted counts of not seeing a Pied-billed Grebe were for nothing, right? Well, I have seen other birds along the way that I have not seen in my life. For example: One time I went to a park that has a good size pond. Remember the flood? Well, I saw a Black-crowned Night-Heron perched in a tree during that flood. (Black-crowned Night-Herons are extremely rare in my area) But even some of the most common birds have sparked my interest to lead me to more serious birding.

Inside all of these failed attempts to see a Pied-Billed Grebe, I have almost wanted to quit and give up. But then I thought it over. I'm no quitter and I don't give up at things that I know

that I can do. This task could take some time, but I'm willing to do whatever it takes to see a Pied-Billed Grebe.

#### REFERENCES

*Guide to the Birds of the Rogue Valley*  
Barbara W. Massey, Dennis P. Vroman

*Southern Oregon's Bird Life*  
John Kemper

*Stokes Field Guide to Birds (Western Region)*  
Donald & Lillian Stokes