

Pied-billed Grebe (*Podilymbus podiceps*)

Pennsylvania Candidate Rare Bird Species

State Rank: S3B; S4N (vulnerable, breeding; apparently secure, non-breeding) **Global Rank: G5** (secure)

Identification

The Pied-billed Grebe is a small water bird, about 31-38 cm (12-15 in), with a blunt beak that bears a single distinctive stripe in the mating season. Male and female adults are both drab brown with white rumps and diagnostic black patches on the throat and forehead; the chicks are striped in sharp black and white. Because Pied-billed Grebes are secretive, especially during their breeding season, their population size and distribution are not known in detail.

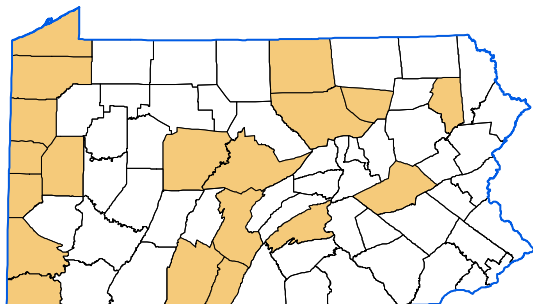


photo source: Dave Menke
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Range

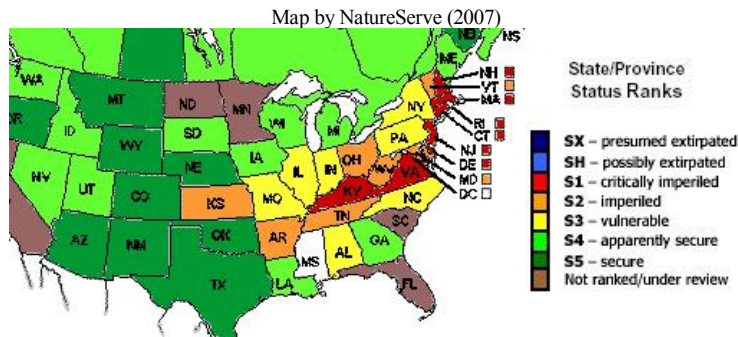
Pied-billed Grebes are year-round residents of the North American southeast and west, as well as southern South America; and breeding residents from the midwestern and eastern United States north into Canada.

Pennsylvania Distribution by County



Pennsylvania Natural Heritage Program data 2007

North American State/Province Conservation Status



Habitat

Pied-billed Grebes inhabit wetlands near open water, including farm ponds, marshes, artificial lakes, and flooded quarries. They require thick vegetation of some sort – rushes, reeds, or cattails – to provide cover and anchorage for their floating nests.

Conservation Status

The Pied-billed Grebe is most vulnerable to human alteration of its wetland habitats: draining, filling, or other interference with natural hydrology. However, Ickes (in Brauning 1992) suggests that this danger may be offset by the grebe's willingness to nest in artificial ponds. Recreational activities such as boating and fishing may also disturb the birds. They can benefit most from preservation and restoration of wetland habitats and from control of disruptive human activities near its breeding grounds. NatureServe's management recommendations call for preserved wetlands to be larger than 10 hectares, with healthy populations of emergent and submerged vegetation; and for breeding grounds to be protected from chemical pollution, siltation, and eutrophication. Maintenance of stable water levels in managed wetlands can greatly improve the grebes' reproductive success.

References

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