



# *The Western Grebe*

Redbud Audubon Society, Inc.,

[www.redbudaudubon.org](http://www.redbudaudubon.org)

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## **The Saga of the Pied-billed Grebes**

*By Henry Bornstein, Photos by Gae Henry*

The Audubon Guide to North American Birds states that Pied-billed Grebes are “secretive in the breeding season, hiding in the marsh.” Obviously, the pair that built their nest a few feet from my dock off of Cache Creek didn’t get the memo. This provided an amazing opportunity to have an intimate look as the Grebes worked to raise their young. The pictures tell the story best, but here are some notes about a few of the things that we saw.

The nest was built by the two birds in one day and the five eggs appeared a few days later on July 3. [PHOTO 1] At first, both birds incubated the eggs. After a week or so, the female took over the job and the male left the area. This was all happening during the incredible heat spell we had in early July. During the heat of the day, she kept the eggs in her shadow, evidently to keep them from overheating. [PHOTO 2] *Continued on page 6*



*(Photo 1) Five eggs in the nest.*



*(Photo 2) Shading eggs from the heat.*

# President's Message

by Roberta Lyons



Hi All! This issue of the newsletter is when I'm usually welcoming everyone back to another fun season of Redbud Audubon monthly programs, field

trips, the Christmas Bird Count. . .

Instead, because of the Covid 19 threat, I'm reporting that as of now, we won't be having any monthly programs or field trips, however, we will still be doing a Christmas Bird Count! We will probably have to change the venue and protocols a little.

We don't plan on any Zoom program meetings, but that could change. I'm joining a Zoom program this week (first week of September) being presented by Wintu Audubon. I'll see how it goes and if it seems practical for us to attempt it. Many of our members and readers are familiar with Zoom, and we do have members of Redbud Audubon with the technical skills to pull it off, but it still takes a lot of effort and planning and requires the willingness of the presenter to set up their program so it can be shared using Zoom. I'm open to any suggestions so just call me at (707) 994-2024 and leave a message or email me at [roberta.lyons@att.net](mailto:roberta.lyons@att.net).

In this newsletter is an enjoyable story and lots of images of a Pied-bill Grebe pair that was followed and studied by Henry Bornstein and Gae Henry. I think you will enjoy the saga of the Pied-bill Grebes.

Another way to enjoy nature is to click on the link to Bob Schoenherr's YouTube site to view the wonderful "A Walk in the Park," videos. They are superb explorations of our own Clear Lake State Park and are often updated. Click on this link:

<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLIt7dpkiufHKItJnP6f9XCj913i-wbAad>

By exploring Bob's YouTube channel you can also

(Continued on page 5)

The State Park Play List link is:  
[Clear Lake State Park](https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLIt7dpkiufHKItJnP6f9XCj913i-wbAad)



 Clear Lake State Park

<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLIt7dpkiufHKItJnP6f9XCj913i-wbAad>

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Other great links of Bob's:

The Land Trust Link is:  
[Lake County Land Trust](https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLIt7dpkiufHKGqgFhhsVWXnJun8dmn14)



 Lake County Land Trust

<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLIt7dpkiufHKGqgFhhsVWXnJun8dmn14>

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[Pure Nature Playlist](https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLIt7dpkiufHLGpgDsxxkzn6zhLmwCYsKrU) just items  
around the western states...

<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLIt7dpkiufHLGpgDsxxkzn6zhLmwCYsKrU>

## Saddened at the loss of long-time Redbud Audubon member Leona Butts



*Leona Butts*

We are sad to report that Leona Butts, a resident of Clearlake Oaks, and a long time Redbud Audubon member and volunteer, died in early July, 2020.

Leona and her late husband DA Butts moved to Clearlake Oaks in 1996 and immediately became supporters of the Redbud Audubon Society. When Redbud started Heron Days, 25

years ago, Leona and DA were among the first people to volunteer the use of their pontoon boat to take people into Anderson Marsh to view the Heron rookery there. DA drove the vessel and Leona served as the bird guide. They both consistently attended Audubon programs and field trips, and for many years Leona headed the Armchair Activist program. Leona was a true "Green Republican," and made it clear that one could be "conservative" as well as being an environmentalist.

Along with her Audubon activities, Leona also volunteered for both the Clear Lake State Park Interpretive Association and the Anderson Marsh State Park Interpretive Association. She led walks, helped at different events held by the parks and presented programs. She was famous for a beautiful PowerPoint program she produced on the White Pelicans that frequent Clear Lake in the winter. She also single handedly wrote the docent training manual for the Clear Lake Sector State Parks. It is still in use today.

She spent several years caring for her beloved husband of 67 years, DA Butts, who died in July, 2016, age 88. DA was also a volunteer for Redbud Audubon and for the State Parks and created and delivered interesting and educational programs on geology.

Leona and DA were both from Fayette, Iowa, where they met and grew up together. They had no children but are survived by family members in Iowa. They are an example of a couple who had well-lived lives and they will be remembered for their contributions and for their devotion to each other.

*Roberta Lyons*

*President, Redbud Audubon Society*

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# Audubon chapter meetings upcoming on Zoom

*Listed below are several upcoming Zoom meetings that nearby Audubon chapters are offering to their members, with guest attendees welcome to join. Please check each chapter's website or Facebook page for more information or reminder alerts.*

## **Birding Indonesia's Lydekker's Line with Matthew Matthiessen**

**Tuesday, Sept. 15, 2020, 7 p.m.  
Peregrine Audubon, Ukiah**

Join us this evening as we go Birding Lydekker's Line with Matthew Matthiessen. Near the east end of the Indonesian archipelago, just before reaching New Guinea, lies Lydekker's Line. Although invisible to the eye, it does mark the boundary forming the eastern limit of Asian bird species. Matthiessen is an engaging and entertaining speaker, as well as a world-class photographer.

Zoom link: Send email to webmaster Cheryl at [cwatson@pacific.net](mailto:cwatson@pacific.net)

## ***Wildlife and Wildfire: Animal Adaptations for a Dynamic Ecosystem***

**Thursday, Sept. 17, 2020, 7 p.m.  
Golden Gate Audubon, San Francisco**

Wildfires are an important part of many ecosystems around the world. Fires provide an opportunity for new growth, to return nutrients to the soil, and to create a wholly unique type of habitat. However, these systems exist in a delicate balance. Recently, forest

fires have been increasing in size, intensity, and frequency due to human activities, and even fire-adapted species are struggling to keep up.

In this talk we discuss how animals survive and thrive in a system defined by fire and what we can do to help protect the balance of these special ecosystems. Speaker Lynn Schofield is a biologist for the Institute for Bird Populations.

Her research covers a diversity of topics including bird migration, forest fire ecology, and wetland conservation.

Zoom link: Send email to Communications Manager Melissa at [mramos@goldengateaudubon.org](mailto:mramos@goldengateaudubon.org).

## ***Are We Polarized? Birders and Bird Photographers***

**Monday, Sept. 21, 2020. 6:30 p.m.  
Altacal Audubon, Chico**

Presenters: Joan Robins and John Seid. Although birders might become irate when bird photographers venture too close and flush a special species, and bird photographers might not welcome a large group of birders to a remote spot where they have remained silent and immobile for hours hoping for a peek at a shy rail, we are all aligned in our love of the natural world. Joan and John will talk about some of the differences and similarities in the two areas of expertise, show where there is much overlap, and discuss how each can learn from the other.

Zoom Meeting ID: 769 5135 3272 Passcode: 6K1Mpg

## ***Legislative support needed!***

Some of our members who are also members of National Audubon may receive email from National on legislative issues that affect our birds. National Audubon (as well as California Audubon) makes it easy to click on a link to locate your representatives in Congress and their email. Your voice is important! Our voices together can make a difference. Redbud Audubon forwards pertinent legislative notices via email to you. We hope you will not mind if you receive them both from National Audubon and us. The protection of our bird life is extremely important.

### ***Welcome new and returning members***

Welcome new and returning members: Thomas Moore, Calistoga; Kristen Olson, Kelseyville; Anne Frappier, Middletown; Luis Santana, Upper Lake, Stella Winckler, Kelseyville; Margaret Flick, Kelseyville; John Berry, Lakeport; Rick McCann, Kelseyville; Franz Waltenspuhl, Cobb; Barbara Bridges, Lakeport; Keith Nelson, Lakeport; Wayne Hill, Clearlake Oaks, Mary Rhude, Clearlake Oaks; Linda Drake, Kelseyville; Duane Strebe, Lakeport; and Margaret Pataki, Middletown.

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## ***Membership explained***

Just a quick reminder that you have a choice between two types of membership. Most of you are members of National Audubon and are assigned by National to our Redbud Audubon chapter. We offer chapter-only membership whereby you ***must enroll via the internet***. You can visit our website at [www.redbudaudubon.org](http://www.redbudaudubon.org) and click on membership for further details.

Also, as a reminder, if you are receiving this newsletter by regular mail and are open to receiving it by email, you can save the chapter significant printing and mailing costs by emailing us at [redbud.audubon@gmail.org](mailto:redbud.audubon@gmail.org) and letting us know.

If you prefer to receive the newsletter by mail, please consider donating \$10 - \$15 to Redbud Audubon.

## ***President's Message*** ***by Roberta Lyons***

*(Continued from page 2)*

look at other videos created by him, along with his able partner Anita Benzing, including videos of Rodman Preserve and other Lake County Land Trust properties. For those of you who do not get the Western Grebe by email, you can go to our website: [www.redbudaudubon.org](http://www.redbudaudubon.org), go to our September newsletter that will be posted, and click on the links that are provided in the newsletter.

I hope everyone is safe and staying as well as possible with the ever-present threats of fire and Covid 19. We need to stay strong and try to stay in touch with each other. We'll get through this together.



John James Audubon

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## ***Please provide us with your email***

A number of our members have emailed us at [redbud.audubon@gmail.com](mailto:redbud.audubon@gmail.com) to opt to receive our newsletter, "The Western Grebe" by email as opposed to receiving it by mail.

Not only do you help save a tree, you help us save on expenses and energy in sending it to you by regular mail, and it comes to you in color versus the black-and-white mailed version. If you have been meaning to, but haven't yet done so, take a minute or two out of your time to do so.

Even if you still prefer to receive the mailed version of the "Grebe", we would like to have your email for our records. Once in a while, we send out emails to our members about important events or bird sightings that may be of interest. You are also welcome

to email us with any information that you think would be of interest to the membership. Questions requiring expert opinions are forwarded to the appropriate persons.

Also, we rely on our members for whom we have emails to help us with any volunteer efforts that we may have. Often it just means a couple of hours of your time. Whether you have areas of expertise or birding skills that you can share, or are willing to help us with general staffing of booths, setting up booths and transporting materials, we welcome your participation.

So please give us your email address by sending it to [redbud.audubon@gmail.com](mailto:redbud.audubon@gmail.com), and, if you wish, let us know in what areas you feel you can help.

# *The Saga of the Pied-billed Grebes*

*Continued from page 1*

When the grebe left the nest unattended to grab a quick meal, she covered the eggs in wet tules. [PHOTO 3]

Finally, after almost three weeks, three of the eggs hatched, leaving one egg in the nest. The fifth egg had disappeared, perhaps a victim of predation or a quick roll out of the nest. [PHOTO 4] The three chicks were in the water swimming the same day that they hatched. [PHOTO 5]

Mom continued to incubate the remaining egg as the youngsters climbed onto her in the nest. [PHOTO 6] At this point, the male returned to help feed the chicks as mom incubated the last egg. The youngsters were fed fish and aquatic invertebrates such as crawdads. [PHOTO 7] Two days later, the final egg hatched and there were four hungry chicks to feed. [PHOTO 8]

About a week later, trouble arrived in the form of a river otter that cruised into the channel. [PHOTO 9] The two adult grebes called loudly for the chicks and two youngsters quickly climbed onto each adult grebe. They exited the channel rapidly, all the time calling loudly. [PHOTO 10] The otter followed slowly.

The following day, only one adult and two chicks returned to the nest. It looked like the female, though it is hard to be certain. [PHOTO 11] The other adult and the two other chicks were not seen again.

In the days following the return, the two chicks, now about a week old, spent a lot of time away from the nest with mom, practicing swimming and diving. [PHOTO 12] *Continued on page 8*



*(Photo 3) Nest covered.*



*(Photo 4) Chicks on the nest with egg.*



*(Photo 5) Chicks in water as mom returns.*



*(Photo 6) Sitting on the egg with chicks.*



*(Photo 7) Dad with dinner.*



*(Photo 8) Chicks in the nest.*



*(Photo 9) Otter in the channel.*



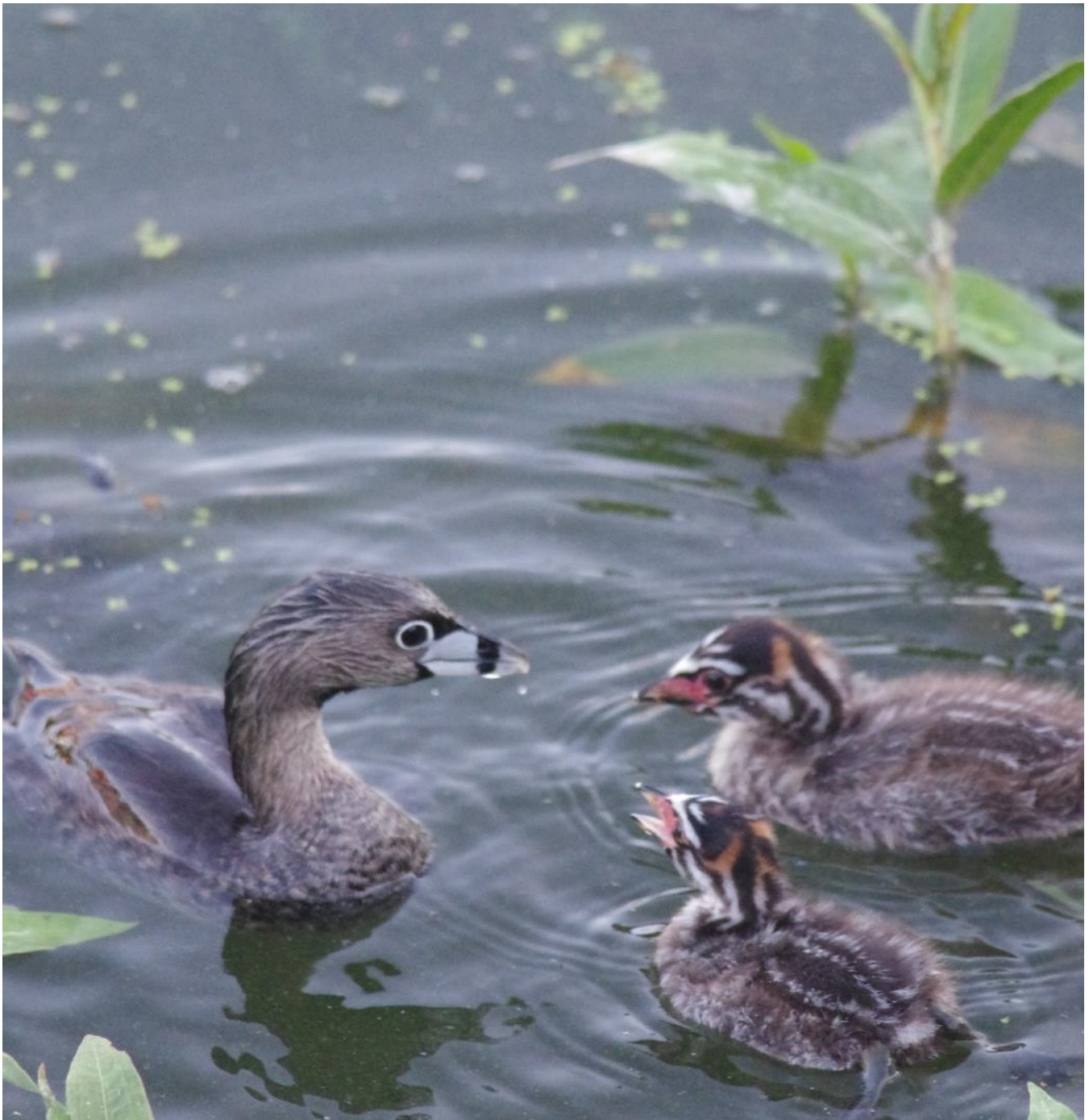
*(Photo 10) Running from the otter.*



*(Photo 11) Grebe and two chicks return.*



*(Photo 12) Chicks swimming*



*(Photo 13) Hungry chicks at morning feeding.*

## ***The Saga of the Pied-billed Grebes***

*Continued from page 6*

In the morning, the chicks called loudly when they were hungry and wanted to be fed. By the difference in size between the two chicks, it seems that one of the survivors could have been that last egg that hatched. [PHOTO 13]

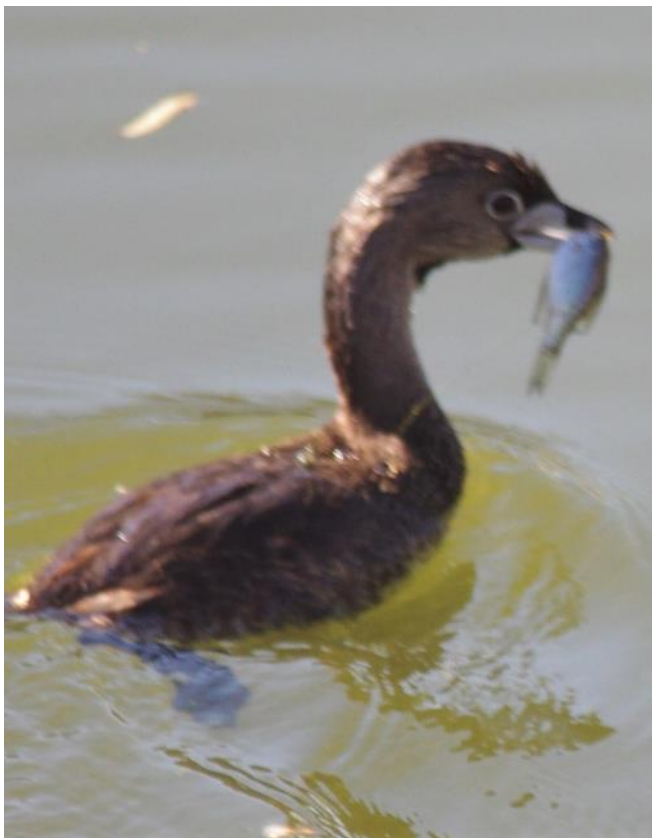
The nest seems to have been located directly on top of an inexhaustible supply of food, which saved mom the trouble of moving off the nest to feed her chicks. [PHOTOS 14, 15, 16]

*(Continued on page 10)*

*Below: (Photos 14, 15)*



*Below: (Photo 16)*



*(Photo 17) Mom with fish.*

## ***The Saga of the Pied-billed Grebes***

*(Continued from page 8)*

Each morning, after she fed the chicks, she left the nest to fish for her own breakfast. [PHOTO 17]

A little over three weeks after the eggs were laid, the nest began to sink. After the nest disappeared, the grebe family left during the day, but continued to return for about two weeks to spend the night where the nest had been located. [PHOTO 18]

Finally, about three weeks after the first chicks hatched, the grebe family made its last visit to the channel. They swam away early in the morning. [PHOTO 19] The older chick was growing fast and was now almost the same size as the adult, but the chicks had still not lost their distinctive adolescent markings.

It is amazing to contemplate the millions of times every year a similar saga plays out in the over 10,000 worldwide bird species. Will Pied-billed Grebes return to this spot next year? We will have to wait to discover the answer.

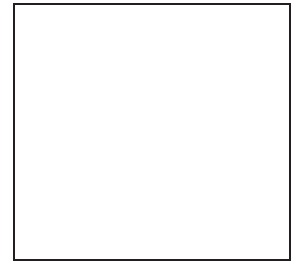


*(Photo 18) Nest gone, after dissolving into the water.*



*(Photo 19) Leaving the channel for the last time.*

**Redbud Audubon**  
**PO Box 5780**  
**Clearlake, CA 95422**



**National Audubon/Redbud Audubon**  
**Joint Membership Application**  
**New Member Introductory Rate — \$20 for the first year**

☐ **YES** Enroll me in both the National Audubon Society and local chapter Redbud Audubon. Start my subscription to **Audubon Magazine**, and **The Western Grebe** chapter newsletter.

☐ Check this box only if you wish to receive **The Western Grebe** newsletter by regular mail. Otherwise, it will be emailed to you.

☐ From time to time, National Audubon may share its mailing list with other environmental organizations. If you do not wish to be contacted, please check this box.

You have the option of joining just the Redbud Chapter by enrolling online at [www.redbudaudubon.org](http://www.redbudaudubon.org).  
Newsletter by email \$25/year; by regular mail \$35/year.

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☐ I would also like to make a donation to the local work of Redbud Audubon. My check is enclosed for  
\_\_\_\_\_ \$25 \_\_\_\_\_ \$50 \_\_\_\_\_ \$75 \_\_\_\_\_ \$100 Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**Please make check payable to Redbud Audubon Society. Mail your application and check to POB 5780, Clearlake, CA 95422**

***Thank you for supporting Redbud Audubon Society***  
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