



✓ Pre-Visit

✓ Field Site

## Activity: Grebe Breeding Behavior, part 1

**Appropriate Grades:** 3-5

**Oregon Content Standard:** Scientific Inquiry: COLLECTING AND PRESENTING DATA  
Conduct procedures to collect, organize, and display scientific data.

**National Science Standard:** Content Standard A - Abilities necessary to do scientific inquiry: use appropriate tools and techniques to gather, analyze, and interpret data.

**Background Information:** The Western and Clark's Grebes are two species of waterbirds that breed in the Klamath Basin. Add species profile on grebes [here](#)..

**Learner Objective:** The student will demonstrate an understanding of bird courtship and the ability to make field observations by formulating questions about Western and Clark's Grebe mating behavior, taking detailed field observations of grebe behavior and summarizing observational data.

### Materials Needed:

- Grebe fact sheet (background section of manual) and courtship behavior (page 3 of this activity)– 1 copy per student
- Life of Birds, Volume 4 (in kit?)
- Binoculars and spotting scope
- Clipboards with strings
- Field Journals
- Pencils and or pens
- Binoculars and scope

### Procedure:

This activity can be done wherever Western and/or Clark's Grebes are mating. Moore Park is a good place to observe these behaviors in April and early May.

1. Discuss what a waterbird is while using Waterbird fact sheet from background section. Give each student a copy of the grebe fact card and the courtship behavior sheet (page 3). Allow them time to read about Western and Clark's Grebes. Add fact card to journals for reference in the field.
2. Play the Life of Birds video on bird courtship behavior (Volume 4). You will need to fast forward to the section on courtship behavior with grebes, your VCR timer should read -00:12.32. After watching it discuss elements of bird courtship; mate selection, mate recognition, resources, nest site, etc. After this general discussion, focus on the grebes. Have students work in groups of 2-3 to generate questions about grebe courtship behavior that they may see in the field. Generate a combined class list of questions.
3. Observe grebes courting at Moore Park or other appropriate site. Schedule a field trip for April or May to observe courting grebes. Have students take their field journals, binoculars, and questions about mating behavior with them in the field. Allow students to spread out at the site and observe birds for 20 min, taking detailed notes in their journals. It may be easiest for each student to observe one pair of courting birds. Encourage students to make detailed notes on grebe behavior, looking for behaviors listed on the grebe behavior sheet (page 3). Challenge students to distinguish between Western and Clark's Grebes.



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### **Procedure Continued:**

4. Back in the classroom: Summarize common behaviors observed by the group. Note similar and unique observations. Tally observations, discuss questions asked, answered, and new questions. Plan for a follow-up visit to observe grebes and their chicks (Part 2 of Activity X).

You may find it useful to visit the site prior to the field trip to verify that grebes are courting at the time of your field trip. Or, contact the Klamath Audubon and ask if someone can verify this for you. They may even have a volunteer who is able to accompany your group on the field trip!



## Grebe Breeding Behavior



Cut out and insert in field journal as a reference page

### Grebe Courtship 'Dance'



rushing



weed Dancing



dip-shaking



bob-preening

### Other Courtship Behaviors

food or nest material offering

mate feeding

nest building

copulation

territorial chasing of other birds

territorial vocalizing

vocalizing to mate