

SPECIES OF THE MONTH**LEAST GREBE****AUGUST 2024**

Of the 5 extant grebe species in the *Tachybaptus* genus, the Least Grebe (*T. dominicus*) is the only one found in the Americas, where it is the smallest grebe. Ranging from Argentina north to southeast Texas, it is a casual and irregular visitor to Arizona. It was first reported in the state on 16 December 1976 in Nogales, and since 2010 at least one has been reported every year but one, primarily in Santa Cruz and Pima counties. From 2010 to 2012, it nested at Peña Blanca Lake (Santa Cruz County), with up to 19 adults and juveniles reported on the same day.

Maricopa County got its third record when a Least Grebe was reported at the Gila Bend sewage ponds on 20 January 2024 and remained through 26 April. This was the first report from this location. Previous county reports were at the Sun Lakes Ponds in 2013 and Glendale Recharge Ponds in 2021. The second report for 2024 was from Canoa Ranch Conservation Park (Pima County) on 29 and 30 June. This was also a new location. The only other counties with records are Pinal (2 in 1995 and 2004) and Cochise (1 in 1998-1999).

Adult Least Grebes are generally unmistakable due to their small size, sooty plumage, slender bill, and yellow to yellow-orange eyes. Eared Grebe (*Podiceps nigricollis*) is larger and grayer, with reddish eyes and a stout bill. However, confusion may occur in the fall when young Eared Grebes often have grayish necks and faces and yellow eyes.

The Least Grebe subspecies that visits Arizona (*T. d. bangsi*) also resides in northwestern Mexico but differs from that found in southern Texas (*T. d. brachypterus*).



Least Grebe, Canoa Ranch Conservation Park, 29 June 2024. Photo by Janine McCabe