

IDENTIFYING LOONS & GREBES IN COASTAL BRITISH COLUMBIA

Loon Indigenous language name: _____ **Grebe Indigenous language name:** _____

With their flashy and distinctive breeding plumage, most species of loons and grebes are fairly easy to identify, even at long distance, but in winter things get a little tougher. Nearly all are reduced to shades of white, gray, and black, making size and structure important in identification (in combination with plumage).

Common Loon

Indigenous language name: _____

- Widespread throughout BC coastal waters (fall-spring)
- In general, Common Loons are dark-gray above and pale below
- Larger, blockier head than Pacific Loon
- Partial pale collar on neck gives it a jagged look
- Larger bill than Pacific Loons

Adult Common Loon in the winter (above by Guy Monty) ▶



Pacific Loon

Indigenous language name: _____

- Sometimes in flocks of several hundred (fall-spring)
- Tends to be more numerous offshore
- Smaller than similar-looking Common Loons with smooth, rounded head
- Often shows a dark "chin-strap"
- Usually darker around eye than Common Loon
- Small, straight bill
- In flight, more slender and streamline than bulky Common Loon

Pacific Loon in the winter (Photo: Ralph Hocken) ▶



Red-throated Loon

Indigenous language name: _____

- Usually not as numerous as the other two loons on the BC coast
- Often found in sheltered coves/harbours, and shallow estuaries
- Distinctive thin bill appears upturned
- Head often peaked near the rear
- Neat speckling on back
- Winter adult has clean white face; juvenile shows light gray streaking
- In flight, often droops its neck

Red-throated Loon (Photo: Ralph Hocken) ▶



Western Grebe

Indigenous language name: _____

- Large grebe with slender build
- Long neck (white throat, thin black nape)
- Greenish-yellow bill, black crown, gray above cheeks & around red eye
- Often seen in large wintering flocks
- Dark gray back, with paler gray/silver flanks
- Like other grebes, sleeps with bill facing forward (opposite of ducks)

Western Grebe (Photo: Gord Gadsden) ▶



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Red-necked Grebe

Indigenous language name: _____

- Medium-sized grebe with large yellow-green beak
- Larger than Horned Grebe with less white and longer bill
- Stockier than Western Grebe, with much less white
- Neck often reddish-brown

Wintering Red-necked Grebe (Photo: Ralph Hocken) ▶



Horned Grebe

Indigenous language name: _____

- Our commonest wintering grebe
- Smaller than Red-necked and Western with short grayish beak
- White face with black crown
- Squarer-headed than Eared Grebe
- Often in small flocks

Wintering Horned Grebe (Photo: Mike Yip) ▶

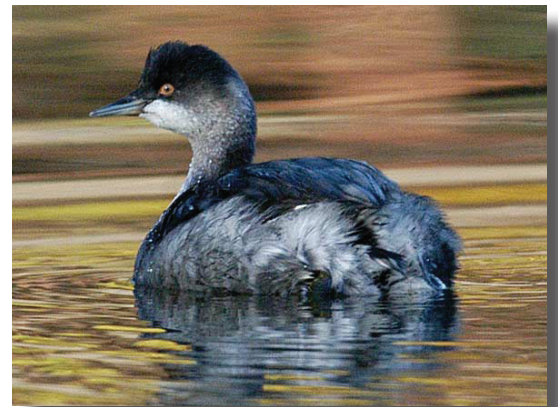


Eared Grebe

Indigenous language name: _____

- The least common grebe in winter (other than Clark's)
- Similar to Horned but with daintier/thinner neck and smaller more rounded head
- Bill is short and sharper than Horned Grebe with a dark tip
- Often more "fluffier"-looking in the rear than Horned Grebe
- Face/auriculars are dark instead of white

Wintering Eared Grebe (Photo: Mike Yip) ▶



Pied-billed Grebe

Indigenous language name: _____

- Almost always found in freshwater environments
- Unlike any other BC grebe
- Small grebe with buffy-brown flanks/neck
- Small bill is pale with a dark ring

Pied-billed Grebe (Photo: Paul Kushmin) ▶

