



# Northernmost record of Clark's Grebe, *Aechmophorus clarkii* (Lawrence, 1858), in Coahuila state, Mexico

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## Abstract

This study reports the northernmost record of *Aechmophorus clarkii* (Lawrence, 1858) in Coahuila state, Mexico. One individual was observed on February 2 and 7, 2019 at El Tulillo pond (25°39.89'N, 101°26.73'W) in General Cepeda municipality. These new records are the northeasternmost ones for *A. clarkii* in Mexico.

## Keywords

Avifauna, conservation, distributional area, El Tulillo pond, new record.

**Academic editor:** Flor Maria Las-Casas | Received 19 June 2019 | Accepted 4 September 2019 | Published 11 October 2019

**Citation:** Ríos-Saldaña AE, Ríos-Saldaña CA (2019) Northernmost record of Clark's Grebe, *Aechmophorus clarkii* (Lawrence, 1858), in Coahuila state, Mexico. Check List 15 (5): 887–889. <https://doi.org/10.15560/15.5.887>

## Introduction

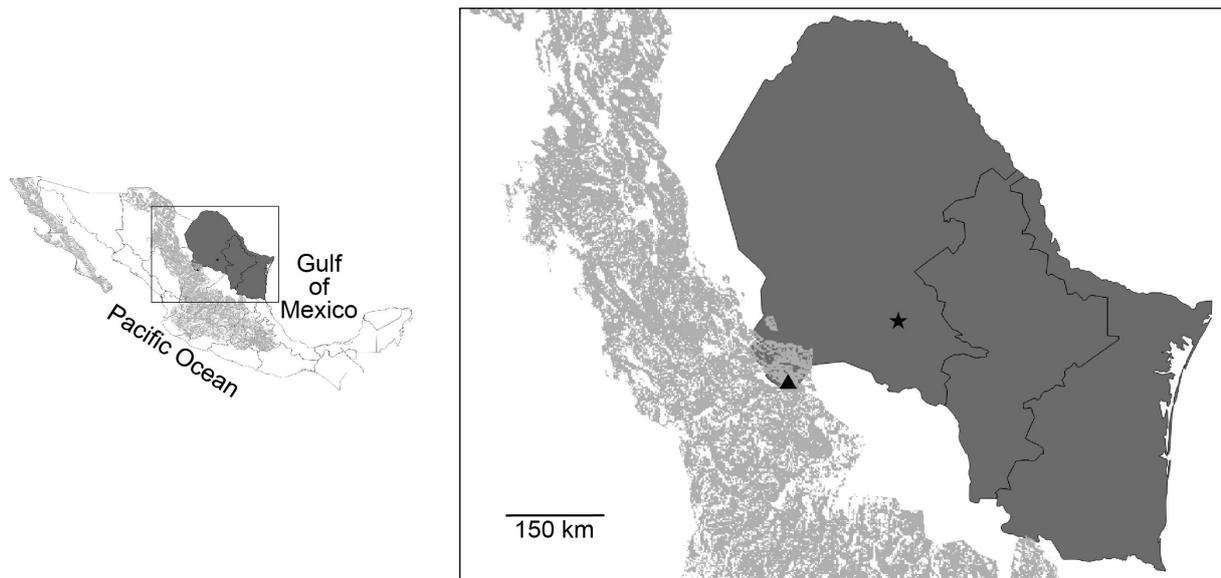
Clark's Grebe, *Aechmophorus clarkii* (Lawrence, 1858), is a species of bird belonging to the family Podicipedidae (order Podicipediformes). It is a conspicuous species which inhabits wetlands and is considered of Least Concern (BirdLife International 2016). Over the winter, *A. clarkii* migrate from southwestern Canada and the western United States to central Mexico via the west coast and the Mexican high plateau (BirdLife International 2019).

We report observations of *A. clarkii* in Coahuila state, Mexico, which represents the most northern record in that state. We also review recent records, which were published on citizen-science platforms, of this species in Coahuila state.

## Methods

The observations reported here were made by one of us (AERS) during a field trip first on 2 February 2019 to El Tulillo pond (25°39.89'N, 101°26.73'W; Fig. 1) in the

Mexican state of Coahuila. Five days later, on 7 February, we made an exhaustive exploration of the dam using kayaks. The El Tulillo pond is 63 km west of the city of Saltillo on the Federal Highway 40 (Saltillo–Torreón) and 8 km from the turnoff to Hipólito (4 km before reaching it). The pond represents an important refuge for aquatic avifauna, especially during the winter and migration periods, in the middle of a large arid zone of the Chihuahuan desert. For this reason, it has been considered as an Important Area for the Conservation of Birds (AICA; Garza de León and Garza-Tobón 1999). The dam crest is 800 m in length, and the pond is 3,000 m long. It currently covers about 275 ha, although when completely full it can reach up to 569 ha (Garza de León and Garza-Tobón 1999) and includes some islands with aquatic vegetation. The average annual rainfall is 214 mm and the average annual temperature is 19 °C with an extreme maximum of 44 °C and an extreme minimum of 11 °C (Garza de León and Garza-Tobón 1999). In some years, El Tulillo pond retains water during spring and



**Figure 1.** Potential distribution of *Aechmophorus clarkii* in Mexico (modified from Navarro and Peterson 2007). The dark gray area represents the northeastern Mexico. The black star represents the new record in El Tullillo pond. The black triangle represents the records in Tanque el Aguilereño pond.

summer, so it could support the reproductive activities of some species of aquatic birds. The main human activity around the pond is raising livestock and recreation.

## Results

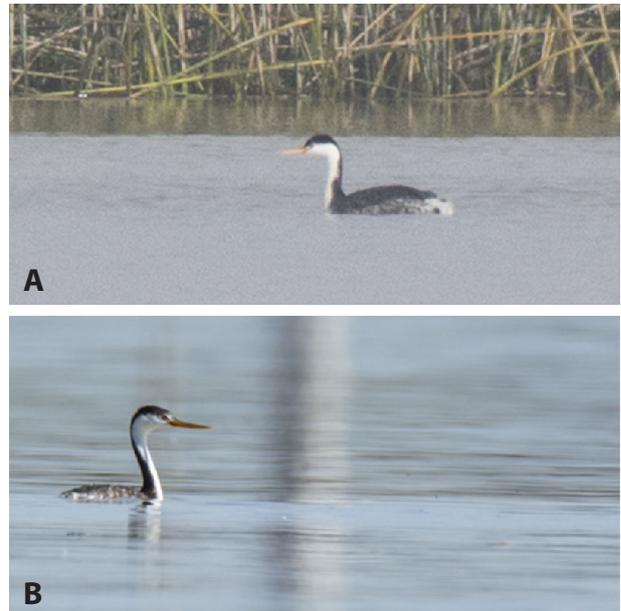
**New records.** Mexico: Coahuila: General Cepeda municipality: El Tullillo pond (25°39.89'N, 101°26.73'W), observed by AERS and CARS, 2 and 7 February 2019 (1 individual each observation).

One individual of *A. clarkii* was seen and photographed on 2 February 2019. Five days later, using kayaks to explore the pond, we observed again one individual.

**Identification.** The identification was conclusive because the main characteristics easily differentiate *A. clarkii* from all other similar species. The birds had a distinctive white face, especially above the eye, where it meets the black cap, a bright yellow-orange bill, and a red eye (Fig. 2).

## Discussion

Our new records are the most northern for *A. clarkii* in Coahuila (about 175 km in a straight line from previous reports). Our observations noteworthy because they are the first from the North High Plateau region in Coahuila (also called the Chihuahuense biogeographic region; CONABIO 1997). Although *A. clarkii* is hypothetical for Coahuila state according to the list of avifauna of the Mexican states (Garza de León et al. 2007), there are few records from the early 2000s at Tanque el Aguilereño pond (Gómez de Silva 2004). Fifteen years later, two observers photographically documented this species (a single bird) at Tanque el Aguilereño on 13 January 2019 (iNaturalist.org 2019). The Tanque el Aguilereño pond is in the South High Plateau biogeographic region (also



**Figure 2.** *Aechmophorus clarkii* recorded at El Tullillo pond, Coahuila state, Mexico. **A.** Recorded on 2 February 2019. **B.** Recorded on 7 February 2019 (Photographs: A. E. Ríos-Saldaña).

called Zacatecano-Potosino; CONABIO 1997).

To our knowledge, our observations are the most northeastern records of *A. clarkii* in Mexico. We do not know of any records in Nuevo León or Tamaulipas (Ridgely et al. 2003; Contreras-Balderas et al. 2008; Rodríguez-Ruíz and Garza-Torres 2017; BirdLife International 2019; iNaturalist.org 2019), states that together with Coahuila constitute northeastern Mexico.

It seems likely that our new records of *A. clarkii* in Coahuila represent an occasional vagrant. However, the El Tullillo pond records are relevant because, together with records from Tanque el Aguilereño, they modify the list of avifauna of Coahuila, changing the status of

*A. clarkii* from hypothetical to confirmed in the state. Although this species is rare or accidental in Coahuila, this find reinforces the importance of carrying out ornithological research in this state, as such studies have been shown to be lacking in some areas of northeastern Mexico (e.g. Ríos-Saldaña and Ríos-Saldaña 2013).

## Acknowledgements

We are grateful to the reviewers and the editor for their suggestions and important contributions to the final version of the manuscript.

## Authors' Contributions

AERS and CARS recorded the bird in the field. AERS identified the specie and review the text. CARS wrote the text.

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