



Western Grebe Habitat Assessment at Lake Isle

Brittany Rae

Who I Am?

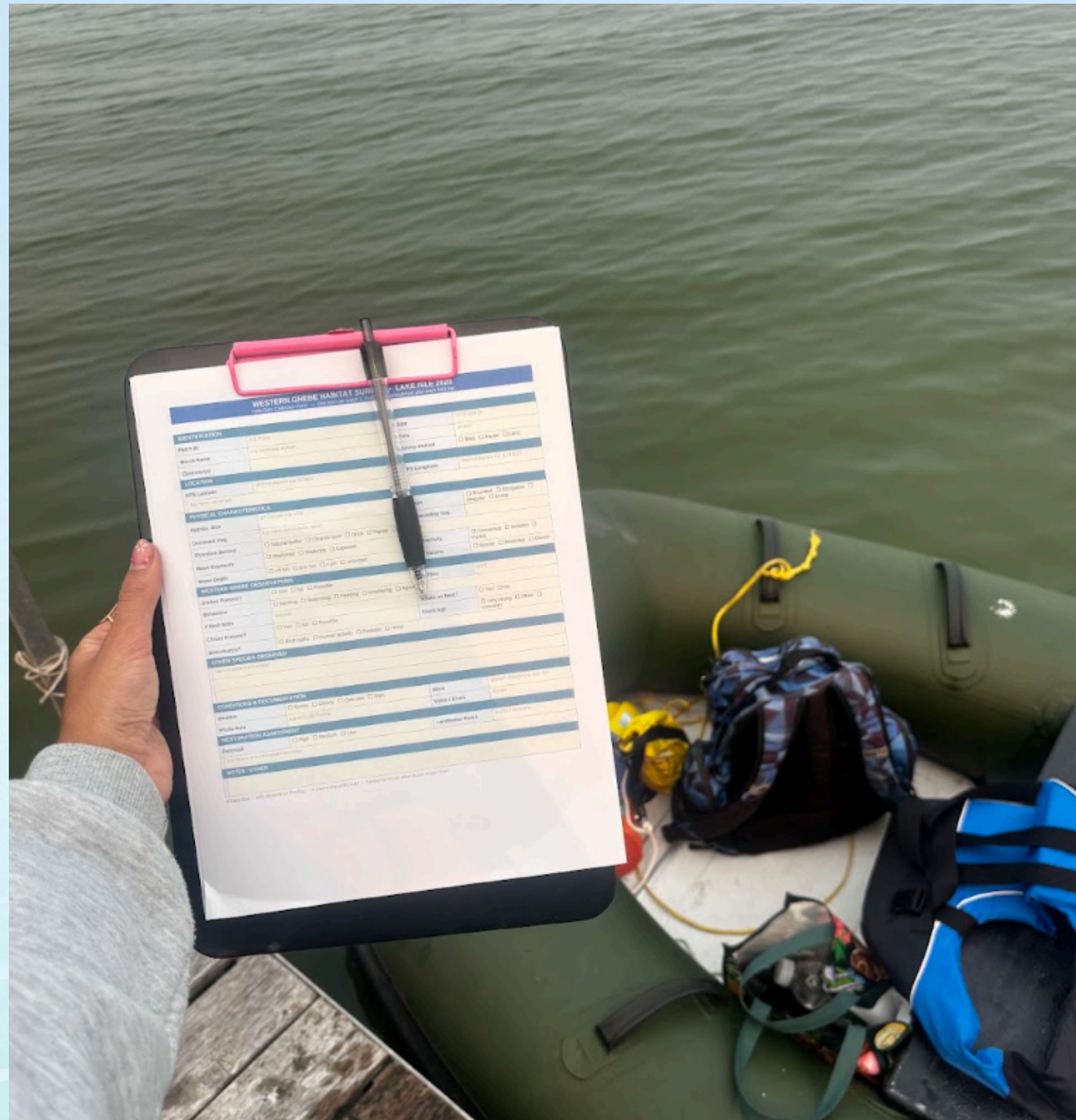
- Recent graduate from MSc in Ecological Restoration program at BCIT (June 2026)
- BSc & BEd from U of A (2022)
- 2 years of experience as a classroom teacher - education is another passion of mine
- Applied and received an Oceanwise microgrant to voluntarily spread awareness about the Western Grebe



@brittinthefield



What We're Doing This Summer



Boat-based habitat assessments of bullrush patches (see next slide for detailed form)



Photo and videography - documenting Western Grebe nesting and behaviours



Education outreach - spreading awareness about the Western Grebe and what people can do to help

Boat-based Habitat Assessments

So far 11 patches
have been
completed and
assessed.

2 of these patches
contain WG nesting
habitat

WESTERN GREBE HABITAT SURVEY · LAKE ISLE 2026

Field Data Collection Form — One form per patch | Transfer to spreadsheet after each field day

IDENTIFICATION

Patch ID	e.g. P-001	Date	YYYY-MM-DD
Marsh Name	e.g. North Bay Bulrush	Time	HH:MM
Observer(s)		Survey Method	☐ Boat ☐ Kayak ☐ Land

LOCATION

GPS Latitude	decimal degrees e.g. 53.8412	GPS Longitude	decimal degrees e.g. -114.6033
	Bay name / landmark		

PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS

Approx. Size	m² estimate e.g. ~300	Shape	☐ Rounded ☐ Elongated ☐ Irregular ☐ Linear
Dominant Veg.	e.g. Hard-stem bulrush, cattail	Surrounding Veg.	
Shoreline Behind	☐ Natural buffer ☐ Cleared lawn ☐ Dock ☐ Riprap ☐ Agriculture		
Wave Exposure	☐ Sheltered ☐ Moderate ☐ Exposed	Connectivity	☐ Connected ☐ Isolated ☐ Partial
Water Depth	☐ <0.5m ☐ 0.5–1m ☐ >1m ☐ Unknown	Veg. Density	☐ Sparse ☐ Moderate ☐ Dense

WESTERN GREBE OBSERVATIONS

Grebes Present?	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Possible	# Grebes	count
Behaviour	☐ Nesting ☐ Swimming ☐ Feeding ☐ Displaying ☐ Agitated		
# Nest Sites	estimate	Adults on Nest?	☐ Yes ☐ No
Chicks Present?	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Possible	Chick Age	☐ Very young ☐ Older ☐ Unknown
Disturbance?	☐ Boat traffic ☐ Human activity ☐ Predator ☐ None		

OTHER SPECIES OBSERVED

	Name + behaviour if notable		

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Education and Outreach

This will be the main focus now.

Handing out fliers door to door, attending community events, etc.

MEET THE WESTERN GREBE

A Threatened species nesting on Lake Isle



Who Are They?

One of Alberta's most striking waterbirds, the western grebe is famous for their courtship dance where pairs run across the water side by side. They build floating nests in shoreline bulrush and carry their newly hatched chicks on their backs while swimming. A colony has chosen Lake Isle as their home, and this summer we are looking to map thier active nesting sites.

Why Are They at Risk?

Western grebes are listed as Threatened in Alberta. They depend entirely on healthy shoreline bulrush and emergent vegetation to build their floating nests and raise their young. As lakeside development increases and wetlands are lost, their habitat disappears, and with it, their ability to breed successfully.





What We're Doing About It

This summer, Brittany Rae (MSc Restoration Ecology) has volunteered to map grebe habitat across the Lake Isle shoreline, identifying where bulrush is healthy, and where restoration could make the biggest difference for the grebes and the lake.

How You Can Help

01

Leave shoreline vegetation in place where you can, even a small strip of bulrush along your property makes a real difference.

02

Reduce fertilizers and pesticides near the water, and share what you've learned with your neighbours.

03

If you see grebes nesting, give them space and keep boat traffic at a distance.

This lake is worth protecting, and every shoreline owner is part of the solution.







Thank you!

Moving Forward



2:02 PM • 4 birds ✓ Saved

3:18

 Franklin's Gull 

 Western Grebe 🟡 

 Bonaparte's Gull 🟡 

 Forster's Tern 

- Bullrush restoration potential
- Slow-wake signs/bouys around known nesting patches
- Similar project at Lac Ste. Anne?