

Rare bird found in Burdwan

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Kolkata: When a group of wildlife enthusiasts conducting a workshop for school teachers in a remote Burdwan village, first sighted a tall red-necked, grey headed bird making strange noises in a nearby water body, they couldn't believe their eyes. Expert bird watchers, they realised immediately that the swan-like bird in front of them was a perfect specimen of the extremely rare red-necked grebe – an endangered bird last seen anywhere in India 25 years ago.

Speaking to TNN on Thursday, secretary of the wildlife NGO Junglee, Raja Chatterjee, recalled how he had suddenly sighted a group of six red-necked grebes in the remote village of Purbasthali-II block in Burdwan. "We had gone there to conduct a workshop in 11 schools in association with the local panchayat. Luckily I had my handycam with me. As soon as I spotted the grebe, I started the camera," he said.

The red-necked grebe – usually found in north Asian states and parts of Alaska and northern Canada – has a long bill and neck, a



grey head, a rusty red neck and chest and white on its cheeks. It lives in marshy ponds and lakes in summer. In winter and during migration it can be found on coastal bays and estuaries. The grebe is a great diver and swimmer and often swims with just its head above the water.

Among its other peculiarities, the bird watchers almanac *Grimmet's* identifies the bird's call as: "Often repeated, excited ah-ooo ah-ooo ah-ah-ah-ah-ah".

"We have sent letters to international association of ornithologists as well as to the wildlife department. This is real big news. In our profession this is as big as discovering a new peak. The red-necked grebe is listed in Schedule-I and has not been seen in the region for the last 25 years," Chatterjee said.

The Junglees will leave for Purbasthali again on Sunday, hoping this time to capture this rare bird on camera over a longer period of time before it flies back to its home somewhere in the mountains of Alaska.