

Black-Necked Stilt  
Documentation Fourth State Record  
(First occurrence in forty years.)

Charles W. Hocevar

On July 18, 1981 at approximately 8:50 a.m. EDT, this writer was birding in the company of Bruce Peterjohn at Magee Marsh Wildlife Area (Crane Creek State Park), Lucas County, Ohio when I observed a black-necked stilt feeding in a shallow pool of water about 600 feet west of the causeway.

Within minutes of its discovery the stilt was pointed out to Karl Overman & Joe Kleinam of Detroit, Michigan and about a half hour later to Dick & Jean Hoffman of Cleveland, Ohio. John Pogacnik, Park Ranger, also observed the stilt prior to our departure at 10:30 a.m. The stilt was last observed, to my knowledge, between 1:15 and 1:30 p.m. EDT, at which time Bruce and I returned with Laurel Van Camp.

The black-necked stilt was observed in excellent light and spent most of its time feeding and preening. This particular area in the marsh had recently been "drawn down" and still had a number of pools of water which had attracted many other shorebirds notably yellowlegs and dowitchers.

Significant notes were taken at the time of observation and form the basis for this summary. In addition, the bird was photographed with a Nikon 500 mm. lens and also with the aforementioned lens and 2x extender. The slides provide identification but are not sufficiently close for reproduction.

The black-necked stilt was the largest shore bird present, noticeably larger than the lesser yellowlegs. The stilt was observed in its typical black and white plumage pattern with long and thin rose-pink legs and the long thin black bill which are unique to this species. The stilt was also seen several times in flight as it would move from one end of the pool to another.

While the stilt's long legs made it larger than the other shorebirds, its body was proportionately small. Its plumage was a contrast of black and white with white on the forehead and a conspicuous white patch over the eye. The nape, wings and upper back were black, with a noticeable brownish-black tinge to the upper back. The remainder of the bird was white including the rump and lower back which appeared "dowitcher like". The stilt was not heard to call.

Editor

There are three probable prior records of the black-necked stilt in Ohio, other than general historical references:

1. F. W. Langdon in A Revised History of Cincinnati Birds published in the Journal of (the) Cincinnati Society of Natural History (1878) states at page 182:

"181 Himantopus nigricollis, Vieillof - Black-necked Stilt - One specimen noted by Mr. Dury."

Langdon earlier referred to Dury as: "... Mr. Charles Dury, of Avondale, whose extensive ornithological collection contains many of our rarer species, ..." (pg. 167).

Langdon based his list on: "The collections and observations ... made at two or three points, in the territory lying between the Great and Little Miami Rivers, and within ten or twelve miles of the Ohio". (p. 167).

Arthur Wiseman (in personal communication) states that the Charles Dury collection at the Cincinnati Museum of Natural History presently has no record of *Himantopus mexicanus* from Ohio. There is one old skin with no information but it seems likely that this specimen was collected after 1878 and some old mounts that may have been from Ohio on which no data was maintained.

2. Lynds Jones reports in 1904 in *Additional Records of Ohio Birds*, the *Ohio Naturalist*, Volume IV, No. 5 at page 112:

" Mr. (A) Hall (of Lakewood) furnished me with the following additional records: *Himantopus mexicanus*, Black-necked Stilt, one shot at Berea, October 24, 1881."

3. A. B. Williams states in 1950 in *Birds of Cleveland Region* at page 64:

"A dead bird, reported to be of this species, was noted by Oscar E. Mueller, August 15, 1941, on the pavement of North Park Boulevard near the Lower Shaker Lake, Cleveland Heights. Unfortunately this specimen was not preserved."

This record is also reported in Walker C.F. 1941. *Audubon Magazine* 43:570.

General historical references to the occurrence of this bird are found in J. M. Wheaton in 1882 in his *Report on Birds of Ohio*. (Report of the geographical survey of Ohio. Volume IV, Part I, Section 2: page 463):

"The stilt has been repeatedly taken on Lake Erie, as I am informed by (R.K. Winslow of Cleveland, Ohio)."

and C.F. Clark in 1966 in *Birds of the Lake St. Mary's Area*. (with J.P. Sipe; Ohio Department Natural Resources Publication 350: pg. 31):

"115. Black-necked stilt, *Himantopus mexicanus* Muller.

During the senior authors contacts with "old timers" of the area, Messrs. Fred Magill, Guy Heap and William Sherman described this bird. Magill stated that prior to 1900 one or two were seen every year."

Correction: Great Egret in Volume 4, No. 1 at page 15 reads; 5/28 Gilmore (Tuscarawas Co.). It should read; 5/28 Gilmore Ponds (Butler Co.).