



Black-necked Stilt, 20-22 May 1989, Town of Lysander, Onondaga Co., New York. Photograph by David Cesari.

PHOTOGRAPHS OF NEW YORK STATE RARITIES 50: BLACK-NECKED STILT IN UPSTATE NEW YORK

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On 20 May 1989 while participating in Region's 5 annual "Big Run" with Ruth K. Knight and Susan Adair, I observed a Black-necked Stilt *Himantopus mexicanus* in a wet horse pasture on Lamson Road 1 mile w of Rt. 48 in the Town of Lysander, Onondaga County. The pasture has several shallow pools which attract migratory shorebirds and is checked regularly each spring. We arrived here about noon but found few shorebirds despite good conditions. While searching for sleeping shorebirds in the poolside grass, I kept hearing a call that vaguely reminded me of a Black Tern *Chlidonias niger* but I was unable to locate its source. As we were leaving, the horses in the pasture shifted position and Ms. Adair called "Black-necked Stilt!" We all quickly located the bird in a puddle surrounded by horses. After a short while, the bird took flight, circled the pasture and returned to a pool closer to us where we studied it for about 30 minutes with 10 power binoculars and 30 power telescopes under ideal lighting conditions. All three of us had had prior field experience with this species on the Atlantic coast and/or California. The bird was discovered independently later that afternoon by a party led by John Hanyak and remained until the morning of 22 May, during which time it was seen by most of the active observers in Region 5. The accompanying photograph was taken by David Cesari on 21 May. The following description is based on notes and sketches made while I was observing the bird:

a very long legged, long necked, slender shorebird approximately the height of an American Crow. The bill was dark, very slender, straight, approximately 1.5 times as long as the head; eyes dark; legs dark flesh colored. The plumage was in good condition. The bird was black on the crown and upper neck, grading to very dark gray on the back and wings; the tail, rump, underparts, forehead and a short elongate superciliary spot were white. The demarcation between the black and white was rather sharp, curving from the forehead in front of and below the eye to the lower auricular region, down the side of the neck to the shoulders where the white extended up towards the back, and then back below the folded wing. In flight the wings and back were uniformly dark above; the legs extended beyond the tail. Feeding in the water, the bird stepped very deliberately, pecking at the water. The only calls heard were an occasional sharp *peck* reminiscent of a Black Tern.

Bull (1974,1976) lists 12 records of this species from New York, and eight more (one bird photographed) have appeared in Region 10 reports in *The Kingbird* since then. None were submitted to the New York State Avian Records Committee for review. The most recent prior records were in 1981 and 1985. This is the first record from the Oneida Lake Basin Region and only the second from upstate New York. The prior upstate record is of a bird photographed near Fairport, Monroe Co., on 2-3 Jun 1973 (Tetlow 1974). Records from Long Island and the New York City area, where as many as four individuals have been seen together, range from about 10 Apr to 29 Jun with a concentration in mid to late May. The species appears to be increasing in numbers along the Atlantic coast and is a potential future addition to the breeding avifauna of New York state.

My thanks to David Cesari for supplying the photograph.

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Literature cited

- Bull, John. 1974. *Birds of New State*. Doubleday Natural History Press, New York.
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- Tetlow, Michael. 1974. Black-necked Stilt at Town of Perinton, Monroe County, New York. *Kingbird* 24:13.