

THE HAWAIIAN STILT

BY CHARLES W. SCHWARTZ AND ELIZABETH REEDER SCHWARTZ

These photographs of the graceful Hawaiian Stilt, *Himantopus himantopus knudseni*, constitute a pictorial record of one of the world's vanishing birds. In 1944, Mr. George Munro of Honolulu (Birds of Hawaii, Tongg Publ. Co., Honolulu) estimated only 200 stilts were left in the Hawaiian Islands. We believe, that in spite of its dwindling habitat, the closed hunting season on the Islands during the recent war and its continuation for stilts permitted the population to increase to approximately 1,000 birds by 1946-1947 (Schwartz and Schwartz, The Game Birds in Hawaii, Bd. Agric. and For., Honolulu, 1949).

The Hawaiian Stilt maintains its largest numbers on the island of Oahu where its best habitat exists. Smaller flocks occur on Niihau, Kauai, and Maui islands, and possibly some may use the island of Molokai. Our limited observations did not ascertain the permanency of the stilt population on each island, but reports by local inhabitants indicate possible movements between islands. We have observed considerable daily shifting of the flocks between different locales on each island.

Stilts frequent the coastal mud flats and the fresh and brackish marshy areas and shallows of reservoirs, lakes, and ponds. The vegetative types most commonly associated with this habitat are great bulrush, *Scirpus validus*, american saltwort, *Batis maritima*, and various grasses. In spite of the upward trend of the stilt population, the future of this species is not bright since the habitat it prefers is rapidly disappearing due to the reclamation of such areas for civic and military purposes. Illegal kill still constitutes a limiting factor.

Two adult Hawaiian Stilts were confiscated on April 6, 1947, from a hunter. They measured as follows:

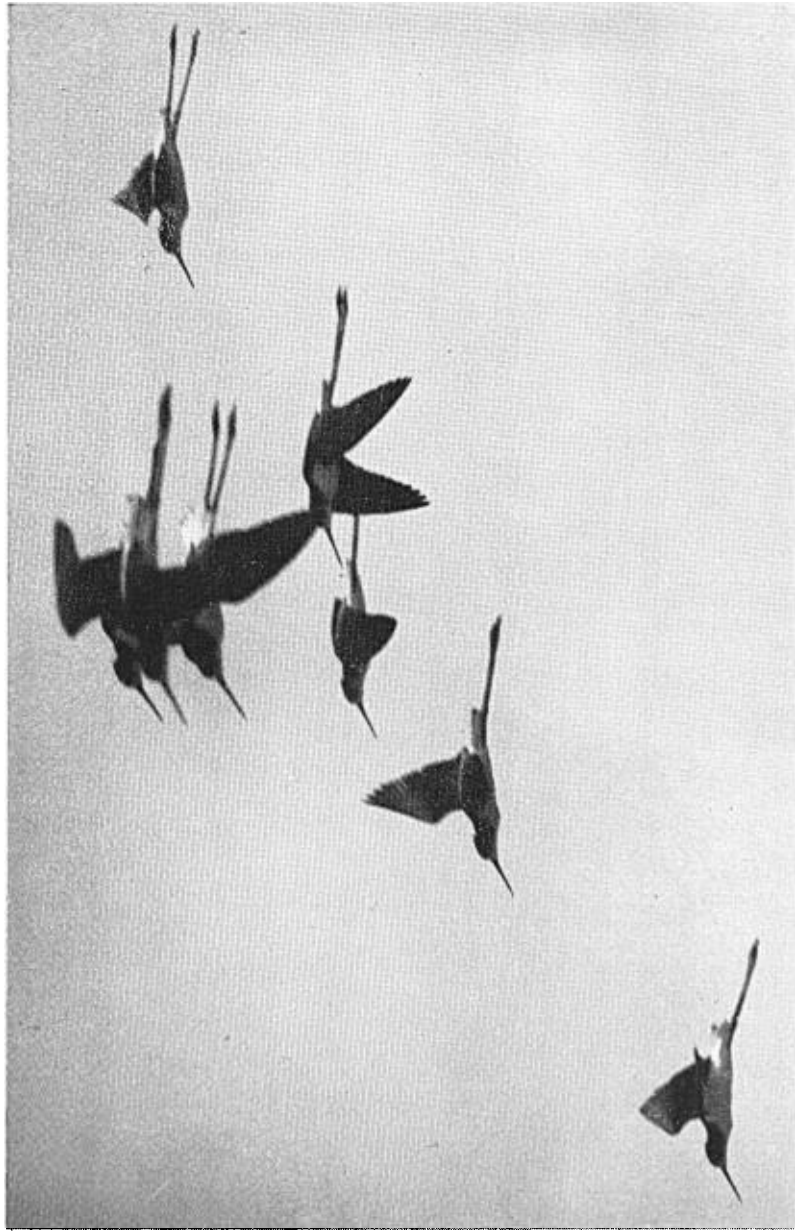
	Male	Female
Total length	396 mm.	395 mm.
Culmen	77	77
Extent of wing	680	690
Closed wing	216	220
Tail	87	80
Length of longest toe	42	42

Both were lightly infested with mallophaga and each contained two cestodes, in their small intestines. These cestodes were tentatively identified by Mr. Ernest Ediger of the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service as being *Diplophallus (polymorphus)* which has also been recorded from

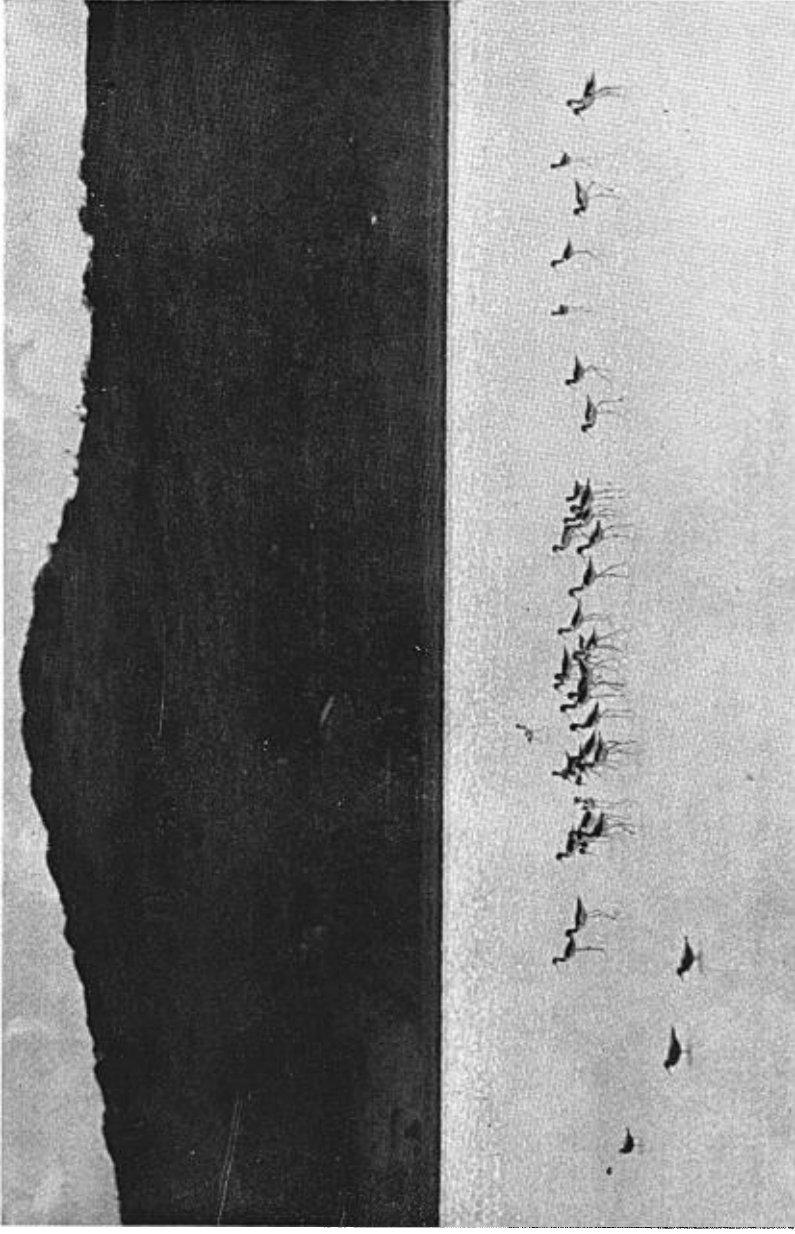
specimens of *H. himantopus* (locale of specimen unknown), and *H. h. mexicanus*, from North America. The crops of both birds were empty but the remains in the gizzards consisted of snail shells, small fish scales, mud, and particles of basalt and feldspar.

We do not know when the Hawaiian Stilt breeds, but in the first week of April, 1947, we observed what appeared to be three family groups of adults and young. The young were distinguished from the adults by a slightly smaller size, their calls, and actions. At this same time, one other stilt exhibited behavior indicating a nest near by, but subsequent search failed to reveal its presence. The two confiscated adult stilts mentioned above were non-breeding, although the oviduct of the female was enlarged and appeared typical of a post-breeding condition.

*Conservation Commission, Jefferson City, Missouri.*



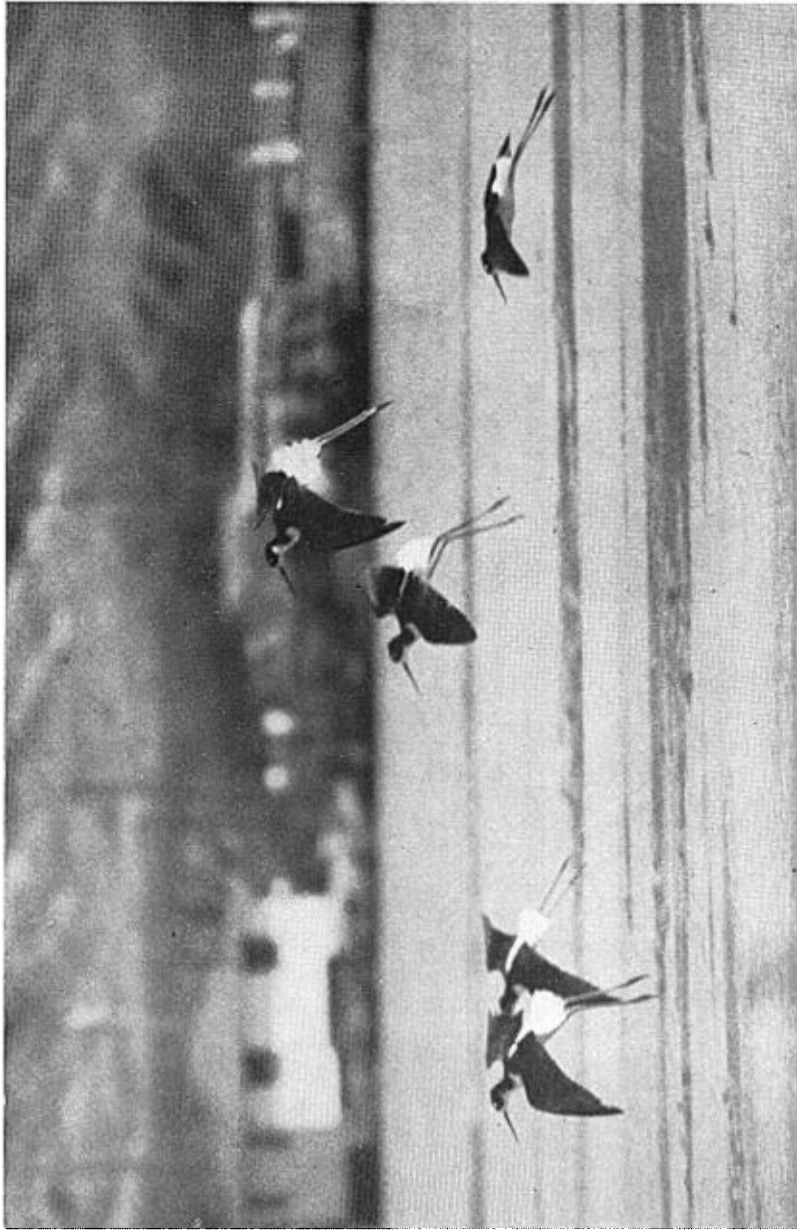
HAWAIIAN STILT *Himantopus himantopus knudseni*, IN FLIGHT. APRIL, 1947. KUAPA POND, OAHU, HAWAII.



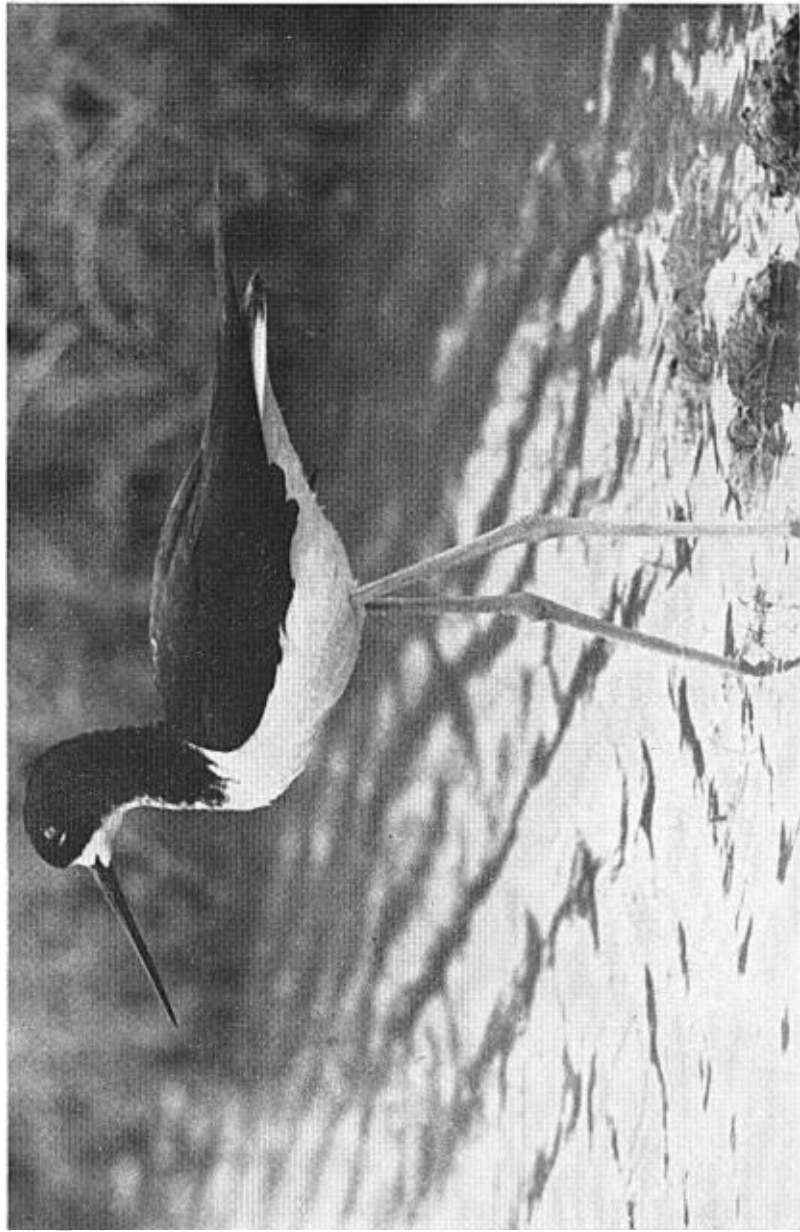
PART OF A FLOCK OF 68 HAWAIIAN STILTS IDLING IN THE SHALLOWS OF KUAPA POND, OAHU, HAWAII. APRIL, 1947. TO THE LEFT, THREE WANDERING TATTLERS, *Heteroscelus incanus*, ARE RESTING.



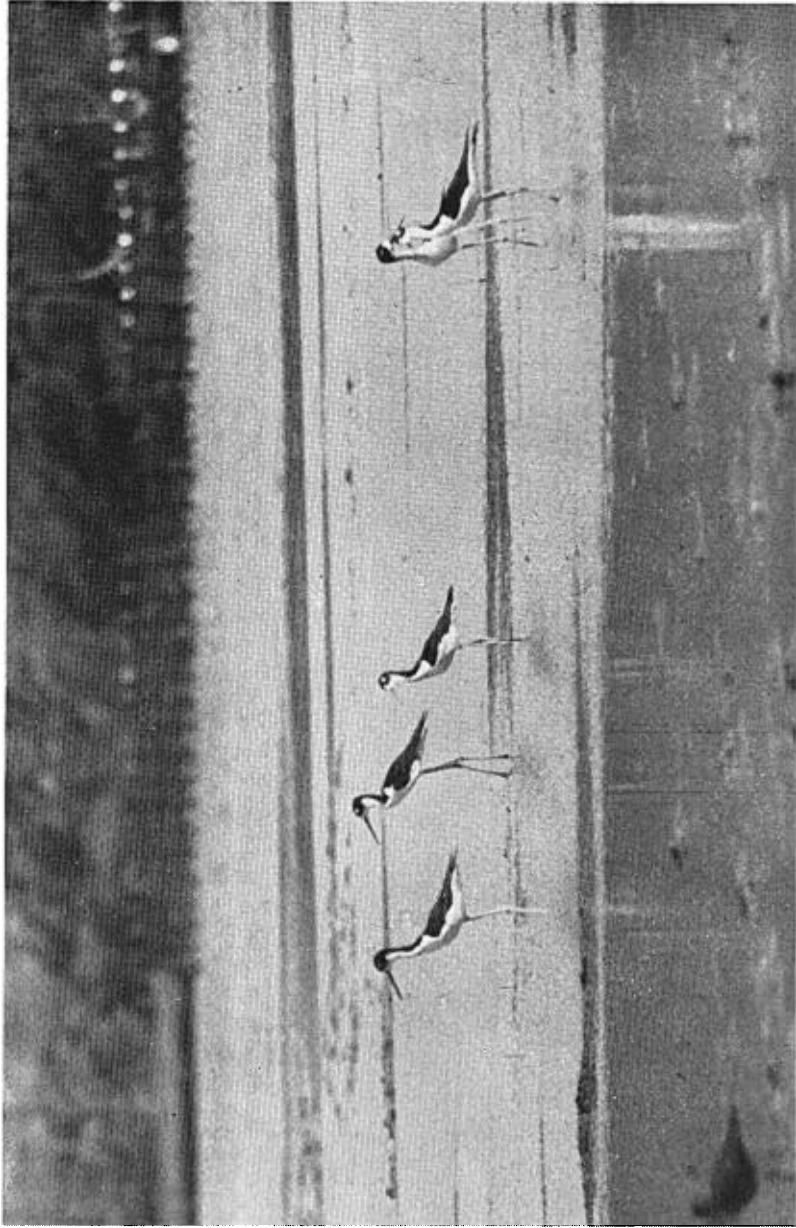
HAWAIIAN STILT PROBING IN THE MUD BOTTOM OF KUAPA POND, OAHU, HAWAII.  
APRIL, 1947.



HAWAIIAN STILTS LANDING. KUAPA POND, OAHU, HAWAII. APRIL, 1947.



HAWAIIAN STILT. KUAPA POND, OAHU, HAWAII. APRIL, 1947.



HAWAIIAN STILTS. KUAPA POND, OAHU, HAWAII. APRIL, 1947.