

First North American record of the Black-winged Stilt

C. Fred Zeillemaker,
Merlin S. Eltzroth
and Jay E. Hamernick

ON MAY 24, 1983, while conducting a wildlife census in the western Aleutian Islands for the Alaska Maritime National Wildlife Refuge, we discovered a healthy Black-winged Stilt (*Himantopus himantopus*) at a pond on 691-hectare Nizki Island (52° 43'N, 173° 59'E). Previously there was neither a North American record of this species nor an Alaskan record of this genus.

When first detected by Eltzroth, the bird was resting belly-deep in the fresh water pond, puzzling us as to its identity. When it stood up, exposing its long pink legs, however, identification was simple: it was obviously a stilt. The lack of a white spot between the eye and the dark cap and the lack of a dark hindneck joining the head cap to the black back separated the bird from the Black-necked Stilt (*Himantopus mexicanus*) of the Nearctic and Neotropics (Prater *et al.*, 1977). We aged the bird as immature by its white-tipped secondaries (*op. cit.*). We studied it at leisure as it foraged about the pond, and photographed it on May 26. The bird was still present when we left the island on June 3.

The Black-winged Stilt is widely distributed in the Palearctic, but does not normally occur anywhere near the Bering Sea. It is found from the Iberian Peninsula to Indochina and Malaya. It is "sedentary, erratic and migratory, the birds which breed farther north are migratory . . . and it is reported as a very rare migrant or straggler from Manchuria, Korea, Sakhalin, Japan, Ryu Kyus, Bonins, Volcanos and Formosa" (Vaurie, 1965:439). There have been occasional records of the bird in southern Siberia (Cramp and Simmons, 1983), and there are a few breeding records from central Japan (Massey *et al.*, 1982). Some au-



Black-winged Stilt, Nizki Island, Aleutians, Alaska, May 26, 1983. Photo/C.F. Zeillemaker

Characterized as "sedentary, erratic and migratory," this long-legged wading bird made its first appearance on our shores in Alaska's Maritime National Wildlife Refuge

thorities (*e.g.*, Vaurie) regard the similar Black-necked Stilt as the New World subspecies of this bird.

Thanks to Daniel D. Gibson of the University of Alaska Museum and Calvin J. Lensink and Colleen M. Handel of the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Anchorage, who critically reviewed the original draft of this note and offered several suggestions for its improvement.

LITERATURE CITED

- CRAMP, S. and K. E. L. SIMMONS (Eds.). 1983. The Birds of the Western Palearctic, Vol. 3. Oxford University Press, Oxford.
MASSEY, J. A., S. MATSUI, T. SUZUKI, E. P. SWIFT, A. HIBI, N. ICHIDA, Y. TSUKAMOTO, and K. SONOBE. 1982.

- A Field Guide to the Birds of Japan. Wild Bird Society of Japan, Tokyo.
PRATER, A. J., J. H. MARCHANT, and J. VUORINEN. 1977. Guide to the Identification and Aging of Holarctic Waders, British Trust for Ornithology Guide #17.
VAURIE, C. 1965. The Birds of the Palearctic Fauna, Vol. 2, Non-Passeriformes. H. F. & G. Witherby, London.

—U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Box 5251 NAS Adak, FPO Seattle, WA 98791 (Zeillemaker), 3595 NW Roosevelt Drive, Corvallis, OR 97330 (Eltzroth), 3748 McCracken Lane, Arden Hills, MN 55112 (Hamernick).