

First record of American Avocet from the Republic of Panama

R. G. Brown and Lorna Engleman

ON SEPTEMBER 24, 1987, BROWN WAS observing shorebirds at a shallow lagoon near Aguadulce when he noticed an American Avocet (*Recurvirostra americana*) preening on a sandbar. The bird was recognized by its unmistakable plumage, Brown being familiar with the species in the United States. As the species is not mentioned in Ridgely (1974), it was suspected that the bird might represent a new record for Panama and a detailed description was made and recognizable photographs were taken.

The bird was observed again on October 1 by Brown and Russ Greenberg and, for the last time, on October 18 by Lorna and Dodge Engleman. The Aguadulce area is only infrequently visited by birders so that the bird's arrival and departure dates are unknown. On all the dates mentioned above, many other shorebirds were present at the lagoon, but the avocet almost invariably associated with a large (about 100) flock

of Black-necked Stilts (*Himantopus mexicanus*). No plumage changes were observed during the bird's stay.

The crown and nape of the bird were washed with gray, and the absence of any buffy coloration on the head or neck suggested that the bird was an adult in non-breeding plumage. The observers differed in their opinions as to the bird's sex, as assessed by bill shape.

There are currently six records of American Avocet from Costa Rica, which represent the southernmost records of this species (Stiles and Smith 1977, 1980; Stiles, *in litt.*). Considering the conspicuousness of American Avocets and their status in Central America, it seems likely that this record represents genuine vagrancy. However, with increasing numbers of observers it is possible that there may be further records in the future. Its arrival in Panama was probably due to overshooting, rather than drift or displacement, so that weather conditions at the time of its ar-

rival are relatively unimportant (Elkins 1983). In any case, as the bird's arrival date is unknown, it is difficult to implicate the weather.

LITERATURE CITED

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