

UNSUCCESSFUL NESTING ATTEMPT OF BLACK-NECKED STILT IN BRITISH COLUMBIA

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Prior to 1990 the Black-necked Stilt (*Himantopus mexicanus*) was considered a rare spring vagrant in British Columbia on the basis of 26 records since first being reported in 1971 (Campbell and Anderson 1972, Campbell et al. 1990). Over the past 15 years, however, the species has been expanding its range in the Pacific Northwest. For example, in Washington state, the Black-necked Stilt first attempted nesting in 1973 and since has become established as a breeding species and has been expanding its range (Paulson 1993). Part of this shift has been attributed to droughts in the southwestern United States. It is not surprising, then, that the Black-necked Stilt has invaded southern British Columbia and is now part of the province's breeding avifauna.

From 2002 through 2005 a pair of Black-necked Stilts nested successfully at T'Kumloops Marsh in Kamloops, British Columbia (R.R. Howie and W. Haras, pers. comm. and British Columbia Nest Record Scheme file). The purpose of this note is to put on record an additional nesting attempt for British Columbia, which unfortunately was unsuccessful.

During a visit to Alki Lake near Kelowna on 13 June 2005, I watched a pair of Black-necked Stilts feeding in a particular area and staying close to one another. As I approached the stilts, one adult became agitated and performed a "broken wing" distraction display. I searched for a nest and quickly discovered three eggs in a small depression in the ground that was lined with small twigs and grasses. On 20 June I returned to the lake and photographed the nest that now contained four eggs (Figure 1). The following day an adult was incubating the clutch. On 7 July I returned to the site and was disappointed to find the nest had been abandoned. Also by this time, small ponds that dot the immediate area had dried up thus eliminating a major source of food.

The Black-necked Stilt was first reported in the Okanagan Valley, at Swan Lake near Vernon, on 14 May 1984 (Cannings et al. 1987). Since then it has become a very rare spring migrant in the area. The nesting at Alki Lake represents the first nesting attempt for the Okanagan Valley.

Literature Cited

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Figure 1. Black-necked Stilt nest and eggs. Alki Lake, BC. 20 June 2005. Ryan Tomlinson). BC Photo 3208.

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About the Author

Ryan is an avid and experienced birder living in Kelowna, BC. where he enjoys local environs with Chris Charelsworth.