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Breeding Black-necked Stilts at Funk Waterfowl Production Area

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On 21 July 2003, I was mapping wetland vegetation on Funk Waterfowl Production Area (WPA), Phelps County, when I encountered two adult Black-necked Stilts and two young on the Teal Unit, NE 1/4 of Section 16, T-6-N, R-17-W. I was using an airboat to map pockets of open water throughout the WPA. When I launched the airboat on the Teal Unit, I immediately noticed an adult Black-necked Stilt flying above the small pool. While driving the perimeter of this pool, I noticed two adult Black-necked Stilts continually flying over a small point of cattails surrounded by shallow water. As I passed along the opposite shoreline near the adults, I could see two unidentified, long-legged shorebirds walking just inside the edge of the cattails. As I followed the edge of the cattails around the pool, I slowly approached the area where I had seen the two unidentified shorebirds.

Approximately 10 meters from where I had last seen them, two fuzzy, gray, long-legged Black-necked Stilts appeared and slowly walked just 5 meters in front of the boat for a short distance before weaving back into the cattails. I slowly departed the area and ceased operations on this particular unit. Habitat near the brood location consisted of a large (3.1 acre), shallow (average water depth was 9 cm) opening covered with a mat of common duckweed (*Lemna minor*) and surrounded by a dense cattail (*Typha glauca*) marsh with an average height of 4.7 meters.

These two young birds had black legs approximately 15-20 cm long, a narrow, straight, black bill approximately 2-4 centimeters long, and no distinguishing feather markings due to their young age. These birds appeared to be in natal down and had no visible flight feathers.

This represents the first breeding record in the Rainwater Basin (Sharpe et al. 2001). There have been, however, three other reported sightings by Rainwater Basin Wetland Management District (WMD) staff of Black-necked Stilts at Funk WPA. Mark Humpert and I saw one on 9 April 2002, Tom Koerner reported seeing one on 15 April 2002, and on 1 June 2002 I saw 12 using the Peterson moist soil unit. However, no other pre-fledged young have been documented in the Rainwater Basin area.

Literature Cited

Sharpe, Roger S., W. Ross Silcock, and Joel G. Jorgensen. *Birds of Nebraska Their Distribution & Temporal Occurrence*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2001.