

Seasonal Highlights - Breeding Season 1996

First Nesting Record of Black-necked Stilt for Madison County

On 8 Aug. 1996, while examining a flooded pool that was rapidly receding along a levee south of Chain of Rocks Road near the Mississippi River in Madison County, H. David Bohlen noticed an adult Black-necked Stilt (*Himantopus mexicanus*) with three young. The birds occasionally hid behind emergent vegetation on an island cove where he assumed they nested. The adult often gave a loud alarm call when he got closer. Dorsally, the young appeared to be a dark muddy brown; ventrally they were white and a much fainter version of the adults; not as tall and with lighter pinkish colored legs. Bohlen did not observe the young fly, although the next day Keith McMullen observed one of the young birds take a short flight. Andy Sigler and John O'Brien may have

been the last to observe this family group on 11 Aug. at this location.

By 17 Aug, this family group of stilts had flown to Sauget Marsh in St. Clair County nearly 13 miles from the Madison County location. Sigler and O'Brien observed these birds, which were most likely the same four individuals Bohlen found at the Chain of Rocks levee pool. The pool was totally dry by then, according to Sigler and O'Brien. On 20 Aug. Rick Seibert and I observed and photographed this family including the three young birds. The next day, Keith McMullen, Eric Walters, and Wes Serafin also observed the family. Vernon Kleen was the last to report observing these birds on 22 Aug.

The first confirmed nesting record of Black-necked Stilt in Illinois occurred on 11 June 1994 when Todd Find discovered a nest with four eggs in Jackson County (McKee and Fink 1995). Kevin Richmond also confirmed a nest with two eggs in Mason County (Kleen 1995) at Chatauqua NWR off the lake's mid-levees on 27 June 1994. Both these nests failed to produce young, the Jackson County site apparently was abandoned and the Chatauqua nest was flooded. However, in the summer of 1995, six young were observed at East Cape Girardeau in Alexander County (Kleen 1996). That record represents Illinois' first viable young. This Madison County record represents the state's second record of surviving young.

Literature Cited:

McKee, C. and T. Fink. 1995. First confirmed nesting of Black-necked Stilt in Illinois. *Meadowlark* 4:6-7.

Kleen, V. 1996. The 1995 Breeding Season. *Meadowlark* 4:25-40.

Kleen, V. 1995. The 1994 Breeding Season. *Meadowlark* 4:25-40.

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Barn Owls Nest in Vermilion County in June 1995

On 23 June, 1995, Thelbert Falconer of Ross-ville told Doris Westfall of Danville that he had



Barn Owl, Vermilion Co. 25 June 1995. Photo by James O. Smith.