



Earliest Record (1910) of Black-necked Stilt (*Himantopus mexicanus*) for British Columbia and Canada

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The field notes of pioneer naturalists who lived in British Columbia often contain unpublished new information on the early distribution and occurrence of plants and animals in the province. While a tribute article on the life and accomplishments of the late Glenn R. Ryder was being prepared (Campbell and Henderson, in press), a record of Black-necked Stilt (*Himantopus mexicanus*; Figure 1) was uncovered in his father's diaries. As with Glenn, Delbert Ryder was an experienced naturalist who kept detailed notes of birds and mammals between 1903 and 1940 while he lived in Mount Lehman in the central Fraser River valley (Campbell and Ryder, in press), 59 Mile House in the Cariboo, and White Rock in the Lower Mainland.

On 7 May 1910, while exploring an area in the vicinity of 59 Mile House in the extreme southeastern Cariboo region of British Columbia, Delbert hiked east on top of the lava cliffs of Sixtyone Creek to an unnamed "little lake" situated about one kilometer east of Chasm. The lake (10U 606454E, 5674557N) is about 206 m long and 64 m wide and is located at 1,067 m elevation. Among the 10 species of shorebirds recorded was an adult Black-necked Stilt. He knew the bird was unusual and noted the following features:

A most interesting tall long legged bird with its red legs and black and white plumage. Showy to see. Long pointed black bill somewhat upturned. White spot over eye.

Delbert's sighting of the Black-necked Stilt is the earliest reported for British Columbia – by 62 years.



Figure 1. The shape, size, and plumage of an adult Black-necked Stilt is unique and unmistakable and cannot be confused with any other North American bird. *Photo by R. Wayne Campbell.*

The previous first occurrence was an adult on Sea Island, south of Vancouver, on 13 and 14 May 1971 (Crowell and Nehls 1971, Campbell and Anderson 1972). Delbert's record falls within the range of 26 spring arrival dates recorded for British Columbia through 1988 (Campbell et al. 1990). The earliest date was 14 April and the latest was 17 May with a provincial average first date of 1 May.

In the early 20th century, Black-necked Stilt ranged from Oregon south through the western and southeastern United States (Louisiana and Florida) south through Central and South America (Bent 1927). Delbert's sighting appears to be the first record for Canada. Taverner (1928:131) stated the Black-necked Stilt "may have occurred occasionally in Manitoba, but the records are too uncertain for unquestionable acceptance." Godfrey (1986) could not confirm this record and listed the first Canadian occurrences (both as sight records) in 1955. They were from Arcola, Saskatchewan on 20 May and Timmons, Ontario on 1 September. Salt and Salt (1976:179) listed a record of Black-necked Stilt for Alberta, without specific details, as "a verbal report of parts of a Black-necked Stilt picked up in the Brooks area in the mid-1950s."

Other shorebirds seen by Delbert at the lake on that date, with numbers following scientific names, included Killdeer (*Charadrius vociferous*; 6 in family group), Spotted Sandpiper (*Actitis macularius*; 3), Solitary Sandpiper (*Tringa solitaria*; 1), Greater Yellowlegs (*T. melanoleuca*; 10), Lesser Yellowlegs (*T. flavipes*; 6), Least Sandpiper (*Calidris minutilla*; 15), Baird's Sandpiper (*C. bairdii*; 4), Pectoral Sandpiper (*C. melanotos*; 14), and Wilson's Snipe (*Gallinago delicata*; 1).

The sightings of Baird's Sandpiper and Pectoral Sandpiper are significant as they constitute the earliest records for the interior of British Columbia. Although both species are more numerous in the autumn migration (Campbell et al. 1990), the spring records are noteworthy as is the year they were observed. The previous earliest published interior records for Baird's Sandpiper, spring or autumn, were in 1911 (7 July, Okanagan Landing – Cannings et al. 1987 and Moose Pass [Mount Robson] on 8 August (Riley 1912) and for Pectoral Sandpiper in 1912 (August 16, Okanagan Landing – Munro and Cowan 1947). †

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