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## Wood Ducks Gathering Acorns

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## First Black-necked Stilts banded in Canada

Martin K. McNicholl



On 4 July 1977 I had the privilege of banding two downy young Black-necked Stilts (*Himantopus mexicanus*) at a nest at Beaverhill Lake, near Edmonton, Alberta. My companions, D. Vaughn (Chip) Weseloh and Ludo Bogaert were among a large number of prominent Alberta naturalists who were keeping this nest and another nearby under close observation. Both chicks were hatched that day, but dry, and retained upper mandible egg teeth. Peeping was heard from an additional pipping egg.

Banding these two chicks represented the culmination of Alberta's birding event of the year. Two stilts were initially observed at Beaverhill Lake on 1 May 1977 (Bulmer 1977), after which a long series of observations were made by many people, and finally two nests were discovered. These nests were thoroughly documented, observed, and photographed, the details of which will be published by D. Dekker, R. Lister, T.W. Thormin, D.V. Weseloh, and L.M. Weseloh.

This record represents the first confirmed record of nesting by this species in Canada. There are two

previous confirmed observations for Alberta, plus a previous hypothetical record (Weseloh 1972; Weseloh and McKay 1972), and less than ten previous records for the Canadian prairie provinces (McNicholl *et al.* 1972). Thus, the nesting was cause for considerable excitement.

I thank D. Vaughn (Chip) Weseloh for the invitation to band these birds.

### Literature cited

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Weseloh, D.V., and W.G. McKay. 1972. The second report of the Black-necked Stilt in Alberta. *Calgary Field Nat.* 4:90-91. ♦

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## Wood Ducks gathering acorns

Roger L. Briggs



In late September of 1976, while netting Wood Ducks (*Aix sponsa*) north of Pine Bluff, Arkansas, I had the opportunity to make a most unusual observation. Blue Jays (*Cyanocitta cristata*) were gathering acorns from a Pin Oak (*Quercus palustris*) in a flooded area. Under the tree, several Wood Ducks had congregated. The jays dropped many acorns which struck the water with a resounding "plop." A Wood Duck would swim to the site where the acorn struck the water. Without hesitation it tipped up for the acorn. If the bird failed to catch the acorn, it dived under the water, submerging out of sight. They never remained under the water very long—only about three seconds. Upon reappearing at the surface, the duck usually had an acorn.

Since I was hidden in a blind which was level with the water, I could not determine if all the ducks

had learned how to dive for acorns. The hens appeared to be quicker than the drakes, both at swimming to the spot where the acorn had struck the water and at diving.

Later I checked the area under the tree. The water averaged one meter in depth, and visibility enabled one to distinguish a sinking acorn until it reached a depth of approximately 20 centimeters. I believe the ducks were catching the acorns before they had reached the bottom since the ducks reappeared so quickly at the surface. This is unusual, since Puddle Ducks normally do not dive to obtain food, only resorting to this tactic to escape danger. Mallards (*Anas platyrhynchos*) in the area did not appear to be interested in the falling acorns. ♦

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