

A few moments later I looked upwards again and again saw a long-legged, tringa-type wader circling but was amazed how skinny and long-legged it appeared. When I raised my bins I realised why! It was a Black-winged Stilt. It circled for a while then descended and landed on the old pit some distance away. As it came down, I could see against the background of the land, the white neck, underparts and 'V' on the back, the black wings and the long pink legs.

I went to the old pit (via the phone box to let Dale Gibson know) and found it feeding on the sandy area at the rear of the pit about 2-300 m away. I watched it and took some notes over 15 minutes or so, but was distracted by an Osprey passing over, and it had moved when I looked back. I waited for DAG to arrive, and we went back to the new pit where we soon re-located it on an island with Lapwings. It was closer than before, only about 100m away, and we took further notes over c.10 minutes before it flew off with the Lapwing flock. I returned to the site in the evening and it was feeding on the old pit again. DAG also went back later on and it was still in the same area, and he took some record shots.

It was not seen the next day although access is restricted on weekdays.

Description of the bird:

Size, shape, jizz: An elegant, long-legged wader, with a long thin neck and a long, fine bill. The legs trailed in flight.

Head and upperparts: As a first-winter bird the general upperpart plumage was greyer and less contrasting than an adult. The crown was dull grey, with a paler neck with greyish mottling to the rear. The mantle was dark greyish or blackish and the coverts were blackish-brown with paler fringes. The tertials and primaries were blackish. In flight the secondaries and inner primaries showed a thin, white trailing edge. The back, rump and tail were white, producing a white 'V' on the back in flight.

Underparts: White.

Bare parts: Bill black, but possibly with a slightly paler base to the lower mandible. Legs dull pinkish.

Comments on the record:

The record was accepted by the British Birds Rarities Committee and appears in their annual rarity report for 1998 (p. 12). There had been 21 previous records in Kent and 310 nationally.

This was the second record for the Folkestone and Hythe area, with one seen at the same site on the 23rd May 1965. There were only five other sightings, involving a total of at least three individuals, in Britain in 1997. The Nickoll's Quarry bird was presumably the same as the one which was present at Rainham Marshes (Essex) on the 10th to 20th September 1997.