

269-01 - 1998

Paul G. Rodewald  
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I am writing to inform the P. O. R. C. of a sighting I made of an American Avocet on 7 May 1998 in Centre County. Details of the sighting are as follows...

**Species:** American Avocet (*Recurvirostra americana*).

**Date:** 7 May 1998

**Time:** Approx. 9:00 AM.

**Location:** Centre Co., on Nixon Rd., just 0.25 miles north of Pine Grove Mills.

**Weather:** Thick valley fog in AM, approx 50 degrees, no wind.

**Observer:** Paul Rodewald only

**Observation length/distance:** Very brief, seen only about 10 seconds as bird flew across road in front of my car at a distance as close as approx. 50 feet. Distance was close enough to prevent fog from obscuring my view.

**Optics:** None; seen with naked eye.

**Identification/Sighting:** While driving along Nixon road, a large shorebird flew across the road in front of my car. The underparts, head, and neck appeared entirely whitish and I noted no orangy-brown on the head, neck, or breast. (Note: I could not see gray around the head and neck typical of winter American Avocets, but do believe this was a bird in winter plumage). Wing beats were shallow and it had a protruding neck, slightly humped back, long wings, and long legs that trailed well beyond the tip of its tail. These features combined with its white underparts and darker upperparts gave a brief vague impression of a winter plumaged red-throated loon in flight (as unlikely as that may sound). As it flew closer I could see its long thin bill, but I could not see whether or not it was upturned. As it reached the opposite side of the road, I noted a broad white stripe down the center of its back and a white and black pattern on the upperside of its wings, but I could not see the pattern well enough to describe it. Underwing linings were white. I then stopped the car quickly and got out. At that point I was able to hear its vocalizations (see below), but it quickly disappeared into the fog. I contacted several other birders in the area, but nobody, including myself, saw the bird again.

**Behavior/Vocalizations:** Bird flew low (10 feet off ground) in a southwesterly direction and seemed to be looking for a place to land. It gave a repeated loud high-pitched and sharp call that I described as ...*peek...peek...peek...peek...peek*. The call matched perfectly with calls given on a Petersons CD of bird vocalizations that I have. The vocalizations I heard did not match those of Black-necked Stilt on the CD, which gives a lower pitched, shorter duration, and perhaps slightly more nasal ...*kek...kek...kek...kek*.

**Similar Species:** The only shorebird species of large size and roughly similar coloration is the Black-necked Stilt. Any godwit species would not be pure whitish in the underparts, and would lack the strong black and white pattern of both the wings and back. The bird I observed differed from a BN Stilt in having both the broad white stripe down the center of the back and a white and

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black pattern to the wings (the stilt would have solid black wings – above and below). In addition, the bird I observed had a whitish appearing head and neck, and did not have black on the crown and upperside of the neck as in BN Stilt. Vocalizations were unlike that on BN Stilt (see Vocalizations above).

**Familiarity with species/Experience of observer:** I have seen large numbers of both American Avocets and Black-necked Stilts in many states in the eastern and western U.S. I have extensive field and research experience with birds over the past 15 years. Currently I am working on a Ph.D. in avian ecology at Penn State University.

I realize that details for this sighting are few due to the brevity of the observation. Please let me know if you have any questions. I can be reached at the above address or by email at: pgr2@psu.edu. Thank you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Paul G. Rodewald".

Paul G. Rodewald

# Pennsylvania Ornithological Records Committee

## Voting Tabulation - Round One

Species: American Avocet (*Recurvirostra americana*)

Date of Sighting: 7 May 1998 to 7 May 1998

Location: PINE GROVE MILLS

County: CENTRE

Observer(s): Paul Rodewald

Date of Submission: 1998

Submitted by: Paul Rodewald

WRITTEN DESCRIPTION YES PHOTO NO SPECIMEN NO RECORDING NO

Member	Class I	Class II	Class III	Class IV-A				Abstain
					Class IV-B	Class IV-C	Class V	
D. Couchman			X					
T. Floyd								X
P. Hess			X					
R. Ickes			X					
J. McWilliams			X					
B. Reid			X					
P. Rodewald								X
TOTALS			5					2
DECISION			X					

Comments: 5/0/2

Signature (Secretary):

Date:

10/8/00