

(Jeff Lemons)



Recurvirostridae the STILTS and AVOCETS

This is a small family of nine species with members that are spread worldwide. They all have long, often needle-thin bills and long-skinny legs, and they spend their days wading in shallow water foraging for food. There is some disagreement among taxonomists as to how many birds should be classified within this family on other continents, but there are two distinct species found in North America: the Black-necked Stilt and the American Avocet. Together, they are two of the most stunning birds that can be seen in the Carolinas, having been described as “curious birds” which are “sufficiently striking in appearance to attract immediate attention.” Both of these species breed in the western United States and are found in the east during migration or in winter, usually along the coast. Only the American Avocet has made its way into the Central Carolinas. The Black-necked Stilt (*Himantopus mexicanus*) has been seen as close as Winston-Salem, Greensboro, and Mebane, NC.