*candidus* or *melαnopterus* of modern writers, and belongs to the group *Limicolæ,* having been usually placed in the Family *Scolopacidæ,* though it might be quite as reason­ably referred to the *Charadrüdæ,* and, with its allies to be immediately mentioned, would seem to be not very distant from *Hæmatopus,* notwithstanding the wonderful development of its legs and the slenderness of its bill.

The very peculiar form of the Stilt naturally gave Buffon occasion (*Hist*. *Nat. Oiseaux,* viii. pp. 114-116) to lament the shortcomings of Nature in producing an animal with such “ enormous defects,”— its long legs in particular, he supposed, scarcely allowing it to reach the ground with its bill. But he failed to notice the flexibility of its proportionately long neck, and admitted that he was ill-informed as to its habits. No doubt, if he had enjoyed even so slight an opportunity as occurred to a chance observer (*Ibis,* 1859, p. 397), he would have allowed that its structure and ways were in complete conformity, for the bird obtains its food by wading in shallow water and seizing the insects that fly over or float upon its surface or the small crustaceans that swim beneath, for which purpose its slender extremities are, as might be expected, admirably adapted. Widely spread over Asia, North Africa, and Southern Europe, the Stilt has many times visited Britain—though always as a straggler, for it is not known to breed to the northward of the Danube valley,—and its occurrence in Scotland (near Dumfries) was noticed by Sibbald so long ago as 1684. It chiefly resorts to pools or lakes with a margin of mud, on which it constructs a slight nest, banked round or just raised above the level so as to keep its eggs dry (*Ibis,* 1859, p. 360) ; but sometimes they are laid in a tuft of grass. They are four in number, and, except in size, closely resemble those of the Oystercatcher (vol. xviii. p. 111). The bird has the head, neck, and lower parts white, the back and wings glossy black, the irides red, and the bare part of the legs pink. In America the genus has two representatives, one@@1 (fig. 1) closely resembling that just described, but rather smaller and with a black crown and nape.

This is *H. nigricollis* or *mexicanus,* and occurs from New England to the middle of South America, beyond which it is replaced by 77. *brasiliensis,* which has the crown white. The Stilt inhabiting India is now recognized to be *H. candidus,* but Australia possesses a distinct species, *H. novæ-hollandiæ,* which also occurs in New Zealand, though that country has in addition a species peculiar to it, *H. novæ-zelandiæ,* differing from all the rest by assuming in the breeding-season an altogether black plumage. Australia, however, presents another form, which is the type of the genus *Cladorhynchus,* and differs from *Himantopus* both in its style of plumage (the male having a broad bay pectoral belt), in its shorter tarsi, and in having the toes (though, as in the Stilt’s feet, three in number on each foot) webbed.

Allied in many ways to the Stilts, but differing in many undeniably generic characters, are the birds known as Avosets,@@2 forming the genus *Recurvirostra* of Linnæus.

Their bill, which is perhaps the most slender to be seen in the whole Class, curves upward towards the end, and has given the oldest known species two names which it formerly bore in England,—“Cobbler’s-awl,” from its likeness to the tool so called, and “Scooper,” because it resembled the scoop with which mariners threw water on their sails. The legs, though long, are not extraordinarily so, and the feet, which are webbed, bear a small hind toe.

This species (fig. 2), the *R. avocetla* of ornithology, was of old time plentiful in England, though doubtless always restricted to certain

localities. Charleton in 1668 says that when a boy he had shot not a few on the Severn, and Plot mentions it so as to lead one to suppose that in his time (1686) it bred in Staffordshire, while Willughby (1676) knew of it as being in winter on the eastern coast, and Pennant in 1769 found it in great numbers opposite to Fossdyke Wash in Lincolnshire, and described the birds as hovering over the sportsman’s head like Lapwings. In this district they were called “ Yelpers ” from their cry ;@@3 but whether that name was elsewhere applied is uncertain. At the end of the last century they frequented Romney Marsh in Kent, and in the first quarter of the present century they bred in various suitable spots in Suffolk and Norfolk,—the last place known to have been inhabited by them being Salthouse, where the people made puddings of their eggs, while the birds were killed for the sake of their feathers, which were used in making artificial flies for fishing. The extirpation of this settlement took place between 1822 and 1825 (*cf.* Stevenson, *Birds of Norfolk,* ii. pp. 240, 241).@@4 The Avoset’s mode of nesting is much like that of the Stilt, and the eggs are hardly to be dis­tinguished from those of the latter but by their larger size, the bird being about as big as a Lapwing (vol. xiv. p. 308), white, with the exception of its crown, the back of the neck, the inner scapulars, some of the wing-coverts and the primaries, which are black, while the legs are of a fine light blue. It seems to get its food by working its bill from side to side in shallow pools, and catching the small crustaceans or larvæ of insects that may be swimming therein, but not, as has been stated, by sweeping the surface of the mud or sand —a process that would speedily destroy the delicate bill by friction. Two species of Avoset, *R.* *americana* and *R. andina,* are found in the New World ; the former, which ranges so far to the northward as the Saskatchewan, is distinguished by its light cinnamon-coloured head, neck, and breast, and the latter, confined so far as known to the mountain lakes of Chili, has no white in the upper parts except the head and neck. Australia produces a fourth species, *R. novæ- hollandiæ* or *rubricollis,* with a chestnut head and neck ; but the European *R. avocetta* extends over nearly the whole of middle and southern Asia as well as Africa.

A recent proposal *(Ibis,* 1886, pp. 224-239) to unite the Avosets and Stilts in a single genus seems to have little to recommend it but its novelty, and will hardly meet with acceptance by systematists. (a. n.)

@@@1 This species was made known to Ray by Sloane, who met with it in Jamaica, where in his day it was called “ Longlegs.”

@@@2 This word is from the Bolognese *Avosetta,* which is considered to be derived from the Latin *avis—*the termination expressing a diminu­tive of a graceful or delicate kind, as *donnetta* from *donna* (Prof. Salvadori *in epist.).*

@@@3 *Cf.* “Yarwhelp” (Godwit, vol. x. p. 720) and “Yaup” or “Whaup” (Curlew, vol. vi. p. 711). “Barker” and “Clinker” seem to have been names used in Norfolk.

@@@4 The same kind of lamentable destruction has of late been carried on in Holland and Denmark, to the extirpation probably of the species in each country.