

Middlewestern Prairie Region  
(Iowa, Missouri, Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky, Ohio)

BIRDS: VERIFYING DOCUMENTATION OF AN EXTRAORDINARY SIGHT RECORD.

1. Species yellow rail 2. Number: 1
3. Location Cone Marsh, Louisa Co., Iowa
4. Date: 30 April 1978 5. Time Bird seen: 12:00 to 12:20 PM
6. Description of size, shape and color-pattern (describe in great detail all parts of the plumage, and beak and feet coloration, in addition, to the diagnostic characteristics, but include only what actually was seen in the field):  
Small rail, similar in proportions to Sora (chunky body, slender neck, chicken-like head & bill) but smaller <sup>by 1/2</sup>. Upper parts + upper surface of wings dark brown or blackish; underparts yellow-ochre. A white patch on rear edge of wing, ~~beginning~~ beginning at the inner margin and extending out about 1/2 the length of the wing. Patch was ~ 1/3 of the width of the wing.  
Flew with 'buggy' wing beats like Sora, with legs dangling; not more than 5'-6' off ground.
7. Description of voice, if heard: —
8. Description of behavior: flushed from field of alfalfa (~1'-1 1/2' tall), flew 50', raised wings over back + pitched sharply to ground. We flushed bird about 5 times. Eventually flew into base of multiflorous hedge + we were unable to flush it again.
9. Habitat - general: grass at specific: alfalfa field bordered to w. and s. by hedges + mow fields; to n., second-growth woods; to e., extensive area of woods and marsh.
10. Similarly appearing species which are eliminated by questions 6, 7 & 8, Explain:  
Sora-like build, yellow-ochre underparts, white patch on wing, eliminate all other Rails. Imm. Sora would lack yellow beneath + white wing patch.
11. Distance (how measured)? 50'-100' (est) 12. Optical equipment: 8x40 binocs.
13. Light (sky, light on bird, position of sun in relation to bird and you):  
partly cloudy day; sun behind obs.
14. Previous experience with this species and similarly appearing species: have seen many Soras (including many that morning, including some in flight). had never seen y. Rail before.
15. Other observers: T. Kent, T. Staudt, R. De Coster (seen later by N. Halmi, C. Newton, T. Shires)
16. Did the others agree with your identification? yes
17. Other observers who independently identified this bird: —
18. Books, illustrations and advice consulted, and how did these influence this description:  
None. made notes within '20' of sighting of appearance of bird.
19. How long after observing this bird did you first write this description? copy of notes made on spot.  
Michael C Newton Address: 408 Wales St  
Signature  
Date: 7 May 1978 City, State: Iowa City, IA 52240

small rail, similar in build  
to sora but about 1" smaller.

brownish-yellow (rather bright)  
on breast, back + upper surface  
of wings dark, with a white  
patch on the inner  $\frac{1}{2}$  of rear  
edge of w -  $\sim \frac{1}{3}$  width of wing.  
in alfalfa field ( $\sim 1'$  tall).

flushed 3-4x, then  $\rightarrow$  corn.

bird wd fly 30-40', then raise  
w above back + pitch  $\rightarrow$  field.  
flew not more than 6' of gr.