

DOCUMENTATION FORM

Extraordinary Bird Sightings in Iowa

Species Possible Black Rails
 Location Zirbel Slough East Parking Lot Cerro Gordo Co.
 Habitat Marshy
 Date(s) 2 May 1993 Time 2:30 est to _____
 Name and Address Curt Nelson RR 4 Mason City
 Other observers None

Describe the bird(s) including only what you observed. Include size, shape, details of all parts (bill, eye, head, neck, back, wing, tail, throat, breast, belly, under-tail, legs, feet). Also mention behavior and voice.

This is the worst documentation I have attempted. I enclose it because I reported it on the bird line as a possible Black Rail.

I observed a small (sparrow-sized) black bird run quickly along the edge of a grassy area into a stand of willows at the edge of the SE pool at Zirbel Slough. It was in clear view for 20 ft. It was chunky, not slim like a sparrow and did not have a long tail. As I started to

Similar species and how eliminated:

Sora - much smaller & darker than a Sora (over)
 Swamp sparrow - too chunky, tail too short, too dark
 Female Red wing black bird - way more rail-like than a wedwing
 Virginia rail - too small, bill far too small.

Did anyone disagree or have reservations about identification? I have reservations

If yes, explain:

It was a very fleeting view. I saw no chestnut nape.

Viewing conditions: give lighting, distance (how measured), and optical

equipment: Light drizzle, 25-30 ft. away (paced)

Previous experience with species and similar ones: Lots of rails, no Black Rails

References and persons consulted before writing description:

How long before field notes made? on the spot on the back of an envelope
 completed? 3 weeks which I lost.

I recorded it in my notes that evening.

