

I did not accept or include this.  
Sounds like Sora to me. RKM

Yellow Rail - 1

~~30~~<sup>29</sup> April 1988 3 miles South of Emerson, Mills County, Iowa

Observer: David McGrew, of Emerson

Documentation written May 2 from what David told me  
May 1 + also his field notes. - Barbara L Wilson

Situation: Dave is very interested in the land + what's on it, including birds, mammals, Indian artifacts. He is observant, + has found Upland Plover nests before. He was discing up government set aside acres when a bird got up + ran almost under the tractor. He was afraid he was about to smash a nest + stopped + got off the tractor. The bird ran from him, then circled back. Dave had no binoculars, but the bird was sometimes six feet from him, + he took notes in his form notebook at the time.

Description: Looked like a miniature duck, about robin sized. Long-necked for a bird its size. Primarily dark brown, even blackish brown with some tan color, perhaps feather edging or a lower layer of feathers being seen. Legs Pheasant-like, not webbed, red or orange. The bird ran with its head down like an angry goose (bend or hump in neck). Strutted like a chicken. Held tail straight up when running. Light colored fluffy undertail coverts. Under neck (incl. breast?) solid dark cream color, not mottled. No barring seen on flanks but Dave didn't see or remember the flanks particularly. Wings never seen at all, no flight, no spreading of wings. Bill far too short for what he thought of as a rail (apparently Virginia) but duck-like except not flat; more like blunt pointed. Not quail-like. Bill colored a bit like candy corn, burnt orange mostly + yellow at base. Once or twice the bird seemed to burrow into the grass stubble to hide.

Similar species considered: Upland Sandpiper (which he had seen in the same field some day), quail, partridge.

I showed Dave rail pictures in Peterson's Eastern guide + the Audubon Master guide. He didn't think much of the yellow rail picture, objecting particularly to the white feather edging on the back, + the dull color of legs + bill (which may vary seasonally).

After looking through the book he felt rails were the best match, though the bill was a bit too acute but the tail matched. He felt ~~that~~ some other species in the Yellow Rail/  
juvenile Sora <sup>area</sup> might be it. Except of course there is no other rail like that, at least here.

Habitat: ~~E~~ In Foxtail Stubble in government set aside acres. The grass had been clipped about knee high + the machinery passing through had smashed much of it, leaving rows of standing stubble, some leaning into it, + flat rows. Dave said the bird was hard to see in it. ~~E~~ this was next to end rows planted to a sparse stand of alfalfa, half way to knee high.

We went to look for it May 1, mid afternoon, windy. Hopeless. 20 acres of undisturbed stubble. This is a upland site, the road ditch is wet + has a stand of phragmites, but this was 50 yards from that wet area.

- Barb Wilson

Dave McGrew's  
Notes transcribed:

April 29 88  
7:30 pm

Miniature brownish duck the size of a Robin. Dark cream solid colored under neck. Long neck. Brown feathers tan borders. Pheasant-like feet - red or orange. Chicken struts. Ran with its head down like a goose. Pointed tail. Ran with tail straight up. Beak burnt orange almost like candy corn, yellow between beak + bill.

MARCH						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31		

"In spite of the cost of living, it's still popular."

—KATHLEEN NORRIS

Orange Bird

THURSDAY

4

April 29 88

7:30 pm

Miniature brownish duck the size of a Robin

FRIDAY

5

dark cream solid colored under neck  
long neck

brown feathers tan borders

pheasant like feet - red or orange  
chicken struts

ran with its head down like a goose

SATURDAY

6

pointed tail  
ran with tail straight up

beak burnt orange almost like candy corn  
yellow between beak + bill

SUNDAY

7

↑  
looks like a chicken