

DOCUMENTATION FORM
For Extraordinary Bird Sightings in Iowa

What species? Yellow Rail How many? 1

Location? Dugout Creek Waterfowl Production Area, 3 mi. SE of Lake Park, Dickinson Co.

Type of Habitat? sedge mat zone of a glacial fen, near banks of Dugout Creek.

When? date(s): October 5, 1994 time: 2:10PM to 2:10PM

Who? your name and address: Douglas C. Harr, PO Box 65, Larchwood, Iowa 51241

Others with you: U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service Station Evaluation Team, but few saw the bird and none had enough of a look or experience to make ID.

Others before or after you: _____

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, undertail, legs, feet). Also mention voice and behavior.

As we hiked down a hillside toward a fen, within about 30 ft. of fen a small, rusty-brown rail-like bird flushed and flew about 20 yards before dropping from sight over creek bank. Flight was typical of rails, with frantic beating of stubby wings until "collapsing" into streamside ^{side} vegetation. Bird was viewed under excellent lighting conditions (see below) and as it flew away, wing and back patterns were readily notable. Wings exhibited a white "speculum" with darker feathers lining either side of white patch. Back was striped longitudinally, with a definite cross-hatched effect. Yellowish legs hung down and behind bird in flight. Head was rounded and small, with a small bill. Size was smaller than a Sora, estimated at about 5-6" in body length. Attempted to reflush, without success.

Similar species; how eliminated:

Sora--larger, darker, commonly seen in area wetlands.

Did any one disagree or have reservations about the identification? No.

If yes, explain:

Viewing conditions: give lighting, distance (how measured), optical equipment. Light: viewed bird flying north, with sun generally overhead and behind viewer. Distance: walked off to estimate. Optical equipment used: none.

Previous experience with species and similar ones: Very familiar with Sora, and have seen a number of Virginia Rails. Also familiar with snipe and other shorebirds that might be found in similar habitats.

References and persons consulted before writing description: none before writing field notes (did not have guide along). Checked against descriptions in Peterson, Zim and Natl. Geo. field guides before preparing this report.

How long before field notes made? 90 min. this form completed? 2 days.

Send completed form to Field Reports or CBC editor (address on back cover of Iowa Bird Life).