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BIRDS: VERIFYING DOCUMENTATION OF
AN EXTRAORDINARY SIGHT RECORD

1. Species Yellow Rail 2. Number 1
3. Location _____
4. Date: April 28 5. Time Bird Seen: 6:45 am to 7:15 am

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):

The bird (small rail shaped) was seen twice in flight only, during the above time period. At the first sighting the bird landed about 25' to 30' in front of me. Just before the bird landed it fluttered its wings hesitating momentarily and its white wing patches were seen clearly seen by me only before it set down. A sora was seen flying a few seconds later. The sora was a darker bird with no wing patches whatsoever and it showed white rear tail feathers. At the second sighting the bird flew up from about 5'-8' to the west of me. This time the bird flew about 20' hesitated as before and then dropped down. The white wing patches were seen by both observers. We both commented on the length of the patches, they appeared to extend beyond the secondaries and well into the primaries. Dark and light brown (yellow) stripes were clearly visible on the back of the bird. No beak or leg coloration was noticed.

7. Description of voice, if heard: NOT heard

8. Description of behavior: The bird was only seen in the air. The bird must have run as soon as it landed because we were never able to locate it in the landing area. The rail was never within 6' feet of the water edge and never flew towards the water.

9. Habitat - general: A small wetland area with a few cattails and marsh grasses.

specific: off the water edge in an area that was still spongy but had dry spots in it. when the bird flew it came up from the spongy areas and flew to the dry spots.

10. Similarly appearing species which are eliminated by questions 6, 7 & 8. Explain:

not large enough for a Virginia, longer legs weren't noticed in flight. we were seeing soras. They were ~~lighter~~ darker, the white undertail feathers of the sora weren't visible on this bird.

11. Distance (how measured)?

Estimated and agreed on by both observers
1st sighting 25'-30' 2nd, 20'

12. Optical equipment:

Bushnell custom Insta-focus
7x35

13. Light (sky, light on bird, position of sun in relation to bird and you):

The sky was fairly clear when we saw the bird. This bird was seen about an hour after sunrise so we had good light, not bright light. The bird flew north when we were facing N and S. when we were facing S.

14. Previous experience with this species and similarly appearing species:

A good deal of experience with soras. One previous sighting of a yellow rail, April 30 1978, written up in IBH summer 1978. The wing patches were the identifying marks for both sightings. Behavior was consistent with

15. Other observers:

Marilyn Glessen

previous sighting.

16. Did the others agree with your identification? yes

17. Other observers who independently identified this bird:

NONE

18. Books, illustrations and advice consulted, and how did these influence this description:

Birds of North America from Golden Press was used in the field after the first sighting for aid in identification. The description above was written independent of any description in the guide books. However, the wing patch illustrated in Birds of North America is smaller than what we saw on this bird.

19. How long after observing this bird did you first write this description? answer 6 three days

Signature: Thomas J. Spratt Address: 931 N. Summit

the rest one week

Date: May 5 1980 City, State: Iowa City Ia. 52240