

DOCUMENTATION FORM for extraordinary bird sightings in Iowa

What species? Yellow Rail How many? two (separate sightings)Location? Doolittle Prairie, Story CountyType of habitat? both flushed from along edge of small pothole, prairie areas
around both potholes had been burned, one recently, other severalWhen? date(s): 28 April 1985 time: ca 10:30~~am~~ other at 11:30 weeks agoWho? your name and address: Jim Dinsmore 4024 Arkansas Drive, Amesothers with you: Steve Dinsmore, Paul Martsching, George and Gordon Brownothers before or after you: John Mayfield, Ames saw one bird

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 voice and behavior.

Although others got some glimpses of birds on the ground, all I saw was when bird was in flight. One was flushed three times and the other twice. In each case the bird flew low and weakly, typical of a rail with maximum flight perhaps 50 m. In each case the legs were held dangling behind the bird and the rounded wings and the short, almost chicken-like bill was seen. The birds were about Sora size, perhaps somewhat smaller (we saw several Soras during day). Although my view of the bird each time lasted only 5-7 seconds at most, on at least 4 of the flushes, involving both birds I clearly saw that the underside was a buffy-yellow in color and there was some dark barring on the back. In all five cases, the bird clearly showed a white wing patch on each wing, the white covering the secondaries while the rest of the wing was distinctly darker. When the first bird was seen, I took it for a Sora until I saw the wing patches and realized what the bird had to be. After that other marks were seen when the birds flew.

The birds were at opposite ends of the prairie and the first was seen by Mayfield about the time we flushed the second, thus two birds were present.

Similar species and how eliminated:

Sora-overall coloration and the wing patches

Did any one disagree or have reservations about identification? No

If yes, explain:

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

When flushed varied from 10 feet to 25 ft. No optical equipment used. Clear sky and good light conditions.

Previous experience with species and similar ones: Have seen specimens and also saw one in hand a few years ago.

References and persons consulted before writing description:
Robbins et al.How long before field notes made? - this form completed? 24 hours

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