

DOCUMENTATION FORM for extraordinary bird sightings in Iowa

What species? King Rail How many? 1Location? Big Marsh, north of Parkersburg, IowaType of habitat? flooded marsh, dikeWhen? date(s): May 21, 1983 time: 3:00 PM to 3:05Who? your name and address: Beth Proescholdtothers with you: Mark Proescholdt, Phyllis Harrisothers before or after you: I know of 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 voice and behavior.

This was a large rail, the size of a small hen, twice as large as the Soras and Virginia Rails we were flushing, rusty-brown with no gray cheeks, heavy barring on its belly, mottled-colored back, long slender bill. It appeared on the dike we were walking, about 75 feet ahead, walking along, flicking its tail, in a seemingly unconcerned way, for about 5 minutes. Then it ducked into the grasses, and flushed across the water as we neared it, just before a Virginia Rail flew, for positive size comparison.

Similar species and how eliminated: Virginia Rail - this bird was twice as large as the Virginia Rails we were flushing, and it had no gray cheeks

Did any one disagree or have reservations about identification? No

If yes, explain:

Viewing conditions: give lighting, distance (how measured), and optical equipment: It was cloudy, but still good viewing - the bird walked ahead about 75' then flushed from grass 25' ahead (stepped off) - binoculars

Previous experience with species and similar ones: I have seen a King Rail 2 or 3 times, Virginia Rails several times

References and persons consulted before writing description: Roger Tory Peterson's new Guide and Birds of N. America by Robbins, et al

How long before field notes made? made at once this form completed? May 27

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