

DOCUMENTATION FORM for extraordinary bird sightings in Iowa

What species? Common Moorhen (Gallinula chloropus) How many? 3 adults w/10 downy young

Location? East side of Sweet Marsh, Bremer Co., Iowa

Type of habitat? Mixed marsh, Cattail and Indian Grass and Smart Weed and others

When? date(s): August 11, 1985 time: 2:40 to 2:50

Who? your name and address: Francis L. Moore, 336 Fairfield St., Waterloo, IA 50703

others with you: No one

others before or after you: None that I know of

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.

I have not seen that many Common Moorhen's in Iowa but have never seen downy young in my life. It seemed that this was an unusual sighting so I decided to document it. The three parent birds were definitely Common Moorhen's with the head and neck being a blackish color and the back being a olive-brown color with a longitudinal white line showing below the wing. The undertail coverts were white and the tail was a blackish color. The bill was red with a yellow tip. I never saw the birds legs. I never heard the birds call. Following one of the adult birds were three small balls of coal black fluff with a whitish color to the front to the face and a bright red bill with a yellow tip. With the other adults were seven downy young that looked just like the three just described. The young were approx. two to three inches long and extremely cute. I do not know how rare this sighting is in Iowa but I do not think that nesting has been documented for this species in Bremer County, Iowa before.

Similar species and how eliminated: American Coot is slate gray on the body with a white bill and does not have the white longitudinal line below the wing.

Did any one disagree or have reservations about identification? No

If yes, explain:

Viewing conditions: give lighting, distance (how measured), and optical equipment:  
Seen from approx. 100 feet in bright sunlight using Leitz 10X40 binoculars

Previous experience with species and similar ones: Have seen a number of Common Moorhen's before and am extremely familiar with American Coot.

References and persons consulted before writing description: None

How long before field notes made? None taken this form completed? 5 hours

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