

DOCUMENTATION FORM for extraordinary bird sightings in Iowa

What species? King Rail (Rallus elegans) How many? One (1)Location? East of Dike that is an extension of the dead-end road on East side of Sweet Marsh, Bremer Co., IowaType of habitat? Open ditch with a dike on one side with cattail marsh on both sides of ditch.When? date(s): August 11, 1985 time: 2:08 to 2:08Who? your name and address: Francis L. Moore, 336 Fairfield St., Waterloo, IA 50703others with you: No oneothers before or after you: None that I know of at this writing

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 was walking down the dike from the parking lot toward the marsh when something made a splashing sound near the dike from where I stood. A few seconds later a fairly large bird stepped out into the open and stood on some of the smashed down vegetation. The bird looked fairly dark at first glance but I noticed that it had a dark gray to blackish color on top of its head with a light superciliary line and a dark brown cheek area. The front of the bird was a cinnamon brown color; of the breast and sides. The flanks had a black and white barring effect continuing through the undertail coverts. The back looked like a very dark gray color with a light tan feather edging making it look somewhat scalloped. The wing was reddish-brown color and the tail appeared blackish. The birds bill was two-toned with the upper mandible being a blackish color and the lower mandible being a medium yellowish color. The birds feet appeared black. The bird did not give a call when it flushed. I only viewed the bird for about 10 seconds. It then flushed across the ditch and appeared to run on top of the water, beating its wings as it ran/flew across the ditch. It then disappeared into a mixture of Cattails and ~~Indian~~ ^{Indian} Grasses and I never saw it, while I was on that side of the marsh.

Similar species and how eliminated: The bird was about the size of a Blue-winged Teal in body size which eliminates Virginia Rail on size. No other rail in Iowa is this color and size. In some respects it looked like a very large Virginia Rail only brighter cinnamon on the breast, browner on the head and with a darker looking bill.

Did any one disagree or have reservations about identification? No

If yes, explain:

Viewing conditions: give lighting, distance (how measured), and optical equipment:
Viewed from approx. 30 feet in bright sunlight using Leitz 10X40 binoculars.

Previous experience with species and similar ones: Have seen a number of this species when I lived in Virginia in 1976-1978. I am very familiar with Virginia Rail.

References and persons consulted before writing description: None

How long before field notes made? time of sighting this form completed? 4.5 hours

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