

Black Rail

1899

Linn Co., IA

Berry

Anderson 1907, DuMont 1933

Record Number: 81-FJ
Classification: NA

REFERENCES

Anderson 1907

DuMont 1933

VOTE (1981): 2-IV, 4-V, 1-VI

V, Berry unreliable.

IV, no details (but see DuMont's comment!!)=VI?

VI, saw eggs only?

IV, A set of eggs reported. No mention of parents (!). Not saved -- not described.

V, No details on the eggs, or nest. Surely the adult was in the area? Also, is there not some doubt about Berry's observations?

Subgenus CRECISCUS Cabanis.

84. (216). *Porzana jamaicensis* (Gmel.). Black Rail.

The Black Rail appears to be even rarer than the preceding species, its range not extending so far to the north. Its habits are similar.

County records: Blackhawk—"rare migrant; one specimen mounted" (Walters). Des Moines—"Burlington, Iowa, 1892—specimen in the flesh examined by me" (Nutting, Proc. Iowa Acad. Sci., 1892, 41). Lee—"very rare—Keokuk district" (Praeger). Linn—"a set of eggs was found by myself in 1899, too far incubated to save" (Berry). Van Buren—"some 17 or 18 years ago a farmer caught one with his hands while plowing in a swamp and brought it to me. This is the only time that I have known it to occur here—Hillsboro" (W. J. Savage). Webster—"rare; July 11, 1899, killed a small rail of some sort new to me, along the edge of the slough in Black's field just east of the rendering works (Fort Dodge). It is 5½ inches in length; dark slate on head and breast, back dark brown tinging to a reddish at back of neck" (Somes).

Anderson 1907
p 209

Creciscus jamaicensis stoddardi Coale. Black Rail

Very rare. Anderson (1907) recorded several occurrences of this species in Iowa as follows: "County records: Blackhawk—"rare migrant; one specimen mounted" (Walters). Des Moines—"Burlington, Iowa, 1892—specimen in flesh examined by me" (Nutting, Proc. Iowa Acad. Sci., 1892, 41). Lee—"very rare—Keokuk district" (Praeger). Linn—"a set of eggs was found by myself in 1899, too far incubated to save" (Berry). Van Buren—"some 17 or 18 years ago a farmer caught one with his hands while plowing in a swamp and brought it to me. This is the only time I have known it to occur here—Hillsboro" (W. G. Savage). Webster—"rare; July 11, 1899, killed a small rail of some sort new to me, along the edge of the slough in Black's field just east of the rendering works (Fort Dodge). It is 5½ inches in length; dark slate on head and breast, back dark brown tinging to a reddish at back of neck" (Somes)." The specimen mounted by Walters has been examined by the writer and found to be an adult Yellow Rail. There is no evidence that the specimen examined by Nutting was preserved. Widmann (1907)^{from Cooke 1895} recorded that one was seen at Iowa City, Johnson County, October 11, 1885.

There are but two recent observations, both by E. D. Nauman of Sigourney. He records (Wilson Bull., XXXIV, pp. 217-19) one seen May 5, 1914 as it flew from the marsh grass within four or five feet of him. Nauman said in a letter that this bird was distinctly a rail, black, and too small for any other species. At that time of year it could hardly have been the young of any other species of rail. Another was seen by him at Sigourney, October 1, 1925. The writer has been unable to find an Iowa specimen.

The only basis for considering the Black Rail as a breeding bird in Iowa is the statement by George H. Berry that he took a set of eggs in Linn County in 1899. Some question has arisen recently in regard to the veracity of several of Berry's records. Therefore it seems advisable, as the eggs were neither preserved nor examined by a trained ornithologist, to remove this species from the list of Iowa breeding birds.

DuMont 1933
p 63

Black Rail

Bent, A. C. 1926. North American Marsh Birds. Bull 135 US Nat Museum, Washington, 1926. pp 331-332

Range.—Eastern United States to Central America.

Breeding range.—North to Kansas (Garden City, Finney County, probably Beloit and Manhattan); Iowa (Linn County); Minnesota (Hennepin County); Illinois (Chicago); probably southern Ontario (Dundas); Connecticut (Saybrook); and Massachusetts (Chatham). East to Massachusetts (Chatham); Connecticut (Saybrook); New Jersey (Mount Holly, Camden, Brigantine, and Beasley's Point); probably Virginia (Wallops Island); North Carolina (Raleigh); South Carolina (Mount Pleasant); and Florida (Alachua County and Merritt's Island). South to Florida (Alachua County, Merritt's Island and Wakulla County); western North Carolina (Statesville and Weaverville); Illinois (Philo); and Kansas (Princeton). West to Kansas (Garden City).

The black rail also has been reported as occurring in summer from Wisconsin (Lake Koshkonong); and Ohio (Grand Reservoir). A specimen believed to be this species was reported as seen near Tucson, Arizona, on April 23, 1881 (Brewster).

Winter range.—The black rail is known to winter in Jamaica and Guatemala (Ducos); and it appears to occur rarely at this season north to Louisiana (New Orleans) and Florida (the Tortugas Islands, Key West, St. Marks, and Daytona). It has been reported in winter from Tybee Island, Georgia (Hoxie), but this case lacks subsequent confirmation.

Spring migration.—Early dates of arrival are: District of Columbia, Woodridge, May 14, 1923, and Washington, May 29, 1891; Massachusetts, Boston, May 5, 1913, and Milton, May 16, 1904; Illinois, Canton, April 15, 1895, and Rantoul, May 11, 1914; Ohio, Medina, April 14, 1921, and near Carthage, May 17, 1890; Texas, Houston, April 21; and Kansas, Neosho Falls, March 18, 1886.

Fall migration.—Late dates of fall departure are: Kansas, Lawrence, September 26, 1885; Illinois, Chicago, October 15, 1903, and Canton, October 27, 1894; Iowa, Iowa City, October 11, 1885; Maine, Scarboro, October 4, 1881; New Jersey, near Camden, September 22, 1887; Maryland, Piscataway, September 25, 1877, and Mount Calvert, October 19, 1906; District of Columbia, near Washington, September 25, 1877; and South Carolina, Mount Pleasant, November 9, 1906.

The typical form of this rail (*Creciscus jamaicensis jamaicensis*) is now said to occupy Jamaica, Cuba, and Porto Rico; and the bird found in the eastern United States has recently been named *Creciscus jamaicensis stoddardi* Coale, as a distinct subspecies.

Egg dates.—New Jersey: 26 records, May 30, to August 12; 13 records, June 12 to 23.