

Black Rail  
17 May 1952  
Fisher's Lake, Polk Co., IA  
Olivia McCabe  
McCabe 1952

Record Number: 81-FP  
Classification: A-D

REFERENCE

McCabe, O. 1952. A record of the Black Rail near Des Moines.  
IBL 22:42-43.

VOTE (1981): 5-III. 1-III.5, 1-IV(VI?)

III, barely adequate description.

III, A short look, but essential field marks observed.

IV, VI?, Could it have been a fledgling redwing? Description not very complete, but suggestive.

III.5, A May single observer record of a 'small' weakly flying bird -- apparently smaller than a redwing, but 'tailless'. Description not very good. Observation must have been limited to just a glimpse as the bird flushed. Seen at a distance of 20 ft. coming out of cattails (is that unusual?)

III, Description adequate, especially 'rusty black'. 'Whitish stripes on each side' are questionable, presumably means barring on belly.

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**A Record of the Black Rail near Des Moines.**—Fisher's Lake is a shallow pond often visited by shore and water birds about two miles north of Des Moines. About noon on May 17, 1952, we went there to look for birds. So many fishermen were sitting on the banks about half way around the lake,

our expectations of shore birds had almost vanished when suddenly, as we stepped up the high bank of the highway, a Red-winged Blackbird dashed in panic from the cattails in the marshy growth below. Following closely was another, small bird with dangling legs and weakly flapping wings. This bird was dark, rusty black with whitish stripes on each side and the back speckled lightly with white. It seemed tailless as it dropped helplessly into the cattails some 20 feet away. Its plump, round body made it look like a chipmunk or some small animal trying out borrowed wings. This was a Black Rail, and my first record for it. So secretive are these little inhabitants of the marshes, very rarely is one seen. Their presence is usually unsuspected and they creep around in the grasses instead of flying, though occasionally they flush, as this one did, when taken by surprise.—OLIVIA McCABE, Des Moines, Iowa. 10