

LOUISIANA ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY

LOUISIANA BIRD RECORDS COMMITTEE

REPORT FORM

This form is intended as a convenience in reporting observations of species on the LBRC Review List. The LBRC recommends the use of this form or this format when submitting records for review (to assure that all information involving an observation is accounted for). Attach additional sheets if necessary. Please print or type. Attach drawings, photographs, or tape recordings, if available. Include all photos if an obscurely marked species. When completed, mail to: LBRC Secretary, c/o Museum of Natural Science, 119 Foster Hall, Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge, LA 70803-3216.

1. ENGLISH AND SCIENTIFIC NAMES:

Black Rail (Laterallus jamaicensis).

2. NUMBER OF INDIVIDUALS, SEXES, AGES, GENERAL PLUMAGE (e.g., 2 ad. in breeding plumage):

Two adult singing males, one Specimen LSUMZ No. 104011.

3. LOCALITY: LOUISIANA; Cameron Par.,
(state) (parish)

0.5 mi. NNE Creole
(specific locality)

4. DATE(S) WHEN SEEN: 24 April 1982.

5. TIMES OF DAY WHEN SEEN: ca 2:00 AM.

6. REPORTING OBSERVER AND ADDRESS: Steven W. Cardiff
LSU Museum of Natural Science
Baton Rouge, LA 70803

7. OTHER OBSERVERS ACCOMPANYING REPORTER WHO ALSO IDENTIFIED THE BIRD:

Mark B. Robbins, Gary H. Rosenberg.

8. OTHER OBSERVERS WHO INDEPENDENTLY IDENTIFIED THE BIRD: none.

9. WEATHER/LIGHT CONDITIONS (position of bird in relation to shade and to direction and amount of light):

dark, calm.

10. OPTICAL EQUIPMENT (type, power, condition): none.

11. DISTANCE TO BIRD: 0 ft.

12. DURATION OF OBSERVATION: 10 minutes.

13. HABITAT: marsh/field/pasture with fine grass and sedges about 1/2-1 ft. tall, scattered hummocks of taller, thicker grass/sedge, 1-2 in. standing water on relatively hard substrate.

14. BEHAVIOR OF BIRD/CIRCUMSTANCES OF OBSERVATION (flying, feeding, resting, etc. - include and stress any habits used in identification; relate events surrounding the observation):

We were in the pre-dawn phase of a Big Day. Having started at Cameron at midnight, we drove to Creole on Hwy. 27, periodically stopping to listen for calling rails and playing recordings of Black Rail. We continued N on Hwy. 27 from Creole and stopped just N of town where we had located a promising looking wet field east of the highway during scouting the previous day. I don't remember if we heard the Black Rails as soon as we got out of the car, or if they responded to the tape. Anyway, we could hear at least two singing birds and possibly three. The birds sounded quite distant, and we weren't sure about the stability of the substrate in the field, but that didn't stop us from charging out in their general direction in the hopes of getting closer or even seeing one of them. As I recall, it quickly became apparent that the closer of the two birds was much closer to the road than we thought, probably within 100-150 m. I kept the the endless loop tape going as we walked toward the singing bird. As we got closer, the three of us spread out and tried to triangulate on the somewhat ventriloquistic song. Finally, it seemed that we must be right on top of the excited rail, so we turned on our flashlights and started sweeping the ground and vegetation around us. Much to my amazement, I pointed my light down at my feet and discovered that the singing rail was standing on top of the end of my rubber boot! The fearless Black Rail continued to sing excitedly as I blurted out to Mark and Gary that the bird was standing on my foot. Mark, who was determined to grab the bird, slowly reached down and then lunged for the bird, which deftly dodged his hand and disappeared out of the light beam. The bird also stopped singing momentarily and we thought that it was surely gone for good. I had turned off the tape when Mark tried to catch the bird. I turned it back on within 30 seconds of the "miss" and the rail began to sing immediately in response. The bird sounded as though it hadn't moved more than a few feet and we turned our lights on again after a few seconds. The bird was quickly relocated perched on top of a 1-2 ft. tall clump of sedge/grass right in front of us. I hadn't moved from my previous position and was able to slowly reach over and pluck the rail from its perch. We decided to keep the bird as a specimen. After capturing the rail, we could still hear one, possibly two birds still singing farther out in the field.

15. DESCRIPTION (include only what was actually seen, not what "should" have been seen. Include if possible: total length or relative size compared to other species present or familiar species; body bulk, shape, and proportions; bill, eye, leg and plumage characteristics. Stress features that separate it from similar species):

see attached photo. An unmistakable Seaside Sparrow-sized rail (23.7 g). Head and underparts generally dark slaty-gray, chin and throat slightly paler, lower belly barred with white, lower flanks dull black thinly barred with white. Hindcrown dull grayish-chestnut blending to dull chestnut nape and upper back. Rest of mantle dull brownish-olive with white spots and vermiculations. Rump and tail black with white spots. Iris bright crimson, bill black, legs and feet dark gray-brown.

16. VOICE: the bird sang constantly, the classic "ki-ki-do" or "kink-ee-doo."

17. SIMILAR SPECIES (include how they are eliminated by your observations):

specimen and vocalizations confirm ID.

18. PHOTOGRAPHS OR TAPE RECORDINGS OBTAINED (By whom? Attached?):

slide of prepared specimen attached.

19. PREVIOUS EXPERIENCE WITH THIS SPECIES:

I have seen one (also captured by hand) and heard many others in S. Calif.

20. IDENTIFICATION AIDS (list books, illustrations, other birders, etc. used in identification):

a) at time of observation: tape recording.

b) after observation: none.

21. THIS DESCRIPTION WRITTEN FROM: _____ notes made during observation; _____ notes made after observation (date: _____); X memory; X specimen.

22. ARE YOU POSITIVE OF YOUR IDENTIFICATION? YES. If not, explain:

23. SIGNATURE OF REPORTER: *Steven W. Cardiff*

24. DATE AND TIME OF WRITING THIS ACCOUNT: 3 April 1989, 10:30 AM.