

231-01-2002

Yellow Rail (*Coturnicops noveboracensis*)

Age: unknown

Date: October 6, 2002, ~ 6:45 PM, again at ~7:00 PM

Location: near Eldred, McKean County, Pennsylvania

Site: a large (c. 30 acre) wet meadow mainly of sedges and rushes on private property

Observer: Ben Coulter

3431 Argyle Ave

Erie, PA 16505-1804

814-838-9773

Other observers: Dave Wilton

Habitat: The bird flushed out of a patch of what appeared to be sedges, maybe a foot or two in height. The rest of the field consisted largely of sedges, rushes, cattails, and grasses.

Distance to bird: The rail flushed under our feet at approximately ten feet, and later at a similar distance.

Conditions: partly cloudy, with mid to high level clouds. Light was still sufficient, as the sun was just setting.

Optics: Swarovski 8.5x42 binoculars

Description: The rail was seen only in flight as it flushed. The bird struck me as a little smaller than a Sora as I brought my binoculars to my eyes. It had short, rounded wings, and its longish legs dangled beneath it as it flew. Its wings were beat very quickly, so that the bird sort of fluttered slowly through the air. The Yellow Rail was seen from behind as it flushed away from us, so the underside was not seen. The head, nape, back, and rump were a dark grayish yellow, with pale buffy yellow longitudinal stripes running down the back. The underparts were a brighter yellow than the upperparts. The dorsal surface of the wings, which was seen as the bird flushed away from us, was grayish and yellow, with brilliant white patches on the inner secondaries. This was by far the most noticeable mark on the flushing bird, and was visible with the naked eye a good distance away. The bird beat its wings rapidly, so the pattern of the wings was easily discerned.

Behavior: The bird was only observed in flight as it flushed. The bird flew rather slowly, with rapidly beating wings. It reached an altitude of probably 6 ft. or so before dropping back into the vegetation.

Similar species: Yellow Rail is distinctive, but Sora could be confused with it under some conditions. Sora is somewhat larger and much darker, with longer wings. In flight, it lacks the prominent white patches on the inner secondaries of Yellow Rail (Sora has a faint pale trailing edge), and does not have strongly contrasting stripes down the back of the bird.

**Pennsylvania Ornithological Records Committee**

**Voting Tabulation - Round One**

Species: Yellow Rail ( Coturnicops noveboracensis )

Date of Sighting: 6 October 2002 to 6 October 2002

Location: ELDRED

County: MCKEAN

Observer(s): Ben Coulter, Dave Wilton.

Date of Submission: 2002

Submitted by: Ben Coulter

Written Description: Yes

Photo: No

Specimen: No

Recording: No

Member	Class I	Class II	Class III	Class IV-A				Abstain
					Class IV-B	Class IV-C	Class V	
G. Armistead			X					
D. Heathcote			X					
P. Hess			X					
J. Stanley			X					
E. Witmer			X					
R. Leberman			X					
M. Sharp			X					
TOTALS			7					
DECISION			X					

Comments: 7/0

Signature (Secretary): 

Date: 6/12/03