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## UNUSUAL SIGHTING DOCUMENTATION

**Species (Common & Scientific Name):** Clapper Rail *Rallus longirostris*  
**Subspecies, if known:** Matches Atlantic illustration in Sibley  
**Number of Individuals:** 1      **Sex(es):** Specimen has no sex defined.  
**Age(s) & Plumage(s):** Specimen has no age defined.

**Date Seen:** 9/27/1976      **Time: Approx:** 8 AM

**Where Seen (Town/County):** Upper Gwynedd Twp., Montgomery Co., PA. NOTE: The label on the bird says North Wales, PA, which is the zip code for the site and is only a couple of blocks away. However, the site was not in the borough of North Wales but in the township.

**Exact Location (Park, Road, Lake):** Approx. 0.3 mi. from Sumneytown Pike on Dickerson Rd. The dead bird was at the curb. I found it on my way to work.

### Observer Reporting:

**Name:** August Mirabella  
**Address:** 1443 Wheaton Lane  
North Wales, PA 19454  
**E-mail:** [augustmirabella@aol.com](mailto:augustmirabella@aol.com)  
**Telephone (optional):** 215-368-0594

**Other Observers (Only those who saw & identified the bird with you):** None

**Distance to Bird:** Road kill in hand

**Viewing Conditions (Sky, weather, position of sun relative to you):** n/a

**Optical Equipment Used:** 7X42 Zeiss Bins & Leica Scope: n/a

**Habitat:** On the east side of the road was a catch basin with marshy vegetation. On the west side of the road was a small creek draining the catch basin and leading to the Wissahickon Creek approx. 200 yds. distance from the road.

**Description (only what you observed; size relative to other species present; posture, body shape & proportions; colors & patterns of plumage:** Since this was a long time ago, the only relevant comments would be what evidence I can see today in the photos provided with this documentation. I suspect that due to the location, I may have defaulted to King Rail at the time but don't really remember. The pictures show the expected grayish edges to the back feathers, gray face, and drab grayish breast, which is consistent with the illustrations in Sibley for an Atlantic coast bird. The dark barring alternating with white bars is drab relative to King Rail. What I see matches the Nate Rice comments provided with the pictures. He said, "Based on the gray cheeks and lores, duller underparts and less distinct barring on the flanks your bird would be considered a Clapper.

**Behavior (Be as specific as possible about what the bird was doing):** n/a

**Vocalizations:** n/a

**Supporting Evidence if Any (include with report):** This is Specimen # 175380 at the Academy of Natural Sciences. I have wanted to document this bird for many years after Matt Sharp confirmed it was still in the collection there. I had sent it down with an employee of the Academy at the time. See three photos provided by Nate Rice of the Academy of Natural Sciences. The middle bird is my Specimen # 175380 and is shown in comparison to another

Clapper Rail (top) and a King Rail (bottom). Nate Rice selected specimens that were obtained from our region (PA/NJ) at the same time of year (September/October).

**Separation from Similar Species** (How you eliminated others): The King Rail would have the brownish edges to the back feathers and bright brown of the breast and head. The barring would be darker and well defined separated by bright white bars. From Sibley, the Gulf coast and Pacific coast Clapper Rails would also have brighter browner tones.

**Discussion** (Anything else relevant to the observation that will aid the committee in evaluating it): Due to the suitable habitat adjacent to the site of the road kill, there is no reason to believe the bird got there in any other way than on its own power. Regarding the ID, Nate Rice also said, "I'm sure that it was Frank Gill that made this original designation, but many other ornithologists would have also looked at the skin including recently James Maley (a Clapper/King Rail expert from LSU). No one has suggested that this is anything but Clapper." Regarding the length of the specimens in the pix, Nate said, "Any difference in body length would be the result of prep style."

**Previous Experience with this and/or Similar Species:** Have seen Clapper Rail many times but King Rail only a couple or three times.

**Are you positive of your ID?** (Why or why not): Yes, the pictures support the ID placed on the specimen by the experts at the Academy of Natural Sciences.

**References:**

During Observation: n/a

After Observation: At the time, Birds of North America by Singer, Bruun, & Zim. Today, The Sibley Guide to the Birds.

**Date of report:** 1/11/2011

**Signature of Observer:** August Mirabella