









PENNSYLVANIA ORNITHOLOGICAL RECORDS COMMITTEE  
613 Howard Road, West Chester, PA 19380

16 February 2003

Kevin Crilley  
PO Box 100  
Sumneytown, PA 18084

Dear Kevin,

Thank you for submitting documentation of the Clapper Rail that was found at Norristown on 27 October 2000. After careful review, the Committee has voted not to accept this record.

The Committee members were divided in their opinions, and voting went two rounds before a final decision was made, with two members favoring acceptance and four voting not to accept it. The members who voted against acceptance felt that neither the measurements, the description, nor the photograph ruled out the possibility of a hybrid Clapper X King Rail.

Enclosed is an analysis made by one member representing the majority of the Committee's opinion, which I hope will explain our reasoning.

As you know, non-acceptance does not necessarily mean that the bird was not a Clapper, but that the Committee felt the documentation did not support the identification with sufficient certainty. We hope that our non-acceptance in this case will not discourage you from submitting reports on any future rarities you find.

Sincerely,



For the Committee:  
Paul Hess, Chair

Record No. 234-01-2000

P.S. I would like to apologize for the delay in announcing our result. We are striving to process the dozens of documentations we receive each year more quickly, and the fact that this one went two rounds before a decision extended the process longer.

Notes on Clapper Rail, Record # 234-01-2000

Based on the description and the two measurements given (weight is not a reliable indicator), this bird cannot be distinguished from a hybrid Clapper X King Rail often called a "Kling" rail, which is fairly common on the Atlantic Coast and sometimes very difficult to distinguish from either parental species.

Here are the ranges of measurements for both species taken from a combination of Roberts (1955) and Godfrey (1966):

King: wing 147.4 - 177.8 mm (This bird was 151)  
bill 50.8 - 76.2 mm (This bird was 58)

Clapper: wing 135.5 - 160.0 mm (This bird was 151)  
bill 55 - 69.5 mm (This bird was 58)

In wing length, this bird was thus toward the short limit of King and long limit of Clapper -- which could be a sign of a possible hybrid.

In bill length, it was also toward the short limit of King -- which could be a sign of a possible hybrid (though inconsistently it was also toward the short limit of Clapper, which would not seem to be appropriate for a hybrid).

In appearance in the photographs it does indeed look more like a Clapper than a King, but so might a "Kling."

The measurements are really the only way to make a confident judgment, and I believe both the wing and bill should be shorter than the small limit of King to be convincingly called a "good" Clapper.

Clappers so seldom wander inland that I think a complete set of diagnostic measurement would be needed to confirm the species. In addition a "Kling," being more fresh-water oriented, might be more likely to wander inland than a Clapper, though this is not necessarily meaningful evidence.

References:

Roberts, T. S. 1955. A Manual for the Identification of the Birds of Minnesota and Neighboring States. [for King Rail]

Godfrey, W. E. 1966. The Birds of Canada. [for King and Clapper]

235-01-2000

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Clapper Rail , Norristown, Montgomery County

On 30 October, 2000, I received a call from Alan Gehret ( a colleague and birding associate) Regarding an injured rail found at a Norristown office complex on 27 October 2000. He related that the wildlife rehabilitator had identified said bird as a Clapper Rail. When I phoned the rehab facility, they again referred to the patient as a Clapper Rail. I asked for and received permission to photograph , weigh and measure the bird. I visited the center on 13 November, 2000 to gather some data on the bird . (Photos enclosed, measurements in table 3 below). My other observations were as follows. The bird was obviously a rail, based on bill, body type, etc. Sora was immediately ruled out based on the bird's long bill. Virginia Rail was also eliminated based on weight (the maximum known wt. Of a male Virginia Rail is 100.3 grams, the bird in question tipped the scales at 171 grams).

DESCRIPTION: Bill- long and slightly curved. Cheek – gray , neck and crown – rusty. Belly – white or off-white. Throat – white. Flanks heavily barred white/dark brown. Wings and back showed brown feathers with gray borders. (wing coverts were not chestnut-colored as in adult king rail). Table 3 lists measurements of "bird X", tables 1 and 2 give measurements of clapper and king rails, respectively.

Table 1: Clapper Rail

	Female	male
Weight	278 g.	351 g.
Wing chord	146.8mm	151.1mm
Tarsus	48.1	51.7 mm
Tail	61.9mm	64.6 mm
Bill	59.6 mm	63.3 mm

table 2: King Rail

	female	male
Weight	N/A	N/A
Wing chord	154.3 mm	163.4 mm
Tarsus	54.0 mm	58.4 "
Tail	64.4 mm	65.9 "
Bill	61.9 mm	62.5 "

Table 3 "Bird X"(Norristown pa 27 october 2000)

Weight	171 g.* on 13 November (As bird adapted to captivity 270 g. 16 dec 2000, 260 g. and very active 12 Jan 2001)	
Wing chord	151 mm	
Tarsus	N/A (measurement not conclusively obtained to reduce further stress on The patient. See very low wt on 13 november)	
Tail	N/A " " " " " (SEE ABOVE)	
Bill	58 mm	

235-01-2000

Based on the plumage (see photos enclosed) and measurements given above, I have to concur with rehab manager's ID that the bird is most likely a Clapper Rail. Though I have seen dozens of Clapper Rails in coastal New Jersey, Delaware, and Virginia, I have never seen a King Rail. Thanks to Trish O'Connell of Schuylkill Wildlife Rehabilitation Center, and Alan Gehret (a licensed bander) for their help and cooperation with my "investigation")

Literature Cited:

-The Birds of North America, Life Histories for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. Published by the AOU, Academy of Natural Sciences, Philadelphia

-National Geographic Field Guide to the Birds of North America , 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, 1997

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**Pennsylvania Ornithological Records Committee**

**Tabulation Form - Round One**

Species: Clapper Rail (*Rallus longirostris*)

Date of Sighting: 27 October 2000 to 12 January 2001

Location: NORRISTOWN

County: MONTGOMERY

Observer(s): Kevin Crilley

Date of Submission: 2001

Submitted by: Kevin Crilley

Written Description: Yes

Photo: Yes

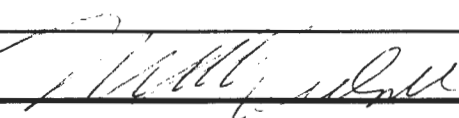
Specimen: No

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. Couchman			X					
P. Hess				X				
J. Stanley	X							
B. Reid					X			
<del>P. Rodewald</del> R. Leberman				X				
M. Sharp	X							
TOTALS	3		1	2	1			
DECISION								

Comments: 4/3 Go to 2nd round

Signature (Secretary):



Date: 11/19/01

**Pennsylvania Ornithological Records Committee**

**Tabulation Form - Round Two**

Species: Clapper Rail (*Rallus longirostris*)

Date of Sighting: 27 October 2000 to 12 January 2001

Location: NORRISTOWN

County: MONTGOMERY

Observer(s): Kevin Crilley

Date of Submission: 2001

Submitted by: Kevin Crilley

Written Description: Yes

Photo: Yes

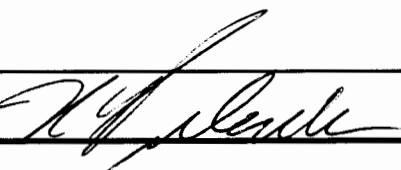
Specimen: No

Recording: No

Member	Class I	Class II	Class III	Class IV-A				Abstain
					Class IV-B	Class IV-C	Class V	
G. Armistead				X				
<del>D. Heath</del> D. Couchman								
P. Hess	X							
J. Stanley	X							
B. Reid					X			
R. Leberman					X			
M. Sharp				X				
TOTALS	2			2	2			
DECISION				X				

Comments: 2/4

Signature (Secretary):



Date: 6/30/02