

Clapper Rail (*Rallus longirostris*)

Age: Adult, based on bare parts and plumage

Date: October 4, 2002, ~8:00 AM-4:00 PM

234-01-2002

Location: Bristol, Bucks County, Pennsylvania

Site: Rohm and Haas property along Delaware River

Observer: Ben Coulter

3431 Argyle Ave

Erie, PA 16505-1804

814-838-9773 aeridia@velocity.net

Other observers: Devich Farbotnik, Steve Farbotnik, Jason Horn, Bob Schutsky, and Dave Wilton

Habitat: The bird was flushed from a grassy field, and was later seen in a spatterdock marsh, and along a vegetated hillside on the bank of the river.

Distance to bird: I was perhaps fifteen feet from the bird as it flew past me. The other sightings were probably within forty feet.

Conditions: Cloudy, with intermittent rain in the morning

Optics: Swarovski 8.5x42 binoculars

Description: This bird was a large, plain, gray *Rallus*. When it flew, it looked quite large and bulky, with the distinctive shape of a rail in flight. The legs dangled below the body, and the wings were broad and rounded. The neck was held out, and the large head with slightly decurved bill was noticeable. I noticed some faint vertical barring on the flanks as it flew past. The bird's overall coloration was a very muted grayish brown, or clay-colored, with no rufous markings evident. The throat was whiter than the body coloration, and a pale supercilium and darker cap were visible. The lores were darker than the rest of the head color. The flanks had some very faint vertical barring, dark and pale gray, but not striking. The iris was orange in color. The bill was gray, and was long, slender, and slightly decurved through the entire length. There was a large yellowish patch along the basal portion of the lower mandible. These features suggest that the bird was not a juvenile (which should have had a dark iris, gray bill, and no barring), but probably an adult. The legs were heavy and strong, and close to the color of the body.

Behavior: When originally flushed, the bird was feeding in a grassy field adjacent to the Delaware River. It flushed to a different part of the field, crouched down for a moment, then flew out towards the water, coming within about ten feet of me at the closest. It landed in a large spatterdock marsh that was exposed by the low tide level. We flushed it again when we walked down to the marsh to investigate where the bird landed. The bird was observed walking slowly along the water's edge in the spatterdock. Once the tide came in, the bird sought shelter in the vegetation along the hillside above the high water line.

Vocalizations: Jason Horn and I heard a sound that may have been the bird calling, a low clicking or tapping sound, but did not see the source of the sound. Since adjacent areas were industrialized, we cannot rule out machinery as the source.

Similar species: The main confusion species is the similar King Rail. The plumage is wrong for that species, as there were no black or rufous markings present at all. The bill shape, admittedly a subtle distinction, seemed a little more slender than a King Rail, and was evenly decurved through the length.

Discussion: The bird was originally flushed in a grassy field adjacent to the

parking area, and flew out into a spatterdock marsh along the shoreline of the river. The tide was out, and the marsh was still fully exposed. Dave Wilton and I flushed it a second time within the marsh, and confirmed our initial ID as a Clapper. The bird was seen again walking along the water's edge as the tide rose. Once the tide came in, the spatterdock was inundated, and the bird was forced up onto the heavily vegetated hillside. It was flushed two more times after that, one of which I personally saw.

Prior experience: I myself have no previous experience with Clapper Rail, but I have seen King Rail in Pennsylvania before. The other birders who saw the bird have experience with this species along the coast.

Pennsylvania Ornithological Records Committee

Voting Tabulation – Round One

Species: ~~C~~lapper Rail (*Rallus longirostris*)

Date of Sighting: 4 October 2002 to 4 October 2002

Location: BRISTOL

County: BUCKS

Observer(s): Ben Coulter, Dave Wilton multiple observers

Date of Submission: 2002

Submitted by: Ben Coulter

Written Description: Yes

Photo: No

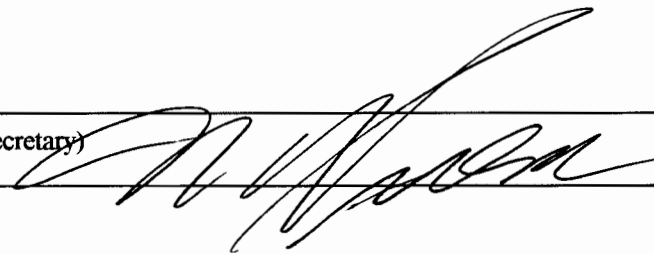
Specimen: No

Recording: NO

Member	Class I	Class II	Class III	Class IV-A	Class IV-B	Class IV-C	Class V	Abstain
G. Armistead			X					
D. Heathcote			X					
P. Guris			X					
J. Stanley			X					
E. Witmer				X				
R. Leberman								
M. Sharp			X					
TOTALS			5	1				
DECISION			X					

Comments: 5/1

Signature (Secretary)



Date:

4/14/04