

PA Rare Bird Report

Submission Date	2018-01-30 17:00:56
Observer's Name	Holly Merker
E-mail	HCybelle@gmail.com
Phone	610-733-4392
Observer's Address	520 Baintree Run Downingtown PA 19335 United States
Names of additional observers	Rob Megraw
Species (Common Name)	Clapper Rail
Species (Scientific Name)	Rallus longirostris
Subspecies (if known)	Unsure- either Atlantic or very possibly Gulf Coast
Number of individuals	1
Age(s) and Plumage(s) and Sex (if known)	unknown
Observation Date and Time	04-10-2016 11:00 AM
Did you submit this sighting to eBird?	Yes
Link to eBird checklist	https://ebird.org/view/checklist/S28919299
County	Chester
Location (City, Borough, Township)	Eagle
Exact Site (E.g. Name of park, lake, road)	Marsh Creek State Park
GPS coordinates of sighting	see eBird checklist
Habitat	Man-made reservoir/lake with sandy-rocky shoreline.
Distance to bird	500 feet or less.
Viewing conditions	Clear day. Perfect.
Optical equipment used	Swarovski 8.5 x 42 binoculars, Canon 7D with 300mm lens + 1.4 extender

Description

When this bird first dropped down in front of us, and started running, we both knew it was a rail without putting binoculars on it. Chicken-like gait, etc. While Virginia Rail is the most likely rail in Chester Co., this bird appeared too large for that species, especially in the head/bill proportions. King Rail was our first thought, since we both noted the very bright plumage details. This was a colorful rail, brighter than any Atlantic race Clapper I've ever seen (I have a decent amount of experience with that ssp in DE, where I work some in summer).

Behavior (be as detailed as possible about what the bird was doing)

This bird was running along the shoreline of the lake, only stopping occasionally to figure out what to do next, it appeared. It eventually flew from one point, to the edge of the lake, where it effectively hid until later that evening, when it was seen again in dim light.

Separation from similar species (How you eliminated others)

In this case, King Rail needs to be eliminated first. We did this effectively by looking at the plumage on the back of the bird. Flight images reveal no rufous on upper-wing.

The rail is too large for a Virginia Rail, and inconsistent with that species, plumage wise.

Discussion – anything else relevant to the observation that will aid the committee in evaluating it:

The big question is what ssp. this Clapper Rail is. It's thought that this "could" be a Gulf Coast race of this species, due to the incredibly bright plumage details, which is consistent with that ssp.

That said, I had the photos evaluated by experts, and no one said it was definitely of that race, but some did wonder. There have been isolated cases of that ssp wandering, including to CO so no reason to believe that ssp. does not wander.

Are you positive of your identification ? (Why or why not)

Yes, of the species, but not the subspecies

After

Sibley Guide to Birds; flickr images

Supporting evidence (check all that apply)

Photograph

Upload images, audio, video or drawings

[IMG_1297.jpg](#)



[IMG_1307.jpg](#)



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