

Biss (Chicago Rare Bird Alert), Danny Diaz, and Dave Johnson. Unfortunately, all three were at work and I did not have my camera with me.

Fortunately, the wigeon remained for several days so they and scores of others were able to see and photograph him in all his splendor.

One of the most recent accepted records of Eurasian Wigeon in Illinois was a male discovered at Moraine View State Park in McLean County in 1997 (*Meadowlark* 8:56).

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Black Rail (*Laterallus jamaicensis*) at Springbrook Prairie

On 24 May 2000, Pat Newman and I walked the edge of the marshy creek that runs west from the main parking lot at Springbrook Prairie Forest Preserve in DuPage County. We were looking for Least Bitterns, often found along this man-made creek during spring migration. Pat walked along the south side and I walked on the north side. Near the west end of the creek a Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrow popped up, so I called Pat to come around to my side to see this bird. She joined me after a 10-minute walk around the west end; of course the Nelson's was nowhere in sight by then.

In front of us was a small isolated marshy area where the sparrow had disappeared. I walked the perimeter, hoping the sparrow would reappear for Pat, but it didn't. Just as we decided to head back to the parking lot, a bird began loudly calling from the small marsh. Kik-kee-doo. Kik-kee-doo.

We both were stunned by this unmistakable call of a bird neither of us had ever heard before – a Black Rail (*Laterallus jamaicensis*). The rail called continuously for several minutes, at which time we decided to go to my house to listen to a tape. The bird was still calling as we left. (The Nelson's cooperatively popped up again for Pat's benefit). While in the car, checking the mnemonic for Black Rail in the National Geographic Guide to Birds of North America convinced me we had heard this species. Listening to a tape of the bird's call further convinced me.

IBET, the DuPage Birding Club hotline and various other formal and informal phone chains were notified, and the word quickly spread. Numerous birders visited Springbrook and heard the bird calling over the next few weeks. A few lucky people were treated to fleeting glimpses of this elusive rail. Some even heard two birds calling, suggesting the possibility of a breeding attempt. Because of this possibility, DuPage County Forest Preserve District biologists decided to cordon off the marsh, restricting

close approach. County biologists also recruited monitors to check for possible breeding. No one confirmed any breeding evidence of the bird and it was last heard 22 June 2000.

A good number of birders were able to at least hear this elusive and reclusive rail, a rare migrant and rare summer resident in Illinois and endangered in the state. This species once bred regularly in the Calumet River area and in central Illinois, though not in great numbers. Wetland destruction and degradation is probably the cause for this bird's demise.

The first Illinois nesting record of Black Rail was recorded 18 June 1875 when 10 eggs were found near the Calumet River (Bohlen 1989).

Some Illinois observers recently heard Black Rails singing during the breeding months in Illinois. Mike Ward heard a Black Rail June and July 1997 at Richardson Wildlife Area in Lee County near the Green River Conservation Area (*Meadowlark* 7:33). Kevin Richmond also saw a Black Rail and heard it singing day and night on three separate days in June 1996 at Matanzas Prairie in Mason County (*Meadowlark* 6:32). Eric Walters heard a Black Rail 1 July 1988 at Frontenac Marsh in DuPage County (*Illinois Birds and Birding* 5:16).

Wetland restoration efforts are making high-quality habitat available for this and other marsh dwellers. Perhaps Illinois birders will have a greater chance in the future to hear and see the Black Rail.

Literature Cited

Bohlen, H. D. The birds of Illinois, Indiana University Press. Bloomington, IN. Immature Painted Bunting (*Passerina ciris*) in Wadsworth

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