

for the east southeast district of Illinois (Illinois State Water Survey 1991). The heaviest rains (19.4 cm) occurred during 11-16 May, probably just before the two King Rail nests were initiated. The wet conditions combined with attractive grasslands may have induced nesting at these sites.

Sympatric bird nests with the King Rail nests included one Greater Prairie-Chicken, one Short-eared Owl (*Asio flammeus*), and one Eastern Meadowlark (*Sturnella magna*) in the brome field. In the redtop field, we found seven Red-winged Blackbird (*Agelaius phoeniceus*) nests, four Eastern Meadowlark nests, and one Northern Bobwhite (*Colinus virginianus*) nest. All non-passerine nests were successful except for the Short-eared Owl clutch. All of these species may attest to the upland character of habitats chosen by the King Rails.

In 1994, King Rail observations included a brood of four downy chicks with an adult and a lone adult, on separate sanctuaries. The brood was observed on 28 June along a drive lane and in a field of smooth brome. A broad drainage dominated by reed canary grass (*Phalaris arundinacea*) bordered one side of the brome field about 50 m from the drive lane. The lone adult bird was observed on two separate occasions in July moving between private land and a sanctuary in a drainage area, dominated by reed canary grass and tall fescue (*Festuca eleatior*).

In 1995, three broods were recorded on three sanctuaries. The first brood of five downy chicks and an adult was observed 22 June along a drive lane and then in a field of smooth brome. This location was about 150 m from where at least two adults were heard calling 30 May. The second brood was seen 18 July on a mud flat of a newly created

wetland. An adult and one immature King Rail ran into winter wheat and annual weeds that bordered the wetland. Adults were seen or heard in these habitats from 30 May through 22 July. The third brood, consisting of an adult and two immatures, was seen 28 July along a drive lane with 10 cm-high grass, next to a tall fescue drainage area. An adult had been heard calling from this area in late May.

A lack of brood habitat is believed to be a major factor limiting King Rails on Illinois' prairie-chicken sanctuaries (T. Fink, pers. comm.). Establishment of wetlands, now underway on the sanctuaries, should maintain shallow open water, wetland vegetation, and mudflats to enhance breeding habitat for King Rails and other wetland species.



King Rail tracks in mud, Donnelley Prairie-Chicken Sanctuary, Jasper Co., IL. 31 May 1990. Photo by Ron Westemeier.

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