

This is the first record of this species for Winnebago Co., and we believe that this is the first record of Purple Sandpiper in Illinois away from Lake Michigan. Bohlen (1989) noted no records away from Lake Michigan, and my subsequent search of fall reports since 1989 revealed no report in either "Meadowlark" or in "American Birds" away from Lake Michigan. I found no records of Rock Sandpiper (*Calidris ptilocnemis*) in the Great Lakes region. Hayman et al. (1986) report that basic plumage Purple and Rock Sandpipers are essentially indistinguishable from each other. These species are separable only upon comparative amounts of white on inner primaries and secondaries, comparative sharpness of spotting on lower breast and flanks, and presence of brown tones on

neck and upper breast in Rock juveniles. Closer study will undoubtedly be done to try to provide more information on separating these two species in the field.

### Literature Cited

Bohlen, H. D. 1989. Birds of Illinois. Indiana Univ. Press, Bloomington, IN.

Hayman, P., J. Marchant & T. Prater. 1986. Shorebirds: An identification guide. Houghton Mifflin Co., Boston, MA.

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## Black Rails in Vermilion County

On 11 September 1997, I was mowing hay 2 miles north of Fairmont, Vermilion Co., when a small blackish rail flushed in front of the operating mower. It flew only a short distance before dropping into a 15 foot wide strip of unmowed hay. I marked the location and, on foot, tried to force the bird to leave the field so that it would not be killed. After I resumed mowing, it did flush and leave the unmowed area. In order to drive it further out of harm's way, I got off the tractor, and was able to make it leave the field.

On 14 September, while mowing hay a mile further north, I flushed a Black Rail (*Laterallus jamaicensis*). Again, an attempt to drive it from the field was unsuccessful. I continued to mow, and flushed 2 Black Rails from the field, one going north and the other south.

The next day, a repeat of the above occurred in an adjoining hay field, except that this time, one bird was flushed many times in front of the mower, and once, one walked into the open at the edge of the standing hay at about a 20 foot distant, and actually stood still long enough for me to stop the tractor, turn off mower, and focus binoculars. I observed the short black beak, black and white belly cross barring, black back with some tiny light specks, very short black tail, and good view of its size and behavior. Both rails left the fields flying into the heavy cover surrounding 2 farm ponds.

On 16 September, while harvesting hay mowed the day before as haylage, a Black Rail flushed from under a mowed swath of hay at a distance of only a few feet and flew to the cover around a pond. This was probably one of the birds seen 15 September.

Black Rails have been flushed from these fields during late May in past years while mowing hay. I believe it is almost impossible to flush either Black or Yellow (*Coturnicops noveboracensis*) rails on foot, and that crushing one underfoot is possible, and likely, if pursued vigorously. I have caught rails by hand when they were observed to run under a mowed swath, and as a result, I knew exactly where they were and was able to hold down the hay and extract the bird gently, and then carry them beyond mower's way. I have usually finished mowing hay by 1 September. Mid-September may have been the peak of Black Rail migration. Several Soras (*Porzana carolina*) were also flushed during this hay mowing. I found 2 Yellow Rails under similar circumstances on 9 September 1996 (Smith, Meadowlark 5: 66-67, 1996) and another on 20 May 1997 in the same field first mentioned.

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