

was that it would be a scoter, which were unusually numerous that day. However, as it neared, I noticed some marks inconsistent with any scoter. Even at a distance, I noticed that the bird's wing beats were slightly slower and deeper than the Greater Scaup (*Aythya marila*) that it was with.

As it flew by me about 10 – 12 m away, its bright orange-pink bill stood out, making me think the bird might be an eider, probably a King Eider (*Somateria spectabilis*). As I knew this would be an extraordinary record, I gathered as many field notes as I could during the short duration of the view.

The bill was bigger and thicker at its base than the scaup. It had a dark head, offset by a white upper back. Its head, back, wings, and belly were all dark, but its breast was whitish, and there was an offsetting pale oval on its dark flanks. These marks led me to conclude that I had probably observed a King Eider. (Bohlen. 1989. The birds of Illinois. Indiana University Press), listed King Eider as a very rare winter resident in Illinois with only 20 records for the state and said, "Most arrival dates are in mid-November." I learned that other reports, near the timing of my observation, of King Eider from along the bottom of Lake Michigan in both Michigan and northern Indiana were also supportive of my observation.

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## Yellow Rail in Downtown Chicago

Sometimes you find the strangest birds in the strangest places. Downtown Chicago is often alive with bird activity during migration, so I always bring my binoculars and field guide to work in case something unusual turns up. On 17 September 1998, I decided to take an early lunch. While walking on Monroe Street between Franklin and Wells, I heard some commotion and saw a pedestrian almost step on a small bird that rose up from the sidewalk and scurried under a parked car. I got down on my hands and knees to look under the car, and saw what looked like an immature Sora (*Porzana carolina*) cowering there. I could not get a great look at the bird because it was so dark under the car, and I did not want to get too close and flush it, so I left it alone.

Several hours later, I realized that what I saw might not have been an immature Sora. I went back with my binoculars, and amazingly, the bird was still there. After further study, I decided that this bird was very probably a Yellow Rail (*Coturnicops noveboracensis*), but I still was



Yellow Rail in downtown Chicago. 17 September 1998.  
Photo by Kenneth R. Wysocki.

not sure. I went back to the office and called Sue Friscia and Wes Serafin for help on the identification. Friscia and Serafin both thought I could be right, and decided to fight the rush hour traffic to check out this bird. I returned to the bird, which was right where I left it—hiding behind a tire. After some anxious moments (including people passing within a foot of the bird, and various delivery people knocking the car that the bird was hiding under) Friscia and Serafin arrived. After examining the bird with a scope and seeing it raise its feathers, we all agreed that this was indeed a Yellow Rail. The COS Rare Bird Hotline was activated, and several other birders were able to see this bird. It eventually walked out onto the sidewalk and posed for photos. After the bird flew into a large plate-glass window, the birders who were still present grabbed the bird and deposited it safely in some bushes on Columbus Drive, near Grant Park.

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## Say's Phoebe at Fermilab

On the sunny to blustery afternoon of 28 November 1998 my brother, Vince Moxon, and I decided to embark on a spur of the moment trip to Fermilab to look for Greater White-fronted Geese. Little did we know, that this short trip would net a lifer for us and many other birders. After arriving at Fermilab we pulled up to what I felt would be our closest look at the geese. Even before exiting the car we glimpsed a bird with a unique behavior as it flitted from fence to the ground and back, taking cover in a nearby oak.

Barely out of the car, Vince said, "What have we got here?" As I focused in on the bird in the oak, Vince stated, "I think we have something very different!" It took several minutes for better looks and I got a couple of quick photos with my camera when the bird was out in the open. Although I was certain we had observed a Say's

Meadowlark