

A NEW SUBSPECIES OF THE LITTLE BLACK
RAIL.

HENRY K. COALE.

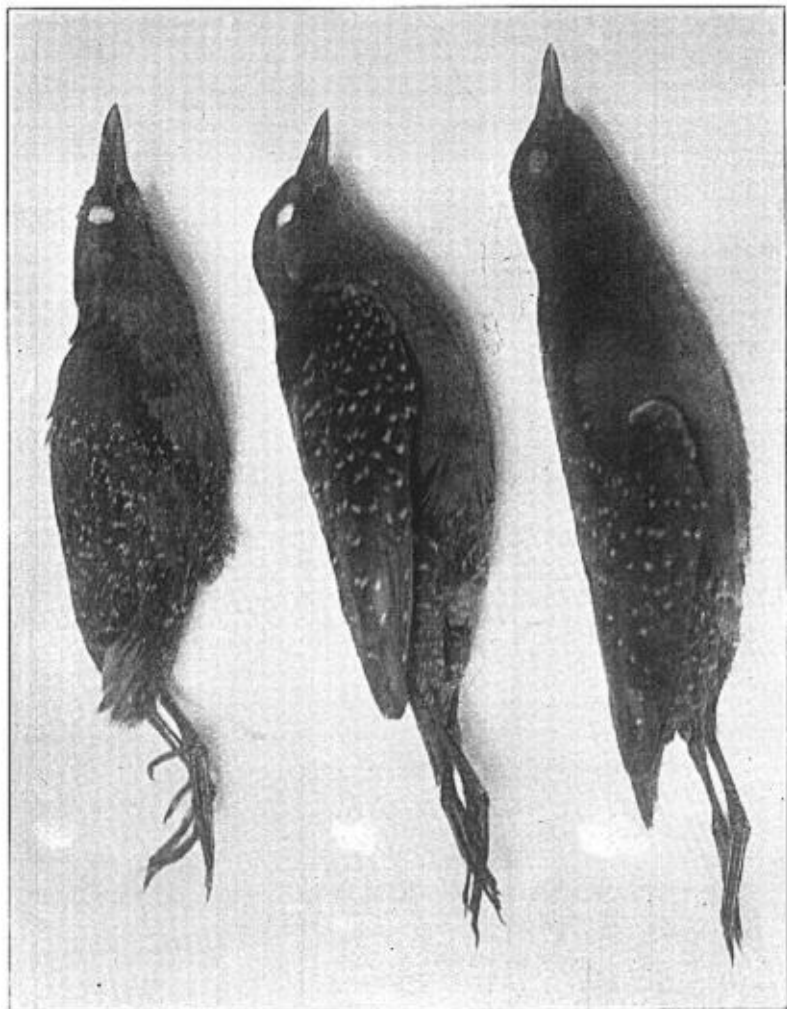
Plate IV.

SOME years ago I examined a Little Black Rail from Jamaica, preserved in the collection of the Academy of Natural Sciences of Philadelphia, which seemed to me then, to represent a form somewhat different from the bird of eastern North America. At that time I was familiar with the California Black Rail, but it was not until the summer of 1916 that I had the opportunity to examine a typical specimen of the eastern form taken by Mr. H. L. Stoddard, on the border of Hyde Lake, South Chicago, Illinois, on May 30, 1916.

Through the courtesy of Prof. S. C. Simms of the N. W. Harris Public School Extension of the Field Museum of Natural History, I was enabled to compare this example with specimens in the Philadelphia Academy of Sciences, the United States National Museum, the American Museum of Natural History, the Museum of Comparative Zoology, and the collection of Mr. John E. Thayer at Lancaster, Massachusetts, confirming my belief that the Black Rail of the eastern United States was different from true *Cresciscus jamaicensis* (Gmelin) of Jamaica.

Unfortunately there are available only three specimens of the Little Black Rail from Jamaica, none of them quite perfect, one each in the United States National Museum, the Academy of Natural Sciences of Philadelphia and the American Museum of Natural History. If we may judge of the accounts of the earlier Jamaican ornithologists, especially that of Gosse, the bird was formerly common, and was resident in Jamaica. It is certainly now very rare, possibly extinct, the mongoose undoubtedly having found it easy prey.

The Jamaican examples agree closely, and differ from the bird of Eastern North America, of which I have now examined many specimens, in having a longer and heavier bill and longer middle



LITTLE BLACK RAILS

On Left: *Creciscus jamaicensis jamaicensis*

Middle: *Creciscus jamaicensis stoddarti*

On Right: *Creciscus jamaicensis coturniculus*

toe and in being duller in general coloration with the white markings on the upper parts smaller.

It gives me pleasure to name the Little Black Rail of the eastern United States in honor of Mr. H. L. Stoddard whose indefatigable work in collecting and preparing the lifelike groups of birds which are distributed among the Chicago public schools by the N. W. Harris Extension of the Field Museum, has done much to make this worthy enterprise a success.

***Cresciscus jamaicensis stoddardi*, subsp. nov.**

Type from Hyde Lake, Illinois, adult original No. 565 N.W. Harris Extension, May 30, 1916, H. L. Stoddard. Type now in the Field Museum collection.

Characters: Similar to *Cresciscus jamaicensis* (Gmelin) of Jamaica, but bill shorter and more slender, (exposed culmen 13–15 mm; in true *jamaicensis*, 16); middle toe shorter, (middle toe with claw, 25.5–28 mm.; in true *jamaicensis* 30); colors brighter, and white markings on upper parts larger. Similar also to *C. jamaicensis coturniculus* (Ridgway) of California, but larger, with much stouter bill.

Description of Type.—Head dark slate; throat slaty gray, darker on the breast; anterior portion of the back chestnut, merging into dark brown on the rump; primaries umber brown with white markings on both webs; secondaries with transverse white bars; wing-coverts olive-brown with black triangular marks followed by white margins; tail dark brown with two or three narrow white bars; back, rump and upper tail-coverts sprinkled with white; center of abdomen light slate; flanks and under tail-coverts dark olive-brown, with faint white bars; legs and feet horn brown. Wing, 77 mm.; tail, 34 mm.; tarsus, 22 mm.; exposed culmen, 14 mm.; Middle toe with Claw, 27 mm. Iris brilliant red; feet black (orig. label).

Remarks.—Two important articles have been published dealing with the history and distribution of the Little Black Rail. One by J. A. Allen (Auk, Vol. 17, 1900, pp. 1–8, with a color plate by Fuertes). The other by Wm. Brewster (Auk, Vol. 24, 1907, pp. 205–210) in which the subspecies are critically discussed and tables of measurements given.

The range of the new form is, of course, the same as usually given for the eastern subspecies, except to exclude Jamaica; roughly speaking, eastern North America from Massachusetts to Florida, West to Illinois, Kansas, Texas and Arizona.

Since Brewster's article was published, there have been a few records for the Little Black Rail from various sources and in 1915

Arthur T. Wayne, in 'The Warbler' describes the nest and eggs taken by him near Mt. Pleasant, South Carolina, June 10, 1903, accompanied by a color plate of the eggs, and a photograph of the male, female, nest and eggs, then in the collection of the late John Lewis Childs.

The bird, however, still remains more sparingly represented in collections than perhaps any other existing species of eastern North America. Mr. John E. Thayer is thus very fortunate in possessing what is probably the largest series in any collection from any one place, having a dozen specimens all taken at Tuckerton, New Jersey, in 1914 and 1915. This series includes a downy young about two days old, and two half-grown young.

I am under special obligations to Mr. Outram Bangs who very kindly revised this manuscript for me and also for loan of specimens by the American Museum, United States National Museum, Philadelphia Academy and Mr. John E. Thayer.

Highland Park, Illinois.

DESCRIPTION OF A NEW CLAPPER RAIL FROM THE COLORADO RIVER VALLEY.

BY DONALD R. DICKEY.

FIELD work carried on during the spring of 1921 in the Colorado River Valley, Imperial County, California, by Laurence M. Huey and Mrs. May Canfield, in behalf of the author's collection, resulted in the utterly unexpected capture of three individuals of a distinct new species of Clapper Rail. This species is described below.

***Rallus yumanensis* sp. nov.**

YUMA CLAPPER RAIL

Type.—Male adult; no. J 1039, Collection of Donald R. Dickey; Bard, Imperial County, California; altitude 140 feet; May 15, 1921; collected by Mrs. May Canfield; original no. 229.

Specific Characters.—Nearest in appearance to certain examples of *Rallus levipes*, but instantly separable from typical *levipes* by duller and more olivaceous outer superior wing-coverts and alula, by paler coloration of underparts and more slender tarsus and bill. Differs from *Rallus*