

Some Rail Traits.—At about noon on June 11, 1928, I observed a Florida Clapper Rail (*Rallus crepitans scotti*) with a fiddler crab (*Uca* sp.) in its beak, walking along the bank of a drainage ditch through a marsh at Apalachicola, Franklin County, Florida. I stood scarcely fifteen feet away and watched while he carried the crab and presented it to a smaller bird with distinctly lighter underparts, presumably the female. She in turn gave the tid-bit to a small black chick which came out of the grass. The chick seized it eagerly and tried to swallow it but without success and dropped it to the ground. The female picked it up and once more offered it to the chick, which tried again to swallow it but in vain. After this was repeated several times the female became alarmed at my nearness and gave a warning cluck upon which the chick disappeared into the grass. The female then swallowed the crab.

The male had fed down the bank of the ditch and the female now turned upstream, frequently giving a sharp cluck and bobbing her tail. She soon caught a small minnow which she carried about for two or three minutes in indecision, passing back and forth in front of where the young were hiding. She finally swallowed the minnow and then retreated into the grass. In the meantime the male had crossed to my side of the ditch and allowed me to approach within ten feet before he flew back again.

On June 26, near the same place I saw four baby rails, still black and about two-thirds the size of their mother. They were surprisingly tame and allowed me to approach quite near. One of them readily swam the drainage ditch which was about eight feet wide and the other three hid in the grass. When I came near they gave the characteristic rail call.—FRANK F. GANDER, *O' Rourke Zoological Institute, Balboa Park, San Diego, California.*

A Dead Clapper Rail Found at Lexington, in the Valley of Virginia.—Early in November, 1928, Miss Emily Penick, of Lexington, Va., told me of having seen what she thought was a Woodcock caught in a fence and dead on a country road three miles from Lexington. I thought little of it until on passing the place on November 9 I examined the bird. I saw at once that it was a rail, but it was strange to me and so dishevelled that I could not identify it with certainty. The bird was caught in the abdomen on a hook on one of the upper strands of a barbed-wire fence and appeared to have beaten itself to death on the wires. The carcass was in bad shape, but the body was not mashed and the flesh was practically intact. It was not at all decayed, had no odor, and was hard and dried out. The feathers were very much ruffled and soiled with dust from the road, and rain, but very few of them were lost. How it stayed there for at least a week in plain sight, without having been eaten by a vulture, I do not know. The spot was on a rather unfrequented country road, some three hundred yards from where the road left the Lee Highway. At the point the road passes through an upland pasture. No water of any consequence is anywhere near, nothing more

than an almost dried-up cattle pool two hundred yards away and a small stream across the highway.

On taking the bird home and giving it a more careful examination, it appeared to be a Clapper Rail (*Rallus longirostris crepitans*). I thought it worth while to send the specimen to Dr. C. W. Richmond at the National Museum, asking him if it could be a King Rail. It seemed so utterly impossible for it to be a Clapper Rail that I did not dare to suggest it. I quote a part of Dr. Richmond's reply: "The rail was duly received and Mr. Riley of this office identifies it as a Clapper Rail. I have also examined it and there seems to be no doubt about it. The particular point is, how did it get there? In these days of automobiles, it is possible that some gunner may have shot the bird on the coast and later discarded it where you found it." Now just this possibility had at once occurred to me when I began to come to the conclusion that it was a Clapper Rail. In the case of the finding of a bird already dead there is, of course, no way of disproving this possibility, but I can hardly believe this is the answer. For one thing, if the bird had been brought all this distance from the coast (about two hundred miles) and then thrown away, it would seem to me that the flesh must have become badly putrid. Possibly the fact that the flesh was still there but so stiff and dried was due to the drying effect of the wind and sun while it was hanging so long on the fence. In the second place, it was on a country road where no through travel passes. I have inquired through the State Game Commissioner, Major Willis Robertson, who lives in Lexington, and he tells me that no local hunters have been to the coast this fall. It is true that the Lee Highway, by which some hunter from a distance might have been going through, is only three hundred yards away. But the bird was hanging at least four feet from the ground and it does not seem likely that a dog or other animal could have carried it there. The body showed no signs of having been partially eaten. Then, too, the bird was not hung on the fence but firmly caught. It might have been taken there from the highway by some person and hung up, but it was so firmly hooked that I had some difficulty in loosening without tearing it badly. It gave every appearance of having been hooked in flight and having fastened itself more firmly by its frantic beating.

During the latter part of October and the first days of November we had cold and windy days, but there were no peculiar weather conditions that would help to explain the presence of the bird. There had been, I understand, rough weather on the coast. Fifteen miles from here the James River breaks through the Blue Ridge Mountains by the Balcony Falls water-gap on its way to the coast, thus furnishing a water line from the coast with no mountains to cross.

I am making no positive claims to a record and the unusual nature of the report certainly justifies all possible skepticism.—JAMES J. MURRAY,
Lexington, Virginia.