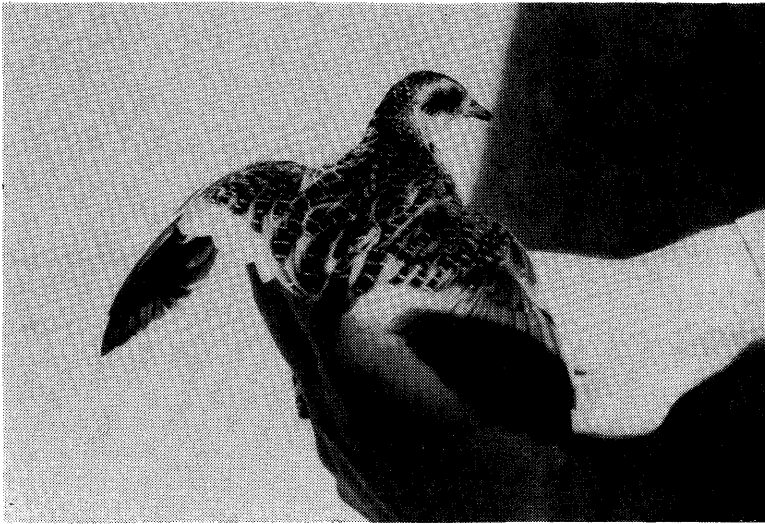


PHOTOGRAPHS OF NEW YORK STATE RARITIES

8. *Yellow Rail*



Photograph by Richard Cohen

Rutgers Housing Project, New York Co., 18 October 1962

Although undoubtedly of annual occurrence, and perhaps even breeding in New York State, the Yellow Rail, *Coturnicops noveboracensis*, is so secretive and elusive that most active observers, even after many years afield, have never seen it in life.

The species is of wide distribution, but is rare and extremely local. The nominate subspecies, *C. n. noveboracensis*, breeds in California, and from Mackenzie, Manitoba, Ontario, Quebec, New Brunswick, and Maine south to Alberta, Saskatchewan, North Dakota, Minnesota, Wisconsin, Ohio, Massachusetts, and Connecticut (A.O.U. *Check-list*, 1957: 157-158). Bull (*Birds of the New York Area*, 1964: 175), however, has recently summarized several sources which cast doubt upon the validity of the New England breeding records.

Yellow Rails winter from Oregon through California, and in southern Louisiana, southern Mississippi, Alabama, and Florida (A.O.U. *Check-list*, *op. cit.*); rarely north to South Carolina, and accidentally to coastal New York and Rhode Island (Bull, *op. cit.*).

There is also an isolated population of Yellow Rails, *C. n. goldmani*, known only from Lerma, Mexico (Blake, *Birds of Mexico*, 1953: 125).

Although the number of Yellow Rail specimens has increased, little new information has been added about the species in New York since Eaton's account of more than 50 years ago (*Birds of New York*, Vol. 1, 1910: 280-281). It has been found most frequently on Long Island, in marshes bordering on Lake Ontario, near Buffalo, and on the central lakes, usually during September, October, April and May. Eaton's sentiment that "its nest will probably be found within our borders" has been echoed by several recent authors (e.g., Reilly and Parkes, *Preliminary Annotated Checklist of New York State Birds*, 1959: 16; Beardslee and Mitchell, *Birds of the Niagara Frontier Region*, 1965: 198) but still has not been realized.

The Yellow Rail in the above photograph was found in October, 1962 by a workman about 7:00 A.M., just outside the fence of a construction project on the lower East side of Manhattan Island. The bird was crouched in a clump of grass next to an old mattress. It was captured in the same manner as have numerous Yellow Rails in Louisiana hayfields (see Lowery, *Louisiana Birds*, 1955: 229-230), by simply throwing a hat over it. The bird was brought to Richard Cohen who released it at Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge after it was banded by John Bull.

The capture of this bird is typical of the way records are obtained. One of the unusual number of Yellow Rails found in the New York City area this past fall was brought back alive by a cat in Levittown, Nassau Co., another was caught in a doorway in the Bronx, and the third was found dead at Jacob Riis Park, Queens Co. (see the Region 10 report for further details).

In the above picture the dark area on the right wing is a shadow.

Peter W. Post, 575 West 183 Street, New York, N.Y. 10033.

CONTINENTAL BREEDING BIRD SURVEY

During the summer of 1966 the Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife conducted a Breeding Bird Survey throughout the states east of the Mississippi River and the eastern Canadian provinces. The data from over 600 survey routes run by cooperators will form a basis for determining changes in songbird populations during future years. During 1967 the Survey will be expanded to cover 11 additional states west of the Mississippi River in addition to obtaining more thorough coverage of some of the eastern states, such as New York.

Each survey route is selected at random and follows a 25-mile course, to be driven by automobile. One trip is made during the month of June. Birders throughout the State, who can identify the breeding birds of New York by song and sight, and are interested in assisting with the survey, are invited to contact Chandler S. Robbins, Migratory Bird Populations Station, Laurel, Maryland 20810.