

FIELD NOTES

King Rail at Montezuma National Wildlife Refuge: On June 22, 1969 at a little after 7 A.M. along the drive to the Headquarters Bldg. at the Montezuma National Wildlife Refuge I noted a chicken-sized bird standing in a small pool of water on the edge of the cattails about 200 feet to my left. Looking at the bird with 7 × 35 binoculars I found it looked like the common Virginia Rail (*Rallus limicola*) which I have seen frequently on the Refuge but was much larger. The back and wings were a bright reddish brown, while the breast, neck and face were a lighter more buffy brown. The flanks were prominently barred with vertical lines of black and white. The bill was large, long and slightly down curved. The upper mandible was generally dark and the lower mandible yellow. I studied the bird in bright sunlight with the sun to my back for perhaps two minutes. The bird then disappeared into the cattails. I identified it as a King Rail (*Rallus elegans*). There are few records of this species in Central New York.

I proceeded to the Refuge Headquarters where I reported the find to the manager, Mr. Clayton Hardy. We returned to the spot where I had found the bird and watched the area for some time but the bird did not reappear.

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Ruff at Montezuma National Wildlife Refuge: At about 5 P.M. on July 5, 1969 I was scanning a mudflat just south of the New York State Thruway on the Montezuma National Wildlife Refuge looking for shorebirds which were just beginning to show up on their way south for the winter. In a group of Lesser Yellowlegs (*Totanus flavipes*) I noted a bird which was about the same height as the Yellowlegs but with a heavier, less streamlined body. The bill was shorter and thicker than the Yellowlegs. The bird had an overall brown appearance with a light belly. The legs were bright orange and in the bright late afternoon sunlight they stood out more conspicuously than the somewhat yellower legs of the Yellowlegs. The brown of the back, wings and tail was prominently barred with black. There were no markings on the brown wash which covered the head, neck and breast except for some white feathers on each side of the neck just above the shoulder of the wing. These appeared to be the remnants of a ruff about the neck. The throat was lighter than the rest of the neck and breast. I identified the bird as a male Ruff (*Philomachus pugnax*), a bird which I have found at Montezuma on five previous occasions beginning in 1963. Observations were made with a 30X Balscope in good light.

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Red-bellied Woodpecker nesting at Old Field, Suffolk Co., New York: This summer a pair of Red-bellied Woodpeckers (*Centurus carolinus*) was reported nesting for the first time in the New York City area.

Mrs. Myrna Hemmerick of Setauket, Long Island, writes, "On May 30, 1969 at the home of Mr. and Mrs. A. Lewis Homire, Old Field, we watched a noisy pair of Red-bellied Woodpeckers that had been in the area for several days. Lone birds had been seen here before in the spring of 1966 and 1968, in a habitat consisting of deciduous woods, mostly oak with an understory of laurel and huckleberry. On June 9 the Homires discovered them visiting a woodpecker hole in a dead white oak with the top broken off. There were four holes in a vertical row; the Red-bellieds were at the lowest, approximately 30 feet above ground.

Over the next few weeks while incubating, the adult pair became much quieter. The 'churring' calls were replaced by an alarm cry of 'chad, chad' when disturbed. Young were hatched by June 28. A parent arriving with food would often land first

in a nearby tree, calling 'chad' several times, then fly to the nest tree. At the entrance of the cavity it would call into the nest, ducking its head in and out many times before entering with the food. The young were very quiet in the nest; only when a parent was inside feeding them were we able to hear them. The adults were never seen to clean the nest cavity.

On the evening of July 15 I saw a young bird stick its head out for the first time; on July 17 two young were fledged and left. Although Red-bellieds are still heard in the area, the young have not been seen since.

Nesting nearby were Hairy and Downy Woodpeckers, Yellow-shafted Flicker and White-breasted Nuthatch. Also on June 1 a pair of Red-headed Woodpeckers was seen calling and examining a nearby tree cavity. On 16 July one was seen on the Red-bellied's nest tree. This pair is still seen in the area but it has not been established whether or not they nested."

Dennis Puleston who took the accompanying photograph commented that the four holes in the Red-bellied Woodpecker's nest tree "looked like Hairy Woodpecker excavations from previous years."



John Bull(*Birds of the New York Area*, Harper and Row, 1964: 285) writes of the Red-bellied Woodpecker that "Judging from its northward spread and increase locally, breeding can be expected in the near future." This past spring witnessed the largest Red-bellied Woodpecker incursion ever on Long Island, with over two dozen individuals reported (T. Davis, *in press*).

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