

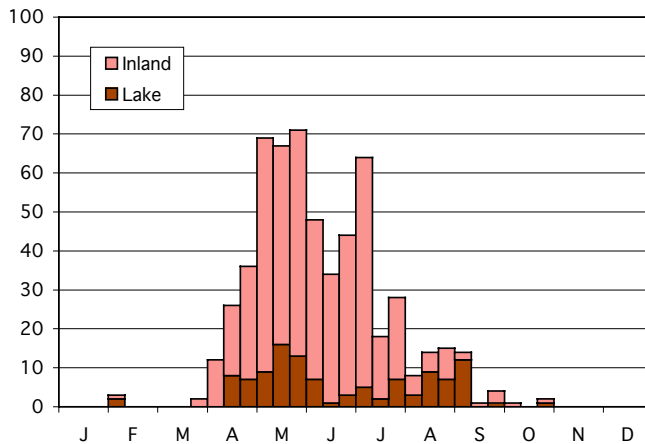
King Rail

Rallus elegans

Historical Information

First Published record: Butler (1898) reported that H.K. Coale observed an adult with downy black young on 8 June 1878 (no location given).

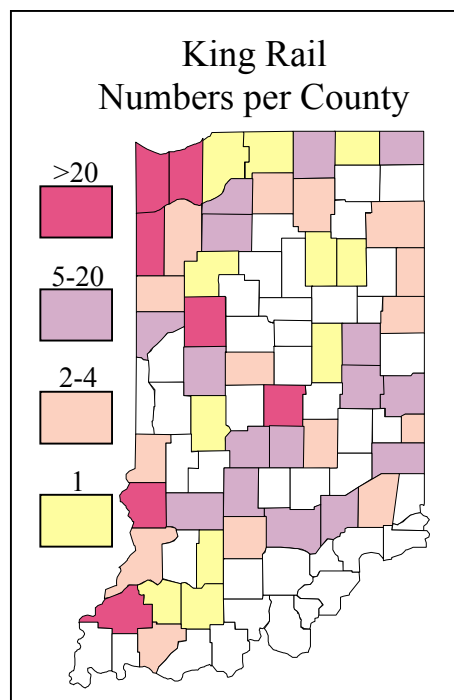
Butler (1890) listed the “Red-breasted Rail” as a migrant and local summer resident. Keller et al. (1979) deemed it a very rare to casual migrant that formerly bred. Mumford and Keller (1984) characterized the King Rail as an uncommon migrant and summer resident.



Status

Physical Evidence: Some eight King Rail specimens are known to be stored in museums (S.F. Jackson unpublished list, J.B. Dunning unpublished computer list, and Richards 1987).

STATUS TABLE				
Specimens				
Museum				No.
Chicago Academy of Sciences				1
Chicago Field Museum				2
National Museum of Natural History				2
Indiana State Museum				1
Purdue Univ. Wildlife Laboratory				2
20-Year Abundance Table				
	Win	Spr	Sum	Fall
Northern Tier	n	7	7	8
Central Tier	n	8	7	10
Southern Tier	n	8	7	n
Entire State	n	7	7	8



Current Status

The King Rail is now Rare (7) in spring and summer and a Very Rare (8) fall migrant.

Occurrence

Though fairly widespread, with reports in forty-nine counties, the King Rail is most frequently encountered in marshes and sedge meadows in the western half of Indiana. It has been reported in nineteen of the last twenty years. A majority of the reports occurred away from Lake Michigan.

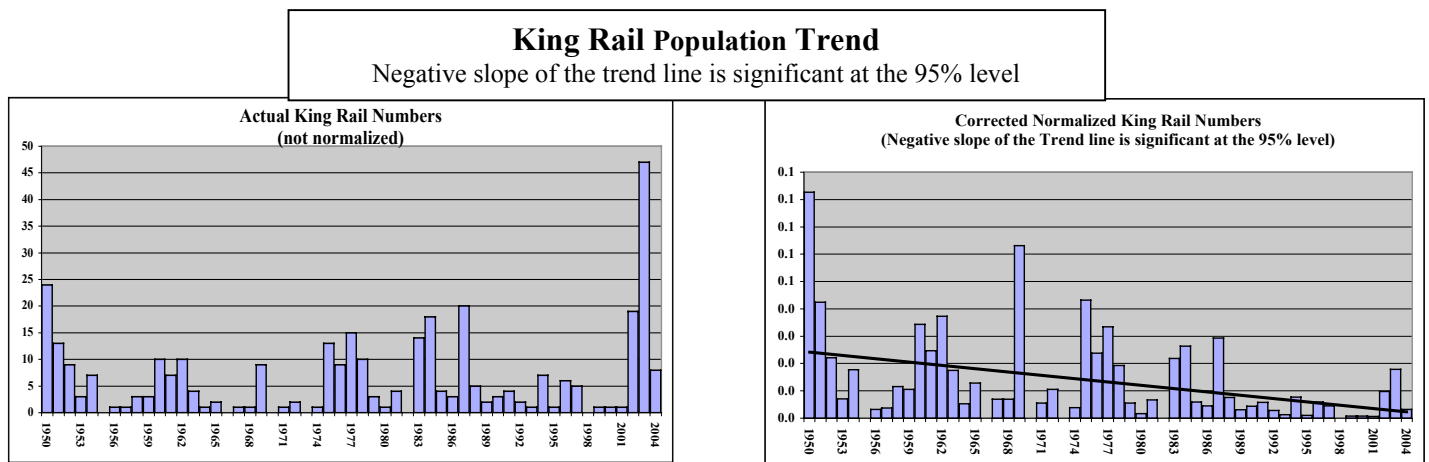
Winter Records

Surprisingly both of Indiana's winter records occurred in northern Indiana adjacent to Lake Michigan. The first was found dead by H.M. Smith in Whiting 4 February 1935 (Ford 1956) and on 10 February 1956 Dr. V. Reuter-skiold

observed tracks in the snow, indicating that the second bird walked along a stream in the Indiana Dunes; the identification was confirmed by measurements of the tracks (Brock 1997). The latter record was reported in LaPorte County by Mumford and Keller (1984).

Population Trend

Along with other wetland species, habitat destruction has reduced King Rail numbers in Indiana. Negative slope of the trend line is statistically significant at the 95 percent level.



Breeding

Today the King Rail is on the Indiana Department of Natural Resources endangered species list. Castrale et al. (1998) reported this large rail in only five counties: Henry, Johnson, Lake, Porter, and Sullivan; breeding was confirmed in only two counties. Eggs have been reported during the interval 10 May and 1 July and young observed as late as 31 July.



King Rail at George Lake, Hammond 11 August 1984. Photo by K.J. Brock.

King Rail Data

Maximum Single Party Counts				
Spring				
Number	Date	Location	Observer	Ref.
12	11-May-1890	Starke Co	Ruthven Deane	BU1
12	10-May-1930	Delaware Co	???	REM
12	23-May-1947	Montgomery Co	C.M. Kirkpatrick	REM
12	28-May-1975	Sullivan Co	R.E. Mumford	REM
Fall				
Number	Date	Location	Observer	Ref.
5	02-Sep-1933	Indiana Dunes	D.H. Boyd	DBo
4	11-Aug-1984	George Lake	K.J. Brock	KJB
3	26-Aug-1943	No. Central Ind.	John Gottschalk	DNR

Migration Envelopes						
Spring						
	Earliest	Arrive	Peak	Depart	Latest	Records
North	31-Mar-1971	22-Apr	11-May	30-May	9-Jun-2003	74
Central	30-Mar-1946	13-Apr	10-May	3-Jun	10-Jun-1969	83
South	1-Apr-1914	11-Apr	10-May	10-Jun	10-Jun-1943	30
Fall						
	Earliest	Arrive	Peak	Depart	Latest	Records
North	15-Jul-1933	20-Jul	12-Aug	9-Sep	31-Oct-76	47
Central	15-Jul-1996	---	9-Aug	---	4-Oct-14	22
South	23-Jul-1978	---	---	---	13-Aug-78	4

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