

LITERATURE CITED

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GREAT EGRET PREDATION ON A VIRGINIA RAIL

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At 1330 on 30 January 1975 we observed a Great Egret (*Casmerodius albus*) with a Virginia Rail (*Rallus limicola*) struggling in its bill near Arcata, Humboldt County, California. The egret was standing along the edge of a slough overgrown with Broad-leaved Cattail (*Typha latifolia*) and Water Parsley (*Oenanthe sarmentosa*). The egret held the rail by the neck for about 7 minutes until the rail ceased to struggle. Throughout the 7 minutes the egret shook its head violently from side to side for several seconds at intervals of approximately 10 seconds. After the rail ceased all signs of life, the egret unsuccessfully attempted to swallow the rail headfirst several times. It was then startled by our presence and, carrying the rail, flew out of sight several hundred meters to a nearby pasture. We walked into the pasture and found the egret again, but it did not have the rail, and its neck did not appear distended as if it had swallowed anything. A Rough-legged Hawk (*Buteo lagopus*) perched about 50 m from the egret was eating a bird approximately the size of the rail. Although we were unable to identify the hawk's prey, we believe the hawk probably pirated the rail from the egret.

Bent (U.S. Natl. Mus. Bull. 135, 1927) reported that ardeids occasionally prey on birds: however, the only previously published records of a Great Egret taking a bird appears to be the reports of Genelly (Condor 66:247, 1964) who saw a Great Egret with a Western Meadowlark (*Sturnella neglecta*) in this same area and Repenning (Auk 94:171, 1977) who saw a Great Egret preying on an unidentified sandpiper in New Jersey.

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