

GENERAL NOTES

Juvenal plumage of the Spotted Rail (*Rallus maculatus*).—The juvenal plumage of the Spotted Rail (*Rallus (Pardirallus) maculatus maculatus*) was described by Friedmann (Bull. U.S. Natl. Mus. 50, 1941) as “. . . similar to the adult but has all the chaetura black on the underparts replaced by dark hair brown and the white on the upper parts slightly washed with ashy buff and has the feathers of the top of the head, hind neck, and anterior interscapulars narrowly edged with mummy brown.” (p. 104). This description was probably based on a juvenile from Argentina in the collection of the American Museum of Natural History (No. 471,936) which was apparently the only specimen in full juvenal plumage in collections in the United States at that time. This specimen is the central bird in Figures 1 and 2.

On 18 November 1963 the authors stopped briefly at a large cattail marsh near the sugar refinery of San Cristobal, 37 kilometers by road south southwest of Tlacotalpan, Veracruz, to check on the water level and hopefully to collect *Laterallus ruber*. On hearing a call much like that of a King Rail, we stopped and “squeaked” until finally within a few yards of us Dickerman saw a rail briefly and collected it. The bird was immediately

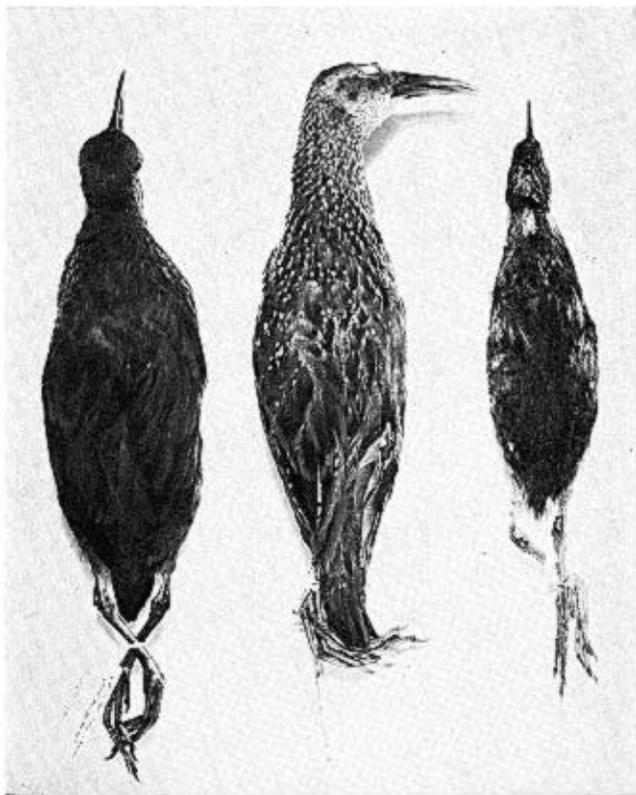


FIG. 1. Dorsal view of juvenal plumage Spotted Rails. *Rallus maculatus insolitus* (left, from Mexico), and *R. m. maculatus* (center and right from Argentina and Trinidad).

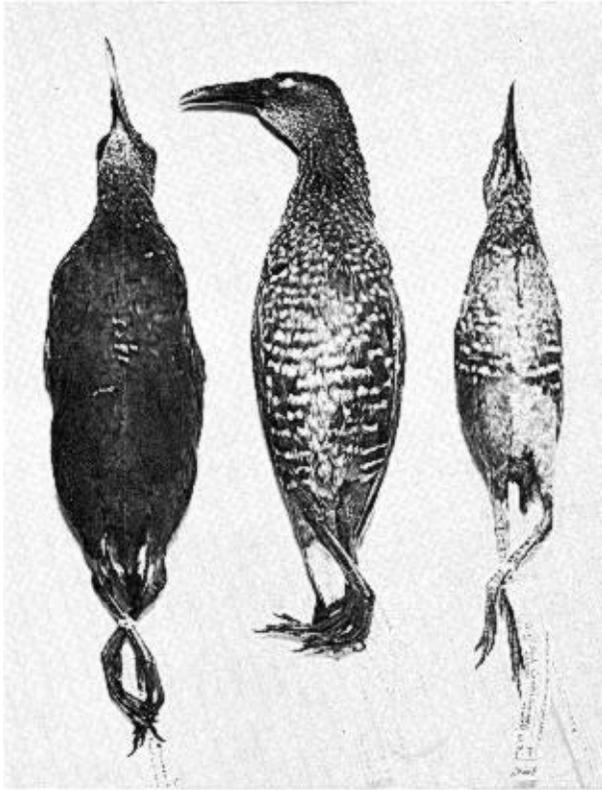


FIG. 2. Ventral view of juvenal plumaged Spotted Rails in Figure 1.

identified as a juvenile Spotted Rail, based largely on the presence of a few black feathers spotted or barred with white, which contrasted with the sooty gray feathers of the juvenal plumage (left specimen in Fig. 1 & 2). In checking our specimen with Friedmann's description of the juvenal plumage of the species, it would have been difficult to believe we had collected the same species, were it not for the few incoming feathers of the first basic plumage!

A survey of museum collections revealed two unreported juveniles of the nominate form; one from the Caroni Swamp, Trinidad (Peabody Museum No. 25,668), and the other from Paraguay (Field Museum Natural History, Conover Collection No. 11,009). In 1965 and 1966 a special effort was made to obtain additional juveniles from Mexico to determine if the first specimen was melanistic, or was characteristic of the northern population *Rallus maculatus insolitus* (cf. Dickerman and Warner, Wilson Bull., 73:336, 1961, and Watson, Wilson Bull., 74:349, 1962). Two were collected. The juvenal plumage of *R. m. insolitus* does appear indeed to be quite distinct from that of *R. m. maculatus* and perhaps offers the most diagnostic character of *insolitus* (cf. Phillips and Dickerman, Wilson Bull., 77:298, 1966 for discussion of the use of juvenal plumage as a subspecific character).

As will be noted in Figure 2, in the juvenal plumage of the Mexican populations, the ventral barring so pronounced in the *R. m. maculatus* juveniles is obsolete or lacking. The underparts of Mexican juveniles appear uniform sooty to dark grayish olive, with obscure darker bars. Dorsally the *insolitus* juveniles are darker, more uniform and have little or no white spotting. The other two Mexican specimens have a little more dorsal spotting than the specimen illustrated. The younger specimen of *maculatus* from Trinidad is largely downy on the back with its juvenile feathers still sheathed. The edges of the back feathers of the juvenal plumage of *insolitus* are a darker brown than are those of *maculatus*. This had also been the principal character used to separate adults of the two subspecies, until Watson (op. cit.) called attention to the reduced white spotting of *insolitus* but deprecated the value of dorsal color. On the basis of examination of a larger series than was available to Watson, we note that, contrary to his findings, the edgings of fresh dorsal feathers of *insolitus* are indeed darker brown, but *not* significantly narrower, than those of *maculatus*.

The specimen from Paraguay, although in a more advanced stage of molt, was apparently similar to the other juvenile *maculatus*, indicated by its flanks, which are pale gray strongly barred with sooty. In the mid-ventral area it is less barred than the Argentina specimen, and more comparable to the Trinidad specimen. The undertail coverts of the juvenile specimens of *maculatus* from Argentina and Paraguay are dusky gray or white, broadly tipped with buff, whereas in the 3 juvenile *insolitus*, these feathers virtually lack any suggestion of buff; the white undertail coverts are tipped with sooty gray.

The Spotted Rail has usually been segregated in a monotypic genus *Pardirallus* Bonaparte (= *Limnopardalis* Cabanis in some reference works). We prefer to follow those authors (such as de Schauensee, The species of birds of South America, 1966: 77) who merge this genus with *Rallus*. The outline of feathering at the base of the bill used by Friedmann (ibid) to separate *Rallus* from *Pardirallus* and *Ortygonax* does not seem to us to be very important, and, in any case, most authors now merge *Ortygonax* in *Rallus*. If this is done, and in view of the diversity already included in *Rallus*, we do not see how *Pardirallus* can be maintained.

The 1963 specimen of *insolitus* will be deposited in the Minnesota Museum of Natural History, University of Minnesota and the 1965 and 1966 specimens will be deposited in the collections of Cornell University and the Carnegie Museum.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Juvenile specimens of *R. m. maculatus* were obtained on loan from the Field Museum of Natural History, Chicago, and the Peabody Museum of Natural History, Yale University. Dr. Dean Amadon kindly provided us with access to the collections of the American Museum of Natural History. Scientific collecting permits were provided by the Departamento de Conservacion de Fauna Silvestre of the Republic of Mexico.—ROBERT W. DICKERMAN, Department of Microbiology, Cornell University Medical College, New York, New York AND KENNETH C. PARKES, Carnegie Museum, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. 12 April 1968.

Porcupine quills found in foot of Sharp-shinned Hawk.—During the spring of 1968 the Ontario Bird-Banding Association sponsored a project of banding Sharp-shinned Hawks (*Accipiter striatus*) at Whitefish Point, Chippewa County, Michigan. The species is often numerous during spring migration on this peninsula which lies at the eastern end of Lake Superior and extends northeast toward the mainland of Ontario. We were present from 4–11 May and found hawks migrating during the entire period (especially