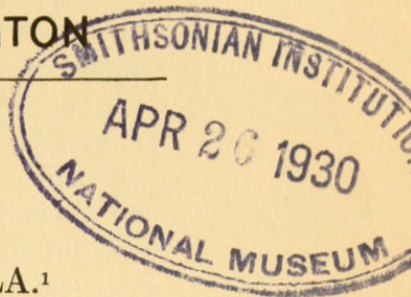


PROCEEDINGS  
OF THE  
BIOLOGICAL SOCIETY OF WASHINGTON



THE CLAPPER RAIL OF HISPANIOLA.<sup>1</sup>

BY ALEXANDER WETMORE.

The clapper rail of Hispaniola (a geographic name used here to cover the island divided, unequally, between the Republic of Haiti and the Dominican Republic) on careful comparison proves to be a distinct form that may be known as

*Rallus longirostris vafer*, subsp. nov.

*Diagnosis*.—Similar to *Rallus longirostris caribaeus*<sup>2</sup> but grayer, less brownish both above and below, fore-neck and upper breast more evidently cinnamon colored, and malar stripe, of same color, more prominent.

*Characters*.—Type, ♂ adult, U. S. Nat. Mus. No. 252,915, Etroite, Gonave Island, Haiti, collected March 18, 1920, by Dr. W. L. Abbott. Crown sepia; a superciliary stripe extending from frontal antiae to above eye dull buffy white; loreal region and upper part of malar region dull sepia becoming brownish neutral gray on sides of head; hind neck somewhat paler; back, scapulars and rump sepia, each feather margined broadly with light grayish olive; wing coverts snuff brown, greater coverts barred and tipped slightly with buffy white; primaries and secondaries bister, margined externally with snuff brown; rectrices dark bister, changing externally to snuff brown, and finally to light grayish olive, throat white; lower part of malar region between pale pinkish buff and pinkish buff, forming a prominent malar stripe; center of fore-neck pinkish buff, side of neck neutral gray with a slight buffy wash; abdomen and center of lower breast white; remainder of breast with feathers cinnamon-buff internally, edged with pinkish buff externally; sides and flanks blackish, the feathers barred and tipped broadly with white; under tail coverts barred broadly with fuscous and white; under wing coverts fuscous, barred and tipped narrowly with white. Bill dull brown, tip paler, basal two-thirds of mandible and sides of maxilla below and behind nostril dull yellowish; tarsi and feet dull brown (from dried skin). Iris marked on label as "clear brown."

*Measurements* (in millimeters).—Males (2 specimens) wing 151.0—

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<sup>2</sup>*Rallus longirostris* c. var. *caribaeus* Ridgway, Bull. Nuttall Orn. Club, vol. 5, July, 1880, p. 140. ("West Indies"—near Spanishtown, Jamaica.)



151.8<sup>1</sup> (151.4); tail 61.5–62.2<sup>1</sup> (61.8); culmen, 63.8<sup>1</sup>–64.4 (64.1); tarsus, 57.0–58.5<sup>1</sup> (57.7).

Females (6 specimens) wing, 134.5–144.5 (138.1); tail 54.4–58.3 (56.4); culmen, 53.6–63.0 (58.6); tarsus, 50.9–59.5 (53.8).

*Range.*—Coastal regions of Haiti, including Gonave Island, and the Dominican Republic.

*Remarks.*—There is decided variation in color in rails of this group, two distinct phases being evident, one being paler above, due to predominance of the lighter edgings of the dorsal feathers and restriction of the dark centers, and the other decidedly darker with the duller colors of the central parts of the dorsal feathers much extended, and the lighter margins correspondingly restricted. The darker appearance of the extreme of the latter type becomes much accentuated with plumage wear. The individual differences indicated need to be kept carefully in mind in segregating geographic races.

The Jamaican material before me in the present comparisons includes the type of *caribaeus* and one other specimen in the U. S. National Museum, and a third skin from the Museum of Comparative Zoölogy, loaned through the courtesy of Mr. Outram Bangs. These birds are all old and are more or less faded, having being collected in the sixth decade of the last century. In arriving at differential characters to distinguish the Hispaniolan race due allowance has been made for color change in the Jamaican series, particularly through study of differences evident between these three and specimens of comparable museum antiquity of other races of *longirostris*, with the result that the darker, duller, browner appearance of the series of *caribaeus* justifies the separation here proposed. In the three *caribaeus* examined two males have the wing 144.0 and 147.6 mm., the culmen 61.8 and 58.5 mm., and the tarsus (in both) 54.2 mm. while a female has the wing 139.8, culmen, 54.7, and tarsus 50.2 mm. There is indicated a slightly longer wing, and shorter culmen and tarsus than in *vafer*, a difference so slight, however, that it needs to be verified in a larger series before it is accepted.

The series of *vafer* now at hand includes two females from Caracol, on the northern coast of Haiti, and two males and four females from Etroite and Pikmi, Gonave Island. The specimens from Gonave do not seem to differ from those of the main island. One of the skins from Caracol is in somewhat melanistic phase as the cinnamon color, normal to the breast, is almost entirely obscured by dark gray.

The form is an inhabitant of mangrove swamps, and from present information is rare except in a few localities.

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<sup>1</sup>Type.



Wetmore, Alexander. 1928. "The clapper rail of Hispaniola." *Proceedings of the Biological Society of Washington* 41, 121-122.

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