

The Diving Instinct in Shore-birds.— In looking over an old note-book I find the following information which seems of considerable interest. On August 4, 1912, while looking for early shore-birds at Toro Point, Panama, I knocked down an immature Spotted Sandpiper (*Actitis macularia*). The beach at that point is a wide coral reef, bare at low tide, and with occasional openings or "wells" connected underneath with the sea. Some of these are of considerable size and the water in all is as clear as crystal to all depths — clear as only those who have seen such tropical "coral water" can imagine.

Upon my approach my crippled bird ran to one of these pools and went over the side, resting on the water surface. As I reached slowly down to take him, he surprised me by diving and swimming under water, using his wings only, to the opposite side of the pool. The action was so sudden and so surprising to me that I could not be sure of the manner of diving but it must have been a "tip-up" and a head first plumage almost straight down.

I had however a perfect view of the bird as he "flew" the ten feet across the pool, through the beautifully clear water which showed white pebbles distinctly on a bottom perhaps twenty feet below. The bird crossed at a uniform depth of eighteen inches to two feet, which he held until he brought up against the opposite wall. The head and neck were extended but not at all stretched while the legs and feet trailed behind with flexed toes, like a heron in flight. The wings seemed to be opened to only perhaps half their full extent — the primaries pointing well backward like wings are trimmed as birds cut down from some height to alight. The wing-beats were slow and even but not labored, and progress was uniform and not at all hurried.

Upon coming up against the opposite wall, the bird rose slowly to the surface, and again rested there as before. The entire performance seemed perfectly natural and unstrained. I tried to have him repeat but he would not, allowing me to lift him from the water without further resistance or effort to escape. Wings and legs were both intact, his wound being in the body, and his body feathers were astonishingly dry after his comparatively long under-water flight.

From what period in his ancestry did he inherit this almost obsolete instinct?— L. L. JEWEL, *Wytheville, Va.*

The Little Black Rail on Long Island, N. Y.— On May 24, 1914, Messrs. J. M. Johnson, S. V. La Dow and I were on Jones' Beach, opposite Amityville, studying the shore-bird migration. We were walking through a grassy marsh, the others slightly ahead, when I saw a little bird running like a mouse behind a tussock some 10 feet ahead of me. Thinking it might be a rail, I rushed forward immediately and was lucky enough to flush the bird, which flew up in front of me about 3 feet away. It fluttered forward feebly a short distance, then turned and flew directly past me, not more than 10 feet away and about 2 feet above the grass, landing in a

dense reed-bed some 30 feet behind. It looked about as large as a Song Sparrow, slate grey all over with black wings and back spotted with small white specks. The iris was bright red. Knowing it to be a Little Black Rail almost as soon as flushed, I shouted to my companions who immediately turned round and saw the bird while it flew past and back of me. They were able with glasses to make out all the color markings except the red eye. I had a pair of prism glasses, but was unable to use them as the bird was too near. The flight is much more feeble than that of any other rail with which I am familiar; the bird seemed barely able to sustain its weight in the air, while its legs dangled down helplessly behind. Unless seen at very close range this species would resemble, I think, a young Sora, though to anyone familiar with the latter species the great difference in size would be striking. Unfortunately I had no means of collecting it, and my last remark would seem to prejudice my case, were it not for the facts that (1) the Sora is a rare summer resident on Long Island, (2) its nest and eggs have never been found so early on Long Island as far as I know, and (3) in any case, it would be impossible for a young Sora to be on the wing by May 24. Finally I have been familiar with the Sora in all plumages for several years. Eaton in his 'Birds of New York' records five specimens of the Black Rail actually taken in the State, three of them from Long Island. It has also been reported as seen at close range on five occasions from the interior of the State. Accordingly this would be the fourth Long Island record and the eleventh for the State.—LUDLOW GRISCOM, *New York City*.

Richardson's Owl and Other Owls in Franklin County, New York.

—A specimen of Richardson's Owl (*Cryptoglaux funerea richardsoni*) in the flesh was recently received by the American Museum from Dr. Wm. N. MacArtney of Fort Covington, Franklin Co., N. Y. The bird was shot on November 14 in a cedar thicket near Fort Covington, in the township of that name, by Wm. N. MacArtney, Jr.

Dr. MacArtney writes that he shot one of these Owls in the nearby township of Dundee, Province of Quebec, within a few rods of the State line in 1879 or 1880; and about 1885 one taken in the same town was brought to him, the latter specimen being now in his collection. All three birds were secured in late fall or early winter.

Eaton, in his recently published 'Birds of New York,' states that there appear to be but two definite records of Richardson's Owl in the State, one from Oneida County, the other from Essex County.

Dr. MacArtney states that during the winter the Snowy Owl is frequently observed, and occasionally the Hawk Owl, Barred Owl and Great Gray Owl. The Long-eared Owl is seen at times, while the Great Horned, Saw-whet and Screech Owls are common, the rufus phase of the last being rather rare.—W. DEW. MILLER, *American Museum of Natural History*.

Lewis's Woodpecker taken in Saskatchewan.—A fine plumage adult male was taken at Herchel, September 24, 1914, and is now mounted in



Griscom, Ludlow. 1915. "The Little Black Rail on Long Island, N. Y." *The Auk* 32, 227–228. <https://doi.org/10.2307/4072434>.

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