

Porzana noveboracensis. Ten years ago, in a certain piece of wet meadow land near Springfield, I captured a Yellow Rail. This was the first and only one that to my knowledge had been observed in this part of the State. One day in the autumn of 1901, at the same place, I found four of this species, and there, later that season and each of the three following autumns, I found others. So little has been known, or at least written, about the Yellow Rail, that I took particular pains to observe them. The place where they were found was wet meadow land covered with wild grass, which in October stood, in places where it had not been harvested, to the height of two or three feet and harbored many Virginia Rails and Soras. The grass upon the other part of the land was cut in the summer, and by the middle of October the second growth reached the height of seven or eight inches, and in this portion the Yellow Rails are to be found, they apparently not desiring so thick a cover as do the common kinds. When the bird is in the air the white spots on the wings make the identification an easy matter. Its flight is much like that of the Sora, although it is apt to rise higher. On alighting it usually immediately secretes itself, but not always, as I have seen it on such occasions run with great rapidity. I have flushed all by the aid of a dog, except one, and that rose about twenty feet ahead of me, evidently frightened by my approach. The earliest date in any autumn that I have found them was the 17th of September, and I think that the latest was the 22d of October. In this part of the Connecticut Valley I have been in many meadows of the same character as the one in question, accompanied by a dog educated in such a way that the scent given out by any kind of rail would so attract his attention that he would be likely to make known the presence of such a bird, if any were there, but in these places I have never found a Yellow Rail, and it seems worthy of note that this species should be a regular autumn visitor to a certain piece of meadow land, containing perhaps three acres, and to be found nowhere else in this vicinity at any time. — ROBERT O. MORRIS, *Springfield, Mass.*

Shore Birds Eating small Fish. — In 'The Auk' for January, 1898 (Vol. XV, p. 51), Mr. H. D. Kirkover records an instance of the Greater Yellow-legs feeding on minnows about an inch and a half in length. While on the island of St. Vincent, West Indies, last October, I observed a number of our shore birds feeding on the young of a small fish known as the 'tri tri' (*Sicydium plumieri*), which were at that time ascending the Richmond River, near which I was staying, by thousands. The land about the lower reaches of this river was laid completely bare by the recent eruptions of the Soufrière, and in its present state proves very attractive to all the species of shore birds which visit the island during the migrations. Those observed or proved by dissection to be eating the young tri tri (which were at that time from half an inch to an inch and a quarter long) were Golden Plover (*Charadrius dominicus*), Turnstones (*Arenaria interpres*), Willets (*Symphemia semipalmata*), Pika, or Greater

Yellow-legs (*Totanus melanoleucus*), Lesser Yellow-legs (*T. flavipes*), Solitary Sandpipers (*Helodromas solitarius*), and Spotted Sandpipers (*Actitis macularia*). All but the last two kept near the mouth of the river, or on the flat land along its lower reaches; the Solitary Sandpiper followed the stream up into what were formerly arrow-root fields, half or three quarters of a mile from the sea, and the Spotted Sandpiper was found well into the mountain forests. — AUSTIN H. CLARK, *Boston, Mass.*

A Killdeer's Mishap. — February 10 last, while watching a large flock of Killdeers on the golf links at Audubon Park, New Orleans, I came upon one of the birds prostrate in an inch of water that had collected in a depression as a result of continued rains. On examining the bird more closely, I found its left leg was protruding into a crayfish hole of about an inch and a half in diameter, and I had literally to tear the bird out to liberate it from its captor, which was most likely a large crayfish. Any more powerful animal, such as a musk rat, a turtle, or a 'blind eel' (*Amphiuma means*), would hardly have mutilated the leg in the way I discovered to be the case when I was able to examine my prisoner critically.

The middle toe was nearly eaten off, while the muscles of the leg below the knee were punctured and rather badly lacerated. How the Killdeer ever made such a mistake as to step into the hole, and how the crayfish, if it was such, had succeeded in catching the agile bird, were mere matters of conjecture with me, but it was evident that the first grip had been upon the toes, and that the captor, then dragging its prey further in, had caught the leg higher up. This was the circumstance that pointed to the crayfish as being the culprit, for the gap between the two points of injury were so far apart, — the length of the tarsus and half the length of the leg below the knee. A large crayfish, with the resistance offered by the sides of its hole, might well have had the grip that seemed at first so astonishing. The bird was drawn down with its breast flush with the ground, further than which, of course, the smallness of the aperture prevented the bird's being dragged. There being nothing at hand with which I could excavate the ground about the hole, I was unable to acquaint myself more fully as to all the circumstances of this strange occurrence, one that must have been cruelly trying to the bird. Further investigation would probably have been useless anyhow, as the captor of the Killdeer, after it had been forced to loosen its hold, no doubt retreated well into its subterranean chambers.

How long the bird had been in this situation was difficult to say. When I released it from its awkward, not to say perilous, situation, it was almost in a state of paralysis, from the combined effects of fear, pain, and being held evidently for some time in the cold water, the day being rather chilly. After I had taken it home, and had cleansed the wound, and kept the bird in a warm room, it soon revived sufficiently to attempt a flight indoors. I kept it overnight, however, and by next morning it had partially recovered the use of the injured foot and leg, and stood upright, even if some-



Clark, Austin Hobart. 1905. "Shore Birds Eating Small Fish." *The Auk* 22, 208–209. <https://doi.org/10.2307/4069724>.

View This Item Online: <https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/item/54102>

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.2307/4069724>

Permalink: <https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/partpdf/89175>

Holding Institution

Smithsonian Libraries and Archives

Sponsored by

Smithsonian

Copyright & Reuse

Copyright Status: Public domain. The BHL considers that this work is no longer under copyright protection.

This document was created from content at the **Biodiversity Heritage Library**, the world's largest open access digital library for biodiversity literature and archives. Visit BHL at <https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org>.