



MARSH BIRDS



The Yuma clapper rail was listed as endangered on March 11, 1967 by the Secretary of Interior, pursuant to the Endangered Species Act of 1966. There are three major group classifications of clapper rails that are found from North to South America and the Yuma clapper rail is one of four subspecies within one of these three groups. It is one of the smaller subspecies of clapper rails but is the largest rail found along the lower Colorado River and is the only one to inhabit freshwater marshes in the southwestern United States and northern Mexico. The Yuma clapper rail was found along the lower Colorado River after constructions of dams and the subsequent creation of marsh habitat. The Yuma clapper rail is a large, gray brown to dull cinnamon rail, with a slightly decurved bill, laterally compressed body, and long legs and toes relative to the body. It is distinguished by paler, duller underparts and grayish edging of dorsal feathers. The cheeks and postoculars are bluish or ashy gray. Clapper rails are sight feeders, gleaning the surface, making shallow and sometimes deep probes, gleaning below the water surface, moving at times erratically in search of prey, and at other times moving slowly and deliberately. They have been observed capturing small fish and tadpoles and gleaning invertebrates from algae covered parts of cattails under the water surface.

The California black rail is one of five subspecies of the black rail that are found in North, Central, and South America. The black rail is the smallest rail in North America. The adult coloration is generally shades of pale to blackish gray, and the top of the head is darker than the surrounding plumage. The underparts are uniformly colored but lighter on the chin and throat. The undertail coverts and flanks are streaked with white and dark gray and washed with chestnut. The nape and upper back are also chestnut. The rest of the back, the uppertail coverts, and wing are shades of dark gray, sometimes with a chestnut or brown wash, and scattered with white spots. The amount of spotting varies between individuals. The tail feathers are brownish gray. The plumage of the California black rail is sexually dimorphic but the sexes are similar in size. Food habits of the black rail are poorly known. Small aquatic and terrestrial invertebrates of less than 1 cm and seeds are main food items. Diet can vary throughout different times of the year, as well as during the breeding season. The bill shape of the black rail suggests that it feeds by gleaning and pecking at individual items and relying on sight for finding food. The black rail is probably a daytime feeder and is active throughout the day.



The least bittern inhabits freshwater and brackish marshes and breeds in low-lying areas associated with large rivers, lakes, and estuaries. It is found from southeastern Canada to South America. The least bittern is the smallest member of the heron family and is one of the most inconspicuous of all marsh birds. Its very small size and contrasting color pattern are diagnostic field marks. Sexes are similar in size but the plumage is dimorphic. The crown, back, and tail on the male are greenish black, while those of the female are a purple-chestnut. The neck, sides of the body, and underparts are brown and white, with the neck of the female darkly streaked. The wings are chestnut with contrasting and conspicuous pale patches and the wingtips are slate. The bill is thin and yellow; legs and feet are a straw to buffy yellow. The least bittern's small size, highly compressed trunk, and ability to grasp with its feet enable it to move through dense vegetation. It forages by clinging to emergent vegetation over open water and extending its long neck, wading along the edge of open water, and using small constructed foraging platforms at rich feeding sites. Foraging behaviors used by the least bittern are standing in one place, walking slowly, moving its head back and forth, and flicking its wings to startle prey. The least bittern's major food items are small fish and insects.

DISTRIBUTION AND SUVERY DETECTIONS:



YUMA CLAPPER RAIL

On the lower Colorado River, this species is currently found in scattered marshes from the Colorado River Delta in Mexico, to Topock Marsh at Havasu National Wildlife Refuge (NWR), near Needles, California. The species' range now stretches north to the Virgin River and Beaver Dam Wash, near Littlefield, Arizona, and Mesquite, Nevada, the Muddy River near Overton, Nevada, and the Las Vegas Wash near Las Vegas, Nevada. The Yuma clapper rail is also found east of the Colorado River along portions of the Gila, Salt, and Bill Williams river drainages and several other locations in central and southwestern Arizona. Significant populations are also found in marshes at the south end of the Salton Sea. Surveys in the Colorado River Delta in Mexico determined that the majority of Yuma clapper rails are in the Ciénega de Santa Clara, the largest marsh wetland in the delta.

Significant populations of Yuma clapper rail are found within the LCR MSCP boundaries in Reaches 3 through 6.

- *Reach 3:* Majority were in Topock Marsh and Topock Gorge; a small population was in the marshes of the Bill Williams Delta
- *Reach 4:* Cibola NWR provides habitat for almost all of the Yuma clapper rails detected during surveys
- *Reach 5:* Rails were detected in Imperial NWR, Picacho State Recreation Area, and between Martinez Lake and Imperial Dam
- *Reach 6:* Majority of rails were located between Imperial Dam and Laguna Dam.

CALIFORNIA BLACK RAIL

During the breeding season, the California black rail is found north of San Francisco at Bodega Bay, Tomales Bay, and Bolinas Lagoon, the northern reaches of the San Francisco Bay estuary, and Morro Bay. A year round inland population of rails is located along the lower western slopes of the Sierra Nevada foothills from Butte to Placer Counties. Further to the south, the rail is presently found in seep marshes and springs along both the Coachella and All American canals, at one location on the New River south of the Salton Sea, and at Big Morongo Canyon in San Bernardino County. Along the lower Colorado River, the California black rail is found at the Cienega de Santa Clara and several other sites in the Colorado River Delta in Mexico. It is found from Laguna Dam north to Imperial Reservoir, portions of the Imperial National Wildlife Refuge (NWR), on Colorado River Indian Tribe (CRIT) lands, at the Bill Williams River NWR, and the Havasu NWR.

California black rails are found within the LCR MSCP boundaries in Reaches 3, 5, and 6:

- *Reach 1:* Observed near the confluence of the Virgin and Muddy Rivers, near Overton Beach (Lake Mead NRA)
- *Reach 3:* Bill Williams River Delta is a known location, with incidental sightings in Topock Gorge
- *Reach 5:* Between Imperial Dam and Martinez Lake, at Ferguson Lake, and at managed wetlands on the Imperial NWR
- *Reach 6:* California side of the Colorado River at West Pond and at Mittry Lake on the Arizona side of the river

LEAST BITTERN

The breeding range of the least bittern is now from southeastern Canada, through the United States and Mexico to Costa Rica. It is discontinuous between the Mississippi River Valley and the Pacific states. Western populations are concentrated in low-lying areas of the Central Valley and Modoc Plateau in California, the Klamath and Malheur basins of Oregon, along the Colorado River in southwestern Arizona and southeastern California, the Salton Sea area, and the Ciénega de Santa Clara in Mexico. Breeding has recently been confirmed in central, south central, and southeastern Arizona, as well as southern Nevada. The winter range is primarily south of areas with prolonged winter frosts: along the Atlantic coastal plain from Maryland and Virginia, south to Louisiana and Texas, with peak numbers in southern Florida, the Rio Grande Valley, the lower Colorado River Valley, and Baja California. Many also overwinter in the Greater Antilles, east and Central America, and south to Panama.

The bird checklists for Havasu, Bill Williams River, Cibola, and Imperial National Wildlife Refuges all list the least bittern as common, certain to be seen in suitable habitat, from June through August. Least bittern populations found along the lower Colorado River are in extensive cattail and bulrush marshes mainly in Reaches 3 through 6.

- *Reaches 1 and 2:* Listed as a rare transient in the Lake Mead National Recreation Area
- *Reach 3:* Majority of marsh habitat is located in Topock Marsh, Topock Gorge of the Havasu NWR, and the Bill Williams River Delta
- *Reaches 4 and 5:* In scattered marsh habitat through the CRIT Reservation, Cibola and Imperial NWRs, and near Imperial Dam
- *Reach 6:* In extensive marsh habitat at Mittry Lake.

