

# Yellow Rail

*Coturnicops noveboracensis*

<b>STATUS</b>	Special Concern 	Not Listed 
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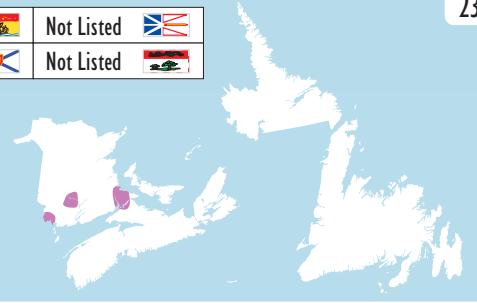


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## Species Description

The Yellow Rail is a small (15-19 cm) marshbird. It has buffy plumage with black and white or yellowish markings, a small yellow or blackish bill, a very short tail, and a buff-yellow face and chest. A white wing patch is visible when in flight. It has a darker, horizontal streak through its eyes. Some say it resembles a week-old chicken in terms of size, shape, and complexion. Juveniles tend to be darker and more spotted.

Total population is estimated at 4600 pairs; possibly fewer than 50 pairs in NB along the edge of its range. Winters along southeastern US coast.



## Habitat

The Yellow Rail lives and nests in marshy habitat dominated by sedge, reeds, grasses, and rushes. The ground is typically saturated but not overflowing with water, and is covered with flattened, dryish vegetation often used for nesting material. Suitable habitat types include meadows, river and stream floodplains, grassy bogs, hay fields, and the upper fringe of estuarine and salt marshes. The Yellow Rail spends winters further south in coastal wetlands and rice fields.

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Wet hay field



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Wet grassy meadow

Known to revisit a handful of sites in New Brunswick, although few breeding records exist. Also very rarely visits Amherst Point in Nova Scotia and Hamilton Inlet in Labrador.

## Interesting Points

- The Yellow Rail is one of the smallest and most secretive rails in the world, and is very seldom seen by birders; it also happens to be at the edge of its range in New Brunswick.
- The male's clicking call sounds like two rocks being thumped together, and is made almost exclusively at night.
- The Yellow Rail lays 6-10 eggs and young ones leave the nest after just one day.

## Similar Species

### Sora:

Black face and throat, and grey breast; longitudinal stripes on back compared to Yellow Rail's transversal stripes; absence of white wing patch.



Searching for Yellow Rail in marshlands near Grand Lake, NB



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## Threats to Survival

- Habitat loss and degradation due to agricultural development, wetland dredging and filling in both its summer breeding areas and wintering grounds.
- Some habitat in central Canada is also threatened by overgrazing of vegetation by Snow Geese.
- Other factors include illegal hunting, contamination from lead shot used for hunting, and general disturbance from overzealous birders.

## How You Can Help

Learn to recognize this species and its unique call and report sightings. Encourage the conservation of large wetlands that support Yellow Rail populations. For farmers: reduce potential impacts to marshes and wet fields and meadows. For hunters: do not hunt Yellow Rail and avoid using lead shot even in upland habitat.

## Contacts, Information, Sighting Reports & Stewardship Opportunities

**Contact:** Environment Canada (506) 364-5044 ext. 5060 or [www.ec.gc.ca](http://www.ec.gc.ca)

**Info:** [www.speciestatrisk.gc.ca](http://www.speciestatrisk.gc.ca), Maritimes Breeding Bird Atlas: [www.mba-aom.ca](http://www.mba-aom.ca)

**Sighting Reports:** [eBird.org](http://eBird.org)



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Agricultural development of wetlands



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Hunters: Do not hunt Yellow Rail and avoid using lead shot