

King Rail (*Rallus elegans*)

(3 subspecies; all within plan area)

Conservation Concern Category: **High Concern**

Population Trend (PT)

R. elegans elegans—declining (Delany and Scott 2002; Reid et al. 1994)

R. elegans tenuirostris—unknown (Delany and Scott 2002)

R. elegans ramsdeni—unknown (Delany and Scott 2002)

“severe declines have been evident in the N part of its range since the 1940s, mainly as a result of the loss, modification and degradation of wetland habitats...alarming declines recorded recently (several sites in central and eastern US)...populations in the S USA, especially in Louisiana and Florida appear more stable...” (Taylor 1998)

“severe declines have been reported in the northern part of the range, populations appear somewhat stable in most of the southern US, especially Louisiana and Florida...” (Meanley 1992)

PT FACTOR SCORE=5

Population Size (PS)

R. elegans elegans—unknown (Delany and Scott 2002)

R. elegans tenuirostris—unknown (Delany and Scott 2002)

R. elegans ramsdeni—unknown (Delany and Scott 2002)

“records from E Mexico may be of migrants, casual birds or scarce winterers...winter densities in the 1960s were estimated at 12-15 birds/km (roadside counts)...the race *tenuirostris* has a limited range...” (Taylor 1998)

“densities: 25 birds/100 acres (South Carolina), 14 birds/13 acres (South Carolina), 30 birds/100 acres (Florida)...” (density data obtained between 1961 and 1964; Meanley 1992)

PS FACTOR SCORE=3?

Threats to Breeding Populations (TB)

“herbaceous floodplain wetlands along the Mississippi River corridor have been extensively reduced and degraded...habitats in C Mexico under threat from increasing agricultural, industrial and urban

development...predators include raccoons, mink, harriers, owls...” (Taylor 1998)

“...a threat is lack of reliable surveys.” (J. Roberson, pers.comm.)

“much of decline directly related to wetland habitat losses and disturbances...predation known to limit nesting success in some areas... loss of wetlands by far the most critical threat to populations...” (Meanley 1992)

“loss of wet prairie habitat fringing water bodies in the Midwest is a major historical reason for KIRA decline; management of waterfowl impoundments in Mississippi Valley with programmed drawdowns in mid-to late spring to promote vegetation growth may create habitat sinks for breeding KIRAs...” (R. Russell, pers.comm.)

KIRA comprise maybe 1-2% of the total rail harvest. (2003 and 2004 harvests were estimated at 600 and 300 birds, respectively. See USFWS 2005) (H. Hands, pers.comm.)

TB FACTOR SCORE=4

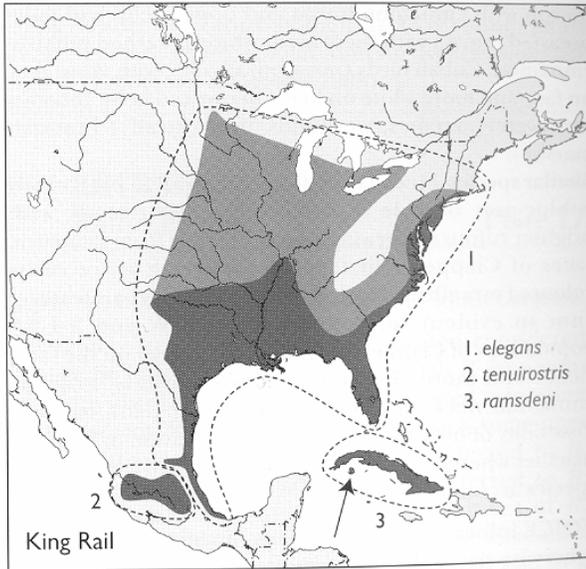
Threats to Non-breeding Populations (TN)

“as nocturnal migrants, rails strike various illuminated structures such as television towers, tall buildings, lighthouses...rails killed in collisions with wires, automobiles...loss of wetlands by far the most critical threat to populations... where muskrats are trapped, rails often become casualties...major degradations to Mississippi River corridor include construction of dikes, addition of toxicants, large reduction in herbaceous floodplain wetlands through agricultural, urban and industrial development...” (Meanley 1992)

Furbearer trapping is a declining activity so this could be a past threat. (H. Hands, pers. comm.)

TN FACTOR SCORE=4

Global Range (Taylor 1998; entire range within plan area)



Literature Cited:

Delany, S. and S. Scott. 2002. *Waterbird Population Estimates – Third Edition. Wetlands International Global Series No. 12*, Wageningen, The Netherlands. P: 116-117

Meanley, B. 1992. King Rail (*Rallus elegans*). In *The Birds of North America*, No. 3 (A. Poole and F. Gills, eds.). The Birds of North America, Inc., Philadelphia, PA. P: 2-9

Taylor, B. 1998. *Rails: A guide to the Rails, Crakes, Gallinules and Coots of the World*. Yale University Press, New Haven, CT.

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. 2005. *Migratory bird harvest information, 2004: preliminary estimates*. U.S. Department of the Interior, Washington, D.C. U.S.A. <http://www.fws.gov/migratorybirds/reports/whs/Migratory%20Bird%20Harvest%20Information,%202004%20Preliminary%20Estimates.pdf>

Breeding Distribution (BD)

R. elegans elegans—E Canada & NE USA (Delany and Scott 2002)
R. elegans tenuirostris—Central Mexico (Delany and Scott 2002)
R. elegans ramsdeni—Cuba & Is of Pines (Delany and Scott 2002)

2,088,400 km² (plan area distribution; estimated from range maps)

BD FACTOR SCORE=3

Non-breeding Distribution (ND)

R. elegans elegans—SE USA, E Mexico (Delany and Scott 2002)
R. elegans tenuirostris—Central Mexico (Delany and Scott 2002)
R. elegans ramsdeni—Cuba & Is of Pines (Delany and Scott 2002)

2,088,400 km² (plan area distribution; estimated from range maps)

ND FACTOR SCORE=4

Additional References:

F. A. Reid, B. Meanley, and L. H. Fredrickson. 1994. King rail. In T. C. Tacha and C. E. Braun, eds. *Migratory shore and upland game bird management in North America*. Allen Press, Lawrence, Kansas.