



# U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

## Arizona Ecological Services Office

### Species Fact Sheet

### Family Rallidae

## Yuma Ridgway's Rail (*Rallus obsoletus yumanensis*)

## Endangered

**STATUS:** Endangered without critical habitat (32 FR 4001; March 11, 1967).

**SPECIES DESCRIPTION:** The Yuma Ridgway's rail is one of the smaller subspecies of the Ridgway's rail. With adults standing at about 8 inches (in) (20-23 centimeters (cm)) tall. Coloring is light grey to dark brown on the upper body a tawny-orange breast, and orange legs. The beak is long, and curves slightly downwards.

**HABITAT AND RANGE:** Consistently found in freshwater marshes that are composed of cattail and bulrush. This emergent vegetation averages greater than 6 feet (ft) tall. And water depth tends to be around 3.5 in. deep. Rail numbers are directly related to habitat quality. In all the rail has a range that extends from Nevada, California, and Arizona to Baja California and Sonora Mexico.

**LAND MANAGEMENT/OWNERSHIP:** Habitat for the rail occurs on State, Federal, and private lands with a majority being on federal and state owned lands.

**LIFE HISTORY:** The Yuma Ridgway's rail diet consists of crayfish, small fish, tadpoles, clams and other aquatic invertebrates. It breeds at age one with nesting occurring from March to July. Clutch size is from 5 to 10 eggs. Young retain black down for a month before juvenile plumage. The second body molt takes six to seven weeks after which flight is possible. Around this second body molt adults also molt and become flightless. Both juveniles and adults are flightless until October due to these molts.

**REASONS FOR DECLINE/VULNERABILITY:** Historical habitat loss is attributable to anthropogenic factors that affect the habitat availability and quality that are necessary for the rail. Remaining habitats are primarily either human-made, as are the managed ponds at Salton Sea or the effluent-supported marshes at the Cienega de Santa Clara and Rio Hardy. Consistent management of these areas is needed to maintain habitat quality.



**RECOVERY PLAN:** The Service published a recovery plan for the species in 1983. A draft recovery plan was made available in 2010 but was not finalized. More information was made available, including an amendment to the range to include Mexico, in 2016. A second revision of the recovery plan is currently being worked on.

**NOTES:** Some authors recognize the Sonora (*R. o. rhizophorae*) and San Blas (*R. o. nayaritensis*) Ridgway's rails as part of the Yuma subspecies. However habitat use substantially differentiates the Sonora and San Blas rails and the coming recovery plan supports maintaining a separation of the subspecies.

Secondly, a name change has occurred. Changing the name from Yuma clapper rail (*Rallus longirostris yumanensis*) to the Yuma Ridgway's rail (*Rallus obsoletus yumanensis*). This change was recognized by the American Ornithological Society in 2014. Documents that supported this change are Chesser et al. 2014. Fifty-Fifth Supplement to the American Ornithologists' Union Check-list of North American Birds. *The Auk*, 131(4), CSi-CSxv. And Maley, J. M., & Brumfield, R. T. (2013). Mitochondrial and next-generation sequence data used to infer phylogenetic relationships and species limits in the Clapper/King rail complex. *The Condor*, 115(2), 316-329.

**DOCUMENTS:** Documents regarding the rail, including range maps, can be found at: [https://www.fws.gov/southwest/es/arizona/Yuma\\_Rail.htm](https://www.fws.gov/southwest/es/arizona/Yuma_Rail.htm). Additional information can be found on the Environmental Conservation Online System at: <http://ecos.fws.gov/ecp0/profile/speciesProfile?spcode=B00P>.