

Virginia Rail (*Rallus limicola*)

(4 subspecies; 2 within plan area)

Conservation Concern Category:
Moderate Concern

Population Trend (PT)

R. limicola limicola—increasing (Delany and Scott 2002: ?)

R. limicola friedmanni—unknown (Delany and Scott 2002)

“populations in the ne US are thought to have declined in the early 1900s...BBS VIRA have declined 2.2%/yr throughout NA from 1982-1991...although there are problems and biases associated with interpreting VIRA population trends with BBS data...populations in the lower Colorado River Valley apparently increased substantially in the late 1970s...” (Conway 1995)

“Significant increasing BBS trend for 1970-1994, but BBS is not good for any of these species...” (H. Hands, pers.comm.)

“population declined 2.2% annually from 1982 to 1991, during a period when natural droughts also reduced the availability of wetlands; the total population is now considered relatively stable...” (Taylor 1998)

PT FACTOR SCORE=3

Population Size (PS)

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

R. limicola friedmanni—unknown (Delany and Scott 2002)

“VIRA tend to occur in lower densities than Soras...densities vary from 0.1 to 8.9 pairs/ha...highest densities recorded 25 pairs/ha (Michigan)...other densities (birds/ha): 0.2 to 4.7 (Colorado), 0.9/ha (Iowa), 8.6/ha (Kansas), 3.6/ha (Colorado)...” (Conway 1995)

“the race *friedmanni* is fairly common to uncommon but local in Mexico...” (Taylor 1998)

“Virginia Rails breed in the Ciénega de Santa Clara in Sonora; Virginia Rails are abundant, with a few thousand individuals...” (O. Hinojosa-Huerta, pers.comm.)

Estimated population size range (Marshbird Workshop 2005)

PS FACTOR SCORE=2

Threats to Breeding Populations (TB)

“availability of adequate food and nesting cover probably determines territory size and breeding density...spring temperatures may influence distribution...seral stage of marsh succession in probably most influential factor affecting abundance...susceptible to toxic bioaccumulation...frequently hit by vehicles (especially young birds)...changing water levels adversely affect rails...flooding...young sensitive to disturbance...” (Conway 1995)

“predators include mink coyote, feral cats, egrets, harriers, and owls; the predation rate is probably high...” (Taylor 1998)

TB FACTOR SCORE=4

Threats to Non-breeding Populations (TN)

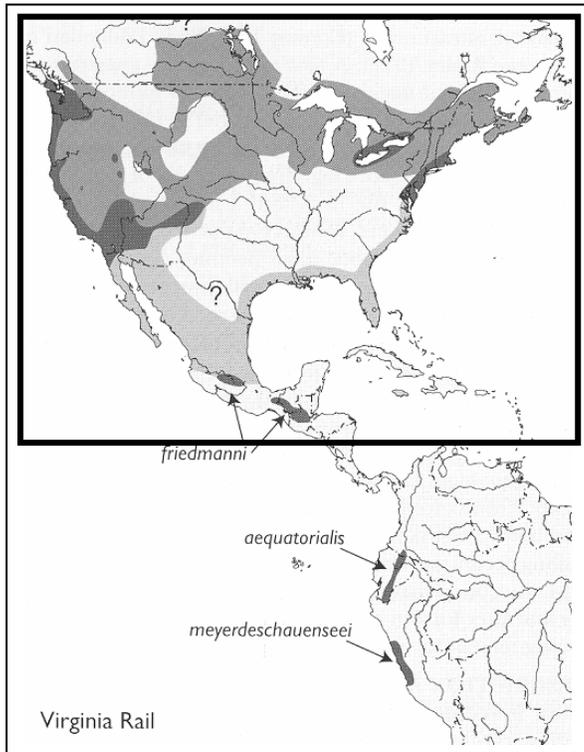
“Habitat loss, primarily draining of inland freshwater wetlands for agricultural purposes, is the greatest threat to Virginia rail populations... habitat management programs should favor acquisition and restoration of natural wetlands areas that have been degraded...” (Conway and Eddleman 1994)

“hunting pressure is highest on the birds' wintering grounds...frequently collides with utility wires and television towers while flying low at night on migration...” (Conway 1995)

“Very few people hunt rails. (2003 and 2004 harvests were estimated at 1,000 and 1,400 birds, respectively. See USFWS 2005). Wetland loss is the major limiting factor...” (H. Hands, pers.comm.)

TN FACTOR SCORE=4

Global Range (Taylor 1998; inset=plan area range)



Literature Cited:

- Conway, C.J. 1995. Virginia Rail (*Rallus limicola*). In *The Birds Of North America*, No.173 (A.Poole and F. Gill, eds.). The Birds of North America, Inc., Philadelphia, PA.
- Delany, S. and S. Scott. 2002. *Waterbird Population Estimates – Third Edition. Wetlands International Global Series No. 12*, Wageningen, The Netherlands. P: 117
- Taylor, Barry. 1998. Virginia Rail. In *Rails: A guide to the Rails, Crakes, Gallinules and Coots of the World*. Yale University Press.
- 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%20Estimate%20s.pdf>
- Conway, C. J. and W. R. Eddleman. 1994. Virginia Rail. Pages 193-206 in T. C. Tacha and C. E. Braun, eds. *Migratory Shore and Upland Game Bird Management in North America*. International Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies, Washington, D.C.

Breeding Distribution (BD)

R. limicola limicola—S Canada & W, C, NE USA
(Delany and Scott 2002)

R. friedmanni—CS Mexico to Guatemala
(Delany and Scott 2002)

1,897,300 km² (plan area distribution; estimated from range maps)

BD FACTOR SCORE=3

Non-breeding Distribution (ND)

R. limicola limicola—SW Canada & E Great Lakes S to Guatemala (Delany and Scott 2002)

R. friedmanni—CS Mexico to Guatemala
(Delany and Scott 2002)

3,370,900 km² (plan area distribution; estimated from range maps)

ND FACTOR SCORE=4