

**04070** **Water Rail** (*Rallus aquaticus*)



Water Rail. Spring. Adult (06-VI).

**WATER RAIL** (*Rallus aquaticus*)

**IDENTIFICATION**

25-28 cm. **Adult** brown reddish upperparts, with dark streaks; grey slate chin and breast; grey belly streaked white; dark flank streaked pale; white undertail coverts with reddish edges; long and reddish bill darker on base. **Juvenile** paler; pale supercilium; whitish underparts spotted brownish; pale brown bill



Water Rail. Pattern of breast and upperparts.

**SIMILAR SPECIES**

Long and red bill makes this species unmistakable.

**SEXING**

Plumage of both sexes alike. Size can be an useful characteristic with most of the specimens: **male** with wing longer than 120 mm; tarsus longer than 40 mm. **Female** with wing shorter than 115 mm; tarsus shorter than 37 mm.

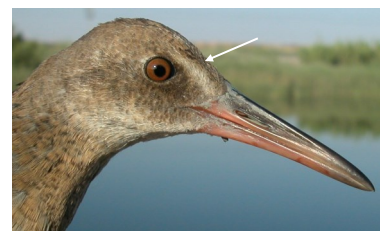
**AGEING**

3 age groups can be recognized:

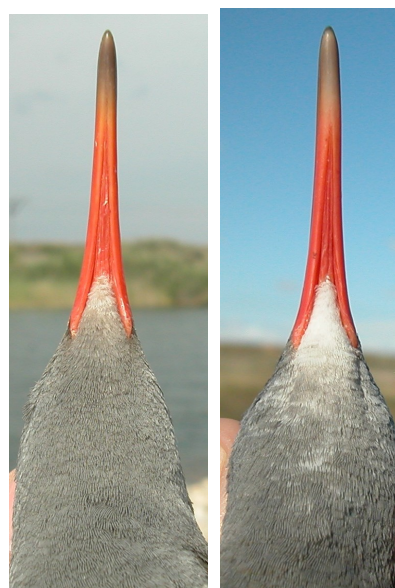
**Juvenile** with white-buff breast, chin and supercilium; iris and bill pale brown.

**1st year autumn/2nd year spring** similar to **adult** but with a pale brown streak running from base of upper mandible to upper part of eye; chin and throat white or light grey; iris orange-brown; sometimes with juvenile brown feathers retained on breast; **juvenile** flight feathers retained that will be heavily worn in **spring**. **CAUTION:** some individuals may be indistinguishable from **adults**.

**Adult** with breast and underparts slate grey; chin slate grey or whitish shading into plain slate grey; reddish iris; bill dark with edges and base bright red.



Water Rail. Ageing. Pattern of head and streak on the eye: top adult; middle 1st year; bottom juvenile.



Water Rail. Ageing. Pattern of chin: left adult; right 2nd year.

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**MOULT**

Complete **postbreeding** moult, usually finished in September. Partial **postjuvenile** moult involving body feathers and, sometimes, tail feathers; often finished in October. Both age classes have a **pre-breeding** moult confined to body feathers.

**PHENOLOGY**

I	II	III	IV	V	VI	VII	VIII	IX	X	XI	XII

- Summer visitor      ■ Resident
- Wintering            ■ On passage



Water Rail. Spring. Young (14-VII)



Water Rail. Spring. 2nd year (14-V)



Water Rail. Spring. Head pattern and iris colour. From top to bottom: adult (06-VI); 2nd year (14-V); juvenile (14-VII); young (14-VII).



Water Rail. Spring. Juvenile (14-VII)



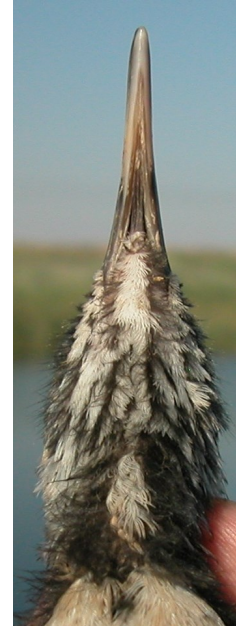
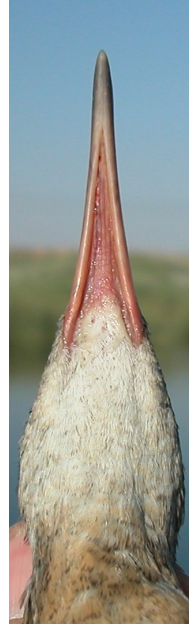
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Water Rail. Spring. Breast pattern: top adult (06-VI); middle 2nd year (14-V); bottom juvenile (14-VII).



Water Rail. Spring. Chin pattern: left adult (06-VI); right 2nd year (14-V).



Water Rail. Spring. Chin pattern: left juvenile (14-VII); right young (14-VII).



Water Rail. Spring. Pattern of legs. From top to bottom: adult (06-VI); 2nd year (14-V); juvenile (14-VII); young (14-VII).

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Water Rail. Spring. Flank pattern: top adult (06-VI); middle 2nd year (14-V); bottom juvenile (14-VII).



Water Rail. Spring. Tail pattern: top left adult (06-VI); top right 2nd year (14-V); left juvenile (14-VII).



Water Rail. Spring. Upper part pattern: top left adult (06-VI); top right 2nd year (14-V); left juvenile (14-VII).



Water Rail. Spring. Pattern of undertail coverts: top left adult (06-VI); top right 2nd year (14-V); left juvenile (14-VII).

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Water Rail. Spring. Adult: pattern of primaries (06-VI).



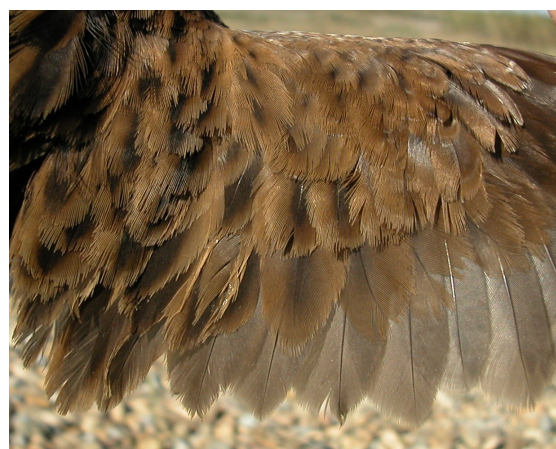
Water Rail. Spring. Juvenile: pattern of primaries (14-VII).



Water Rail. Spring. 2nd year: pattern of primaries (14-V).



Water Rail. Spring. Adult: pattern of secondaries (06-VI).



Water Rail. Spring. 2nd year: pattern of secondaries (14-V).

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Water Rail. Spring. Juvenile: pattern of secondaries (14-VII).



Water Rail. Spring. Adult: pattern of wing (06-VI).



Water Rail. Spring. 2nd year: pattern of wing (14-V).



Water Rail. Spring. Juvenile: pattern of wing (14-VII).



Water Rail. Autumn. Adult (02-IX).



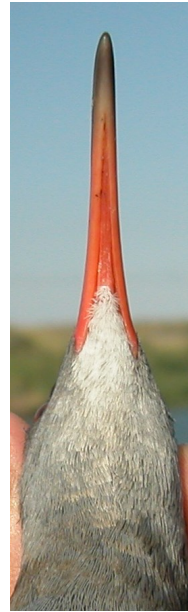
Water Rail. Autumn. 1st year (27-VIII).



Water Rail. Autumn. Head pattern: top adult (02-IX); bottom 1st year (27-VIII).



Water Rail. Autumn. Breast pattern: top adult (02-IX); bottom 1st year (27-VIII).



Water Rail. Autumn. Chin pattern: left adult (02-IX); right 1st year (27-VIII).



Water Rail. Autumn. Upperpart pattern: left adult (02-IX); right 1st year (27-VIII).



Water Rail. Autumn. Tail pattern: left adult (02-IX); right 1st year (27-VIII).

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Water Rail.  
Autumn.  
Flank pattern:  
top adult (02-IX);  
bottom 1st year (27-VIII).



Water Rail. Autumn. Adult: pattern of primaries (02-IX)



Water Rail. Autumn. 1st year: pattern of primaries (27-VIII)



Water Rail. Autumn. Adult: pattern of secondaries (02-IX)



Water Rail. Autumn. 1st year: pattern of secondaries (27-VIII)





Water Rail. Autumn. Adult: pattern of wing (02-IX)



Water Rail. Autumn. 1st year: pattern of wing (27-VIII)