

Black Crake

Scientific Name: *Amaurornis flavirostra*

Class: Aves

Order: Gruiformes

Family: Rallidae



These birds are 19 to 23 cm long with a short tail and long toes. They have mainly black plumage. The eye is red, the bill is yellow, and the legs and feet are red, but they are duller when not breeding. The male is slightly larger than the female. Most males, and 10% of females have a hooked upper mandible. Immature birds have brown upper parts and a dark grey head and underparts. Downy chicks are black.

Range

Their range is Sub-Saharan Africa.

Habitat

They inhabit freshwater marshy areas and swamps, needing water and vegetation for cover.

Gestation

Incubation: 13-19 days

Litter

Clutch size: 2-6 eggs, but usually 3

Behavior

Its movements are typically rail-like. The carriage is upright with the head bobbing and the short tail fliriting constantly as the bird walks. It walks on floating vegetation in the manner of lily trotters and jacanas. It emerges from cover to secure food from the water surface, leaves of aquatic plants, and from mud. It frequently perches on hippos and warthogs and gleans their ectoparasites. It is a good swimmer and dives to avoid danger in the water or, if found on land, will fly to a high bush or dive for cover into reeds or tall grass. It can also "freeze" in defense.

Reproduction

The nest is built as a deep cup made of reeds, rushes, sedges or grasses. It is located in vegetation just at or above water level. In some portions of the range where flooding is frequent, the nest is built high above the water level. Both parents incubate the eggs and care for the young. There are frequently 2 broods a year. The first brood stays with the parents for 6 weeks after hatching, and the second stays 8 weeks.

Wild Diet

Worms, mollusks, crustaceans, insects, small fish, small frogs and tadpoles