

## BOOK REVIEW

### THE MARSH HEN: A NATURAL HISTORY OF THE CLAPPER RAIL OF THE ATLANTIC COAST SALT MARSH

Brooke Meanley. 1985. Tidewater Publishers, Centerville, Maryland 21617. Illus. Drawings by John W. Taylor. Appendices. Bibliography. Index. 124 p. Paperback, \$8.95.

Meanley provides a readable, scientifically documented account of the natural history of the Clapper Rail, two races of which breed in the Carolinas. *Rallus longirostris crepitans* nests from New England southward throughout the portion of the North Carolina coast dominated by wide sounds; *R. l. waynei* nests from Brunswick County, N. C., southward along the sea islands and their associated salt marshes to the northeastern coast of Florida. The author discusses all aspects of the Clapper Rail's life cycle and summarizes the results of both published and unpublished research, including that of David Adams and Thomas L. Quay in North Carolina and of Warren W. Blandin in South Carolina. Meanley, who wrote an earlier work on the King Rail (Natural History of the King Rail, North American Fauna No. 67, U.S. Department of the Interior, 1969), makes many useful comparisons between King and Clapper Rails. Although he documents successful interbreeding by the two species and mentions that some ornithologists consider the King to be a subspecies of the Clapper, he stops short of endorsing that taxonomic change. Meanley's comments on the great similarities between the calls of King and Clapper Rails will give pause to anyone who believes he can reliably separate them by ear. *The Marsh Hen* offers even the casual bird watcher an opportunity to know the Clapper Rail and its habitat intimately, and it provides some good tips on rail watching for serious bird students. -Eloise F. Potter

