

yellow-crowned night-heron *Nyctanassa violacea*

Kingdom: Animalia

Division/Phylum: Chordata

Class: Aves

Order: Pelecaniformes

Family: Ardeidae

ILLINOIS STATUS endangered, native

FEATURES

An adult yellow-crowned night-heron is 22 to 28 inches in length. Its plump body has gray feathers. The head feathers are black with a patch of white on the cheek and white on the top of the head. The wing and back feathers are black- and gray-speckled. The thick beak is black, and the medium-sized legs are yellow. Both sexes are similar in appearance.

BEHAVIORS

The yellow-crowned night-heron is an uncommon migrant through Illinois and a rare summer resident in the southern two-thirds of the state. It winters from the southern United States south to Costa Rica and Panama. The yellow-crowned night-heron lives in swamps, marshes, lakes, sloughs and along streams. This bird eats crayfish, fishes, frogs, and insects. The call is "quark." This solitary bird is active during the day. Like the other herons, its neck is held in an "S" formation during flight with its legs trailing straight out behind its body. Spring migrants begin arriving in Illinois in March. The nest is usually placed solitarily in a tree, but it may be in small groups with other heron species. Nesting occurs from April to June with two to four blue-green eggs per clutch. Fall migration begins in August. The endangered status is mainly due to the destruction and degradation of wetland habitats.

HABITATS

Aquatic Habitats

bottomland forests; lakes, ponds and reservoirs; marshes; rivers and streams; swamps

Woodland Habitats

bottomland forests; southern Illinois lowlands

Prairie and Edge Habitats

none

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