



## yellow-crowned night-heron

*Nyctanassa violacea*

Kingdom: Animalia  
 Division/Phylum: Chordata - vertebrates  
 Class: Aves  
 Order: Ciconiformes  
 Family: Ardeidae

### FEATURES

An adult yellow-crowned night-heron is 22 to 28 inches in length. It has a plump, gray body. The head is black with a patch of white on its cheek and white on the top of the head. Its wings and back 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.

### HABITATS

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> bottomland forests        | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> rivers & streams    |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> lakes, ponds & reservoirs | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> swamps              |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Lake Michigan                        | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> temp water supplies |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> marshes                   | <input type="checkbox"/> wet prairies & fens            |
| <input type="checkbox"/> peatlands                            |   |

### ILLINOIS STATUS

- |  |  |                                     |
|--|--|-------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> common            | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> endangered | <input type="checkbox"/> threatened |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> native | <input type="checkbox"/> exotic                |                                     |

The endangered status is mainly due to the destruction and degradation of wetland habitats.

### ILLINOIS RANGE

Summer resident: southern 2/3. Migrant: statewide.

### BIBLIOGRAPHY

Illinois Department of Natural Resources. 2006.  
*Biodiversity of Illinois, Volume I: Aquatic Habitats* CD-ROM.