

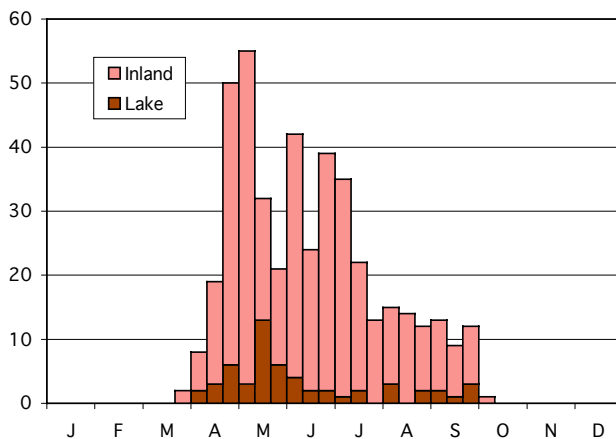
Yellow-crowned Night-Heron

Nyctanassa violacea

Historical Information

First Published Record: A female collected near Wheatland, Knox County on 27 April 1881 (Butler 1898), constitutes Indiana's earliest published record.

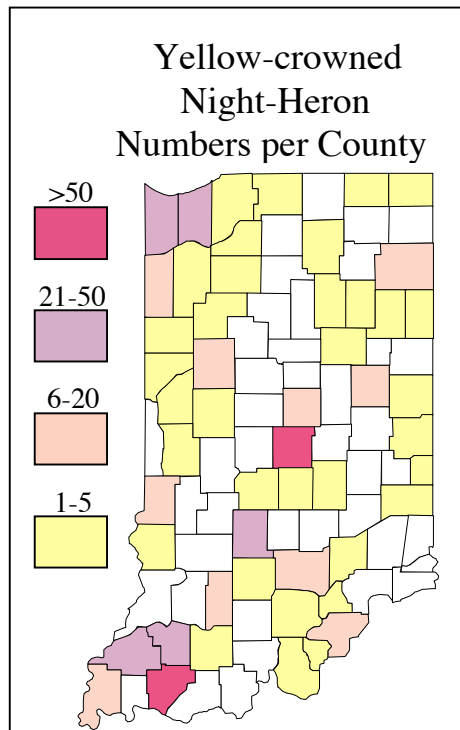
Butler (1890) characterized this species as a "Common summer resident in some parts of the lower Wabash Valley." By the turn of the century a large colony in Knox County constituted the northern-most nesting site in the state (Butler 1898). At mid-century Keller (1966), who deemed this heron a rare to uncommon spring and fall transient, noted that it was very rare in northern Indiana. In 1984 Mumford and Keller described this species as a casual to rare migrant and summer resident, which was becoming more common.



Status

Physical Evidence: Six skins plus eggs are preserved in the nation's museums (S.F. Jackson, unpublished list and Richards 1987).

STATUS TABLE				
Specimens				
Museum				No.
Chicago Field Museum				1
National Museum of Natural History				6*
Indiana State Museum				1
*includes eggs				
20-Year Abundance Table				
	Win	Spr	Sum	Fall
Northern Tier	n	7	7	7
Central Tier	n	10	9	10
Southern Tier	n	7	7	7
Entire State	n	7	7	7



Current Status

In contrast to the 1890 status of Common, this secretive heron is a Rare (7) migrant and summer resident in Indiana. Indeed, plots in the Population Trend section suggest that this species is declining in Indiana.

Occurrence

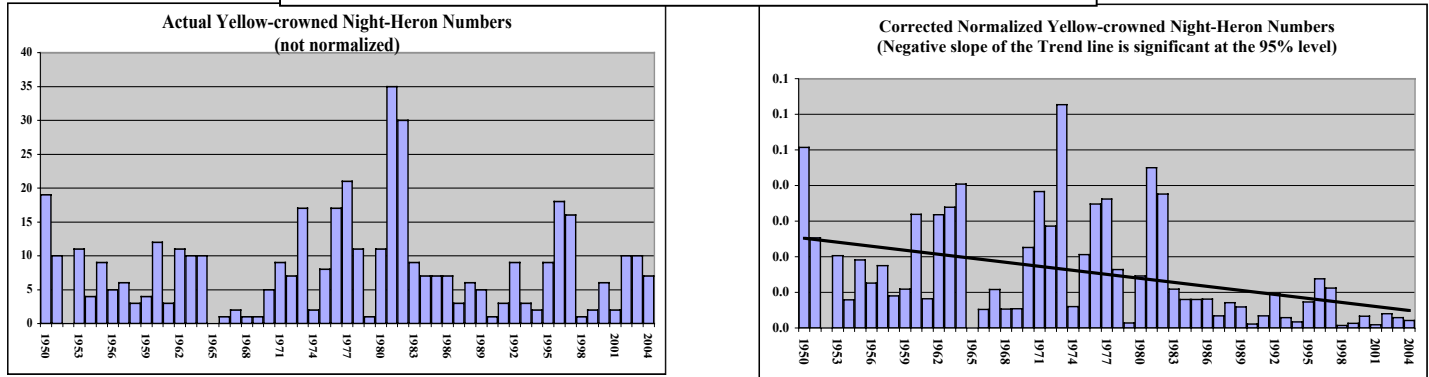
Though still rare, the Yellow-crowned Night-Heron has now been recorded in at least 52 counties, including 18 counties in the northern tier. The distribution map suggests that slightly higher numbers occur in the western half of the state. Over the past two decades an average of 5.8 birds per year have been reported across the state. The migration histogram reveals no distinct fall flight.

Population Trend

Observational data suggest that Indiana's Yellow-crowned Night-Heron population is in decline. Negative slope of the trend line is statistically significant at the 95 percent level.

Yellow-crowned Night-Heron Population Trend

Negative slope of the trend line is significant at the 95% level



Juvenile Yellow-crowned Night-Heron at the Hammond Lakefront Sanctuary 24 September 1995. Photo by J.K. Cassady.

Breeding

According to Butler (1898), Robert Ridgway stated that at a colony east of Vincennes, Knox County the numbers of this species exceeded all other herons combined. He specifically noted that in spring 1881, perhaps a hundred pairs nested there. The enormous breeding colonies of the late 19th century have not reappeared in subsequent years. Indeed, Keller (1966) noted that this species withdrew from Indiana, Illinois, and Ohio in the early 1900s. Breeding, on a significantly reduced scale, apparently resumed about midway through the 1900s. Nesting records, which include counties as far north as Lake County, are summarized by Bruner (2003). Reports in the atlas (Castrale et al. 1998) were restricted to southern reaches of the state. Nests

have been observed from 22 April through 9 June. The photograph of a Martin County nest containing two eggs is contained in Weeks 1976.

Yellow-crowned Night-Heron Data

Maximum Single Party Counts				
Spring				
Number	Date	Location	Observer	Ref.
17	24-Jun-1981	Warrick Co	J.H. Campbell	REM
12	4-Jun-1950	Hovey Lake	P.D. Skarr	DNR
11	11-Jul-1973	Patoka Bottoms	Natalee Stocks	DNR
Fall				
Number	Date	Location	Observer	Ref.
5	24-Sep-1997	Ayrshire Mine	Don Andrews	NNB
3	26-Sep-1980	Vigo Co	Eugene Muench	REM
3	08-Aug-1984	Warrick Co	J.H. Campbell	IAQ

Migration Envelopes						
Spring						
	Earliest	Arrive	Peak	Depart	Latest	Records
North	1-Apr-1981	18-Apr	9-May	5-Jun	Sum. Res.	41
Central	29-Mar-1953	1-Apr	7-May	4-Jun	Sum. Res.	40
South	6-Apr-1999	13-Apr	5-May	4-Jun	Sum. Res.	46
Fall						
	Earliest	Arrive	Peak	Depart	Latest	Records
North	Sum. Res.	16-Jul	30-Aug	24-Sep	30-Sep-1995	24
Central	Sum. Res.	26-Jul	20-Aug	27-Sep	10-Oct-1964	22
South	Sum. Res.	20-Jul	15-Aug	24-Sep	25-Sep-1970	22

References Cited

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Richards, R.L. (1987) The Vertebrate Collection of the Indiana State Museum: “Old” Specimens and Records, *Proceedings of the Indiana Academy of Science* 97:547-570.

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