

1998-8

ACCEPTED 7-0

12<sup>th</sup> record

# COLORADO RARE BIRD REPORT

## YELLOW-CROWNED NIGHT-HERON

*Nyctanassa violacea*

Location: Valco Ponds; Pueblo; Pueblo County, Colorado

Date: March 28, 1998

I was birding with Brandon Percival – completing a "Big Day". It was about 6:30 p.m. and we were finishing up the day, not thinking that we would see much new. It was still light and perfectly good conditions to observe the bird. We were paralleling the Arkansas River, crouching to walk through a tight path through the Russian Olives. I noted the heron when it startled off a roost on a branch in the Russian olive and flew down to land right next to us in the river. I immediately stopped Brandon and pointed out the bird and we crouched together and observed it with binoculars for a full 2 minutes. The bird stood on a pebbly exposed bar in the river, partly protected by overhanging Russian olives and other vegetation – but completely exposed to our view. It was alert, but happy to let us observe it as it stood, stock-still, observing us. Finally we "high fived" each other and moved on. The bird was searched for the following day but not re-found.

### Description:

This was an adult bird in breeding plumage (though without the head plumes). It stood about 22" tall, but seemed quite small at that close of a range. The bird was a stocky heron with a short, stocky neck. The legs were medium-short in length and colored pinkish-orange. The bill was very stout, heavy, dagger-shaped, blackish, with a strongly curved culmen and a sharp tip. The head was black, but with a pale yellow crown and a very pale yellow or off-white cheek patch. The body was basically slate gray – the underparts a paler even gray and the upperparts darker with blackish streaks in the long feathers of the back and wings. This was an unmistakable bird. I did not note eye color.

### Similar Species:

The long legs, long neck and body and bill size indicate a heron. The short stocky neck, compact size and dagger-like bill indicate a night-heron. Black-crowned Night-Heron lacks the yellow crown, pale cheek patch and has a lighter gray body with a black back. The bill shape was consistent with Yellow-crowned Night-Heron (being more stout and more curved).

### Experience with Species:

I have seen all the Colorado herons, including Yellow-crowned Night-Herons

This report was prepared from notes made after observation.

*Mark Janos*

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