

COLORADO RARE BIRD REPORT

YELLOW-CROWNED NIGHT-HERON
Nyctanassa violacea

1998-10
ACCEPTED 7-0
13th

Location: Lower Queens Reservoir = Neeskah Res.; May Valley; Kiowa County; Colorado

Date: September 16, 1998

I was birding with Brandon Percival. It was about 3:30 p.m. and we were at the boat ramp at Lower Queens Reservoir, scoping the lake. Brandon discovered the Yellow-crowned Night-Heron. It was wading in the water next to the ramp, about 50 yards away. We observed the bird in the open, in good light through our scopes and binoculars for about 10 minutes. The bird fed by wading the shallows but was not active and we did not see it get anything. We finally startled the bird and watched it fly around the bend and out of site to the southeast.

Description:

The bird was an apparent sub-adult, but not a bird of the year. It was a smallish, stocky heron with medium-length legs. It stood about 2 feet tall. It had a short, stocky neck. The neck and body of the bird were like that of an adult. They were a plain gun-metal gray color with the wing mottled with fine black feather markings. The bird had no head plumes. The head was marked like a shadow of an adult – it was blackish with an indistinct whitish cheek patch and a pale fore-crown. (Brandon and I saw a bird like this a couple of years earlier in the shallows at Lake Henry). The legs were yellowish in color and in flight extended well beyond the tail – the "ankles" and feet all trailing the tail. The eye was proportioned to look very large and there was an orange iris. The bill was all black, very stout, with a curved culmen – giving the look of a short, thick dagger.

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. The imm. Black-crowned Night-Heron would lack the pale forecrown and 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). Black-crowned Night-Heron legs are not as long behind the flying bird as this bird.

Experience with Species:

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

This report was prepared from notes made after observation.

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