

COLORADO FIELD ORNITHOLOGISTS - SIGHT RECORD FORM

NEW STATE RECORD _____ UNUSUAL RECORD X**Species:** Yellow-crowned Night-Heron (*Nyctanassa violacea*)**Date:** 10 & 23 August 2001**Number seen:** one**Sex:** ?**Plumage:** Juvenal**Locality:** Lower Latham Res.**Elevation:** about 4665'**Nearest town:** Greeley**County:** Weld**Time observed:** off and on between about 18:00 and 19:45 MDT on 8/10; at 19:58 on 8/23**Duration of observation:** about 5 minutes in three sightings on 8/10; ~20 sec on 8/23

Description: While birding from an oil storage tank on 43 Rd on the west side of Lower Latham Res., Nancy Gobris pointed out a small flock of juvenile night-herons flying by us. The front bird had very long legs and we both immediately identified it as a Yellow-crowned Night-Heron (YCNH). We continued to watch it as it flew by us and lost altitude, as if to land. We lost track of the bird, but sometime about 19:00 we refound it in the ditch to the north, whereupon it flew back east and landed on the lake shore out of sight. I called Chris Wood and he came out from Brighton to see the bird. When he arrived, we refound the bird perched on a stick on the shore and watched it for a couple minutes. Then we went to eat to celebrate Chris finally seeing the species in Colorado.

It was a smallish heron flying with obvious juvenile Black-crowned Night-Herons (BCNH). Its legs extended well beyond its tail tip with a long length of tarsus projecting beyond the tail, not just the toes. This was particularly obvious in direct comparison to the leg lengths of the BCNHs flying with it. Additionally, the remiges were much darker than the upperwing coverts creating a contrast on the upperwing recalling that of Am. Bittern. The head was darkish with fine, darker streaking. The eyes were orangish and the bill was shortish, but thick, and all dark. The upperparts were dark brown. The tail and wings were dark brown, with the latter having small white tips to the coverts, unlike the much larger spots of nearby juvenile BCNHs. The underparts were pale with thick, dark streaking - this made the underparts look mostly dark. The undertail coverts were white and the legs were dark yellow. On 23 August, I found the bird, again in flight, at the same location and noted all relevant features again, except that I did not hear it call.

Similar species eliminated: The only real confusion species is BCNH, though juvenile YCNH can look somewhat like Am. Bittern. However, the latter species has a yellowish bill, is much warmer brown than the bird in question, and would have been considerably larger than the BCNHs with which the bird was flying. BCNH juveniles have a partly-pale bill, much larger white spotting on the wing coverts, much shorter tarsi, and less contrast on the upper surface of the wings.

Describe the bird's song and call, if given, including method of delivery (i.e. from perch, in flight, duration): The bird called a few times -- the higher-pitched, somewhat goose-like call of YCNH, as opposed to the deeper, raven-like call of BCNH.

What is your prior experience with this and similarly-appearing species? I have seen >75 juvenile YCNHs and 100s of juvenile BCNHs.

Light conditions: sun was low and behind us and to our left at the first sighting and was behind clouds and/or set behind Long's Peak for the two subsequent sightings

Optical equipment used: Swarovski 8.5x42 and Leica Televid 20x-60x

Distance, and how estimated: I estimated the closest distance at the first sighting when flying by at ~25m and the scope view of the bird standing at ~45m

Other observers who saw the bird with you: On 8/10 - Nancy Gobris (the finder and first identifier) and Chris Wood; on 8/23 - Chris Wood, Ken Rosenberg, Greg Butcher, Carol Beardmore

Other observers who saw the bird independently: none of which I am aware

If photographed, type of equipment and film: Chris video-taped the bird at the third sighting on 8/10.

List books, illustrations, recordings, other birders, etc. consulted and how this influenced your identification:

a) at time of observation: none **b) after observation:** none

Reporting observer: Tony Leukering

Signature:

Address: Rocky Mountain Bird Observatory, 14500 Lark Bunting Lane, Brighton, CO 80601

Date report was written: 18 and 26 August 2001 from notes written without aid of reference the day after the 8/10 sighting

Photo by Christopher L. Wood

2001-71

