

# Species Fact Sheets

**Order:** Pelecaniformes  
**Scientific Name:** *Nyctanassa violacea*

**Family:** Ardeidae  
**Common Name:** Yellow-Crowned Night Heron

**AZA Management:**  Green  Yellow  Red  None

**Photo (Male):**



**Photo (Female):**



## NATURAL HISTORY:

**Geographic Range:** Europe  Asia  North America  Neotropical   
 Africa  Australia  Other  [Click here to enter text.](#)

**Habitat:** Forest  Desert  Grassland  Coastal   
 Riverine  Montane  Other  [Click here to enter text.](#)

**Circadian Cycle:** Diurnal  Crepuscular  Nocturnal  Other  [Click here to enter text.](#)

**Cold Tolerance:** To 70° F  To 60° F  To 50° F  To 40° F   
 To 30° F  To 20° F  Other  [Click here to enter text.](#)

**Heat Tolerance:** To 30° F  To 50° F  To 70° F  To 90° F   
 To 110° F  Other

**Diet:** Frugivore  Carnivore  Piscivore  Insectivore   
 Nectivore  Omnivore  Folivore  Other (Add Below)

**Captive Dietary Needs:**

Commercial Bird-of-Prey diet, chopped fish, chopped hard-boiled egg

**Life Expectancy in the Wild:** Males: [Click here to enter text.](#) Females: [Click here to enter text.](#)

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**Life Expectancy in Captivity:**

Males:

[Click here to enter text.](#)

Females:

[Click here to enter text.](#)

## BREEDING INFORMATION:

**Age at Sexual Maturity:**

Males:

2 Years

Females:

2 Years

**Courtship Displays:**

Males defend nesting sites, then display for females by stretching the head and neck, clapping the bill, and erecting plumage

**Nest Site Description:**

Nest of twigs, sometimes lined with leaves or grass, which are constructed by both parents – usually the male providing supplies, the female actually building it. Nests are usually built in trees, but sometimes on ledges or caves. Nesting colonies tend to be stocked at a low density

**Clutch Size, Egg Description:**

Bluish-white eggs 4.5-5 centimeters long by 3.5 centimeters wide. Clutch size 2-8 eggs, usually smaller clutches in the tropics than temperate areas

**Incubation Period:**

21-25 Days

**Fledgling Period:**

25 Days

**Parental Care:**

Both parents build the nest, incubate the eggs, and feed the young

**Chick Development:**

Eyes open after 1 day. Chicks are covered with grey down shortly after hatching

## CAPTIVE HABITAT INFORMATION:

**Social Structure in the Wild:**

Solitary or Colonial

**Social Structure in Captivity:**

Solitary or Colonial

**Minimum Group Size:**

Pair

**Maximum Group Size:**

Large Colonies)

**Compatible in**

**Mixed Species Exhibits:**

Yes

**Comments:**

[Click here to enter text.](#)

**Optimal Habitat Size:**

[Click here to enter text.](#)

**Management Challenges:**

[Click here to enter text.](#)

## ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:

Adult plumage is bluish-gray, the feathers having darker centers and lighter edges. The head is black with white patches under the eyes and a white cap, which appears yellow or rust-colored outside of the breeding season. The bill is black and the legs are dull-yellow. Body length is 51-70 centimeters, with a wingspan of

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100-112 centimeters and a weight of 650-800 grams. Males and females look alike (though females are slightly smaller), whereas juveniles are brownish with white spots and streaks. Adult plumage is reached at about 2 years of age.

Although they primarily forage at night, yellow-crowned night herons can be active during the day also, usually feeding during tide cycles. Walking slowly along the shore, they seize crabs, crayfish, mussels, fish, frogs, and lizards with lunging stabs. The relatively stout bill allows this species to take proportionately larger prey than other heron species. Different subspecies have been observed having different bill sizes and shapes, possibly a reflection on different prey availability.

Six subspecies of yellow-crowned night heron are recognized, only one of which (the nominate and northernmost) is migratory. The species was once considered extirpated on Bermuda, but a reintroduction program reestablished a wild population on the island.

Though they have been historically hunted, both for their plumes and for meat (considered a delicacy in some cultures), yellow-crowned night heron populations appear to be stable. They are harder to survey than many other heron and egret species due to their smaller nesting colonies. Threats to the species include habitat loss and degradation, though at this time the species is listed as being of Least Concern by the IUCN.

### REFERENCES:

Hancock, James and James Kushlan. 1984. *The Herons Handbook*. Harper and Row Publishers: Philadelphia.

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### COMPLETED BY:

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