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Kale, H. W., II, B. Pranty, B. M. Stith, and C. W. Biggs. 1992. The atlas of the breeding birds of Florida. Final Report. Florida Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission, Tallahassee, Florida.

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Yellow-crowned Night-Heron *Nycticorax violacea*

The Yellow-crowned Night-Heron is an attractive, relatively secretive species widely occurring on the continent. It breeds primarily in coastal swamps and interior wetlands from Baja California and Sonora east through Texas, Oklahoma, Kansas, Iowa, Nebraska, Minnesota, Wisconsin, Michigan, and Massachusetts and south to Peru and Brazil. In Florida, we see it singly or occasionally in groups in early evening on exposed tidal flats. Its calls are often heard overhead in the evening.

Habitat. The Yellow-crowned Night-Heron is more diurnal than the *Black-crowned Night Heron* and forages by still-hunting with its neck extended. Its diet consists largely of crustaceans (fiddler or larger crabs or crayfish), but may include water beetles, leeches, mussels, frogs, and small fish (Hancock and Kushlan 1984).



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The nest is a substantial structure of sticks and twigs, mainly brought by the male, and may be lined with grass and leaves. It is located in tall trees, clumped trees, or shrubs. A greeting ceremony and territorial display with circle flight is part of breeding ritual. Three to 4 pale blue eggs are laid and incubated 21 to 25 days. Nestlings are cared for by both parents and fledge at about 25 days of age. Juveniles are distinguished from juvenile *Black-crowned Night-Herons* by their longer legs and shorter, thicker bills.

Seasonal Occurrence. Yellow-crowned Night-Herons breed as early as February and as late as mid-June in Florida. Many birds that breed farther north winter in Florida, but arrival and departure dates are scant.

Status. Like the more nocturnal and gregarious *Black-crowned Night-Heron*, this species is designated a Species of Special Concern by the Florida Committee on Rare and Endangered Plants and Animals (Meyerrieks 1978).

Breeding in Florida has been confirmed in 127 chiefly coastal quadrangles throughout the state, from March to June. It may be found in mixed-heron colonies, with other Yellow-crowned Night-Herons, or alone, in wooded areas near water, including suburban areas and parks. No statewide counts have been taken for this species, probably because of secretive nesting habits and dark plumage. This species is evidently decreasing in some areas and increasing its range in the Panhandle (Stevenson and Anderson 1994).

Cynthia H. Plockelman

Sponsored by James and Barbara Hazard

Yellow-crowned Night-Heron

