

# American Bittern

*Botaurus lentiginosus*

## General Information:

-When it senses danger, the American Bittern hides by standing motionless with its bill pointed upward and its body tightly contracted. Thus it can be mistaken for a wooden stake in the marshes, saltwater and freshwater bogs, and wetland ponds it inhabits. The dark and light vertical streaks blend with shadows and highlights cast by surrounding vegetation, so the bird often goes unnoticed even from a few feet away. In flight the somewhat pointed dark outer wings contrast sharply with the inner wings and body.

## Song:

-*Oonk-a-lunk* or *punk-er-lunk*, often heard at dusk. It is one of the strangest sounds produced by any bird; sound like someone driving a stake into the mud with a wooden mallet.

## Behavior:

-Stands motionless, often hidden by marsh vegetation, on ground or in water to search for prey. It eats frogs, small eels, small fish, small snakes, salamanders, crayfish, small rodents, and water bugs.

## Breeding:

-May be polygamous. It is a solitary nester.

## Nesting:

-Incubation of 24-29 days by the female. The 1 brood per year of semi-altricial young stay in the nest of 14 days.

## Population:

-Fairly common, but declining due to marshland drainage.

## Conservation:

-Protected by law. Wetland conservation is critical for this species.

## Shoreline Restoration Issues:

- If you would like to create an environment friendly to the American Bittern I would highly recommend planting relatively heavy amounts of emergent aquatic vegetation. Some of the emergent aquatic vegetation that I suggest the most are Hard-stem Bulrush, Soft-Stem Bulrush, 3-Way Sedge, Pickerelweed, Arrowhead, Wild Calla, Water Smartweed, Lily Pads, White &/or Yellow Water Buttercup, and Sago Pondweed. I would then try to concentrate on planting shrubs &/or taller plants like Wool-Grass, Japanese Millet, or Cup-Plant along the shoreline so that this big bird is not spooked by activity from your property.

