

Black Crowned Night Heron

Nycticorax nycticorax

General Information:

-The scientific name of this bird means “Night Raven,” and it refers to the nature of the bird, as does the common name of Night Heron. A stocky bird with short legs and a thick, short neck, it prowls freshwater pools, marshes, and streams and coastal estuaries across much of North America. In flight the toes often protrude beyond the short tail. Juvenile plumage shows brown above with white spots and streaking. Juveniles have a yellowish bill with a dark tip and greenish yellow legs and feet.

Song:

-Low, harsh *woe* and guttural *quock* or *quaik*.

Behavior:

-Primarily nocturnal. Roosts in trees by day and actively feeds at night. Some feed during daylight hours. Omnivorous, feeding on whatever is handy. Diet ranged from fish to mollusks, small rodents, frogs, snakes, crustaceans, plant material, eggs, and young birds. Often stands very still in water for long periods of time, expertly grabbing fish that swim too close.



Breeding:

-Monogamous. Colonial

Nesting:

-Incubation 21-26 days by both sexes. The 1 brood per year of young stay in nest 28 days and are fed by both sexes. First flight at 42 days, and after 49 days the young may follow their parents into foraging areas to beg and be fed.

Population:

-Overall stable or increasing.

Conservation:

-Benefited from general protection by state, federal, and conservation agencies. Loss of wetland habitat affects food supply and reproduction.

Shoreline Restoration Issues:

-If you would like to create an environment friendly to the Black Crowned Night Heron on your shoreland property I would suggest Sandbar Willow, Ninebark, Sweet Gale, High-bush Cranberry, Wool-Grass, Sweet Flag, Blue Flag Iris, Swamp Rose, Eastern White Pine, and Red Pine. I would then plant a smattering of deciduous trees. Black Willow, Shagbark Hickory, Silver Maple, Swamp White Oak, Red Oak, Basswood, Cottonwood, and Sugar Maple are all swell choices.