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Yellow-crowned Night Herons Sighted in North Dakota

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Yellow-crowned night herons (*Nyctanassa violacea*) sighted at four locations in North Dakota during 1976 appear to be the first observations of this species for the State. We sighted a single individual about 8 km south of Medina, North Dakota in western Stutsman County during several visits in June and July 1976. The bird was first seen on 23 June standing in a pasture adjoining an 8.5 ha semipermanent marsh. On following visits, the heron usually was seen perched in trees at the edge of the wetland. A single yellow-crowned night heron was sighted on the same wetland on three separate occasions in June 1977. It is not known whether this was the same individual that was seen in 1976. The wetland contains dense stands of cattail (*Typha* spp.), hardstem bulrush (*Scirpus acutus*), and reed (*Phragmites communis*), and is bordered by open stands of cottonwood (*Populus deltoides*) and peach-leaved willow (*Salix amygdaloides*). Several black-crowned night herons (*Nycticorax nycticorax*) also were observed at the marsh during 1976 and 1977. Herons may have been attracted to the wetland by the presence of large numbers of leopard frogs (*Rana pipiens*). No yellow-crowned night heron nests were found during nest searches of the wetland in 1976 and 1977.

Other yellow-crowned night heron sightings in 1976 were reported at Bismarck and in Richland County (*American Birds* 30(4):855, 1976) and at J. Clark Salyer NWR (*American Birds* 30(5):969, 1976). A sighting on 8 May 1963 that was listed for Glyndon, North Dakota (*American Birds* 17(4):413, 1963) actually refers to a Glyndon, Minnesota location. Stewart (1975) did not list the yellow-crowned night heron as breeding in North Dakota, nor was the species reported by Judd (1917). In southern Manitoba, Godfrey (1966) considered the species a rare wanderer. The yellow-crowned night heron was first reported breeding in southern Minnesota in 1955 and several additional records

have since been reported but the species is still considered accidental in northern Minnesota (Green and Janssen 1975). Several sightings of yellow-crowned night herons have been reported in South Dakota (*Audubon Field Notes*). Bent (1963:219) reported early sightings at Council Bluffs, Iowa (2 May 1843) and Beatrice, Nebraska (19 July 1901).

Several species of herons and egrets have expanded their ranges northward in recent years; the first breeding records of the cattle egret (*Bulbulcus ibis*) and little blue heron (*Florida caerulea*) were recorded in North Dakota in 1976 (*American Birds* 30(5):969, 1976). It appears probable that the yellow-crowned night heron will be seen in North Dakota with increasing frequency in the future.

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