# Yellow-crowned Night Heron (*Nyctanassa violacea*)

***Pennsylvania Endangered Bird Species***
**State Rank: S1B (critically imperiled breeding), Global Rank: G5 (secure)**

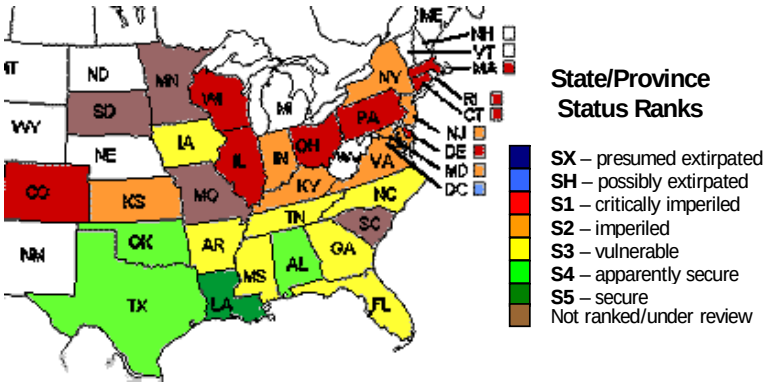
Photo Credit: A. & E. Morris, VIREO

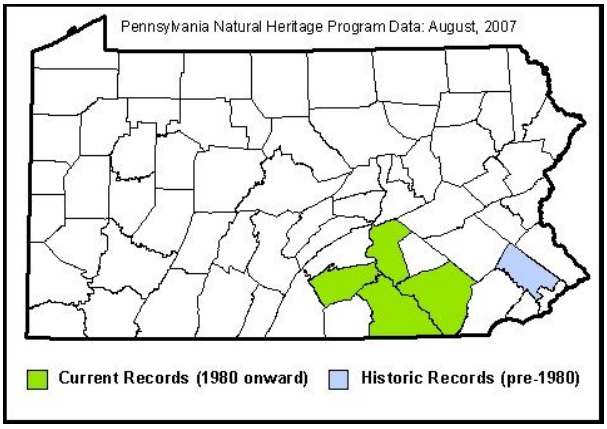
## Identification
Adults are 22 to 28 inches in length, from bill tip to tail tip, gray with black head and a whitish cheek patch and crown. Eyes are red and legs yellowish. Immature is brown, finely spotted and streaked with white buff.

## Biology-Natural History
Pennsylvania lies at the northern fringe of this species' breeding range, which is mainly in the south-central United States. It nests singly or in small groups in the lower reaches of the Susquehanna. A typical clutch contains three or four eggs. Nesting starts as early as April. By mid-summer most young have fledged. Crayfish are a major part of this bird's diet.

## Habitat
Feeds mainly along small shallow streams. Nests in brush or trees, usually sycamores, found on islands or along streams. Most nests found in recent years are along the Susquehanna River and its tributaries, in Lancaster County.

**North American State/Province Conservation Status**
Map by NatureServe (August 2007)




## Reasons for Being Endangered
As a breeding bird, the combination of rarity and tendency to nest in small groups makes this species particularly vulnerable to local habitat disturbance or loss. The largest nesting colony known in Pennsylvania, representing more than half the state's known breeding population, is on a small river island. The integrity of this site and nearby shallow-water feeding areas are threatened by a proposed dam. Degradation of water quality, along with loss of the primary food source – crayfish – is an ever-present threat.

## Management Practices
Known nest sites for this species are monitored and potential new sites need to be surveyed. Whenever possible, nesting habitats need to be protected.

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Pennsylvania Natural Heritage Program

**References:**


- NatureServe. 2007. NatureServe Explorer: An online encyclopedia of life [web application]. Version 6.2. NatureServe, Arlington, Virginia. Available http://www.natureserve.org/explorer. (Accessed: August 22, 2007).


Fact Sheet adapted from: Felbaum, Mitchell, et al. Endangered and Threatened Species of Pennsylvania. Harrisburg, PA: Wild Resource Conservation Fund, 1995.