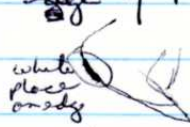

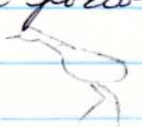
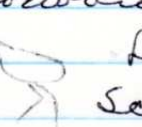


Yellow-crowned Night Heron - 1
Willow Slough, NE Mills County, Iowa

July 23, Aug 7, 9, 11, 18, 19, 20, 27, 31, Sept 3, 6, 7, 1979

Description: General: gray-brown, or slate gray in some light. Resembled an adult Little Blue when in poor light. Small spots. Wing: Flight feathers gray, unmarked. White spot along edge of folded wing, at coverts of primaries, sometimes noticeable,  mainly in a front view of the bird. Tail not barred. Legs: yellowish, long. Feet and part of legs extend beyond tail as the bird flies. Head: Gray. Eye dark, surrounded by a light area (not an eye ring; large part of face paler.) Once I thought there was a line through the eye. Front pattern to face:  Crown + back of head dark, forehead lighter, dark place below eye. Throat white. Bill: short. Maybe light below + darker above. Back: small spots. Scapulars: larger light spots. Underparts: throat, breast, belly, lighter than upper parts. Breast grayer than belly, which approaches whiteness.

Behavior: Active in late afternoon before + after sunset. Hunts by wading quickly through shallow water, then slowing to sneak forward with extreme slowness. Neck out + up.  Feeds in shallow water but not dense cattails.  Scratches head under wing.

Habitat: Marshy edge of lake.

Similar species: Bettern, Black-crowned Night Heron. I think bettern is eliminated by ♂ gray

Y-c Night Heron

color and posture. I saw this bird often but never saw it with head on shoulders + bill in the air. Surely I would have. Also, I never saw the dark stripe a bittern has on its neck.

Immature Black-crowned Night Heron is harder to eliminate, but the fact that part of the leg, as well as the foot, extends beyond the tail in flight seems to take care of that. When Black-crowns were at the Slough in September, they roosted in the edges of the dense cattail beds, heads tucked on shoulders, while this bird was active.

Problem: if the bird I describe here as one bird was really 2 or more, well, that leads to confusion. I never saw two of it at once, but one never knows what might be hidden deep in the slough's vegetation.

Distance, light: I was never close to this bird except when I flushed it twice on July 23. The other descriptions were from across the entire width of the slough with a 20x + 40x telescope. Frankly, that is at the edge of where I could see details clearly. I had to look at the bird a long time before I could be fairly sure the details were really there, not just shadows or whatever.

Light: Most sightings, + all descriptions, in late afternoon with the bird east of me. Light usually good, at least after the bird moved out of shadows.

My experience with these birds: little. Bitterns are usually easy to tell if I see one at all, so I haven't examined them in detail. Imm. Black-crowned Night Herons are usually identified by the ~~two~~ adults present.