



# Black-Crowned Night-Herons

Black-Crowned Night-Herons visit the Sanctuary from late August to late April. Our small group of 6 to 8 birds is often the only flock of this species found in mid-winter across Canada.

A mature Night-Heron has a jet black "cap" with silky white plume feathers. Its back is a slatey bluish black, and the lower face, throat and underside is a creamy white. Legs are yellow and eyes are a startling red.

In spite of this dramatic colouring, this species is often overlooked. They sleep during the day and hunt for small aquatic prey at night, so visitors may not notice them roosting in shrubs and trees near the water.



Black-Crowned Night-Herons are found all around the world except for Australia and Antarctica.

In Canada, they nest mainly across the Prairies. They make stick platforms in trees, and nest in large colonies. There can be as many as 12 nests in a single tree.

The nearest nesting colonies to the Sanctuary are the ones found along the Columbia River in Washington and Oregon. Several thousand pairs nest there. The birds that winter in the Sanctuary may be birds from one of these colonies.



Immature birds are even harder to see. During their first winter, they have striped camouflage colouring of grey and brown. By their second winter, they look more like the mature breeding plumage, only with a less contrasting brown and cream colouring.

