

Night Heron

Regno: fauna

Birds

 [nitticora.jpg](#) [1]

Night Heron - *Nycticorax nycticorax*

Known by its local name "Sgarzotto notturno or Sgarzetta notturna (at the Fucecchio Marches), its name means "Night Crow" and refers to its crepuscular habits, its outline in flight and its call that sounds like that of a crow.

Actually it is a medium-small, compact heron.

The adults are typically white, grey and black; in the breeding season they sport decorative threadlike feathers on the nape and bright yellow-orange legs; the liveries of juveniles on the other hand are not very contrasting, tending to brown. The eye is a beautiful ruby red.

The species frequents habitats like marshlands, paddy fields, ox-bow lakes, dry river terraces and reclaimed marshlands.

Unlike the other herons, it does not like wetlands with brackish waters. It feeds mainly on fish, amphibians and aquatic insects, preferring to hunt by ambush as it remains immobile in wait for its prey.

Very gregarious species, it nests in colonies, generally together with other species of Ciconiiformes. The nesting sites, called heronries, are generally found in hygrophilous woodlands (alder woods), shrub-lands and more rarely cane or reed beds or other types of vegetation.

The Italian population is the largest in Europe, but it seems the species is in decline. Since at least the beginning of the '80s one colony has been nesting uninterruptedly at Fucecchio Marshes.

Over the years, the heronry has grown and gained five new species (Little Egret, Squacco Heron, Cattle Egret, Great Egret and Grey Heron), so that it has become the most important in central-south Italy. Since 2004, the Night Heron has also been nesting in a small heronry on the margins of Lake Sibolla.

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