

## Fifteenth in the Fuertes print series

[The original painting was reproduced in *Bird-Lore*, Vol. XXV, No. 3, May-June 1923. Unlike the text for our earlier series on Fringillids written by Frank M. Chapman, the heron series was written by T. Gilbert Pearson, then President of the National Association of Audubon Societies. It was largely anecdotal. The text below has been adapted from current sources.<sup>1</sup>]

Note that the original painting has faded slightly, especially in the red tones; in the 1923 *Bird-Lore* reproduction (but no longer in the original painting), the irides of all birds except for those of the immature Black-crowned Night Heron are red, the mangrove buds are dark red, and the reddish head and neck plumage of the Louisiana Heron are a more pronounced dusty rose red. Unfortunately we can no longer tell whether the printed plate accurately represented the painting *as painted*. As representations of the birds themselves and as a composition, the painting demonstrates the art of Louis Agassiz Fuertes at the peak of his powers.

### *Louisiana (Tricolored) Heron—Hydranassa (Egretta) tricolor.*<sup>2</sup> 1.

A Western Hemisphere species, the race *ruficollis* breeding from Baja California, the Gulf states and Florida north along the Atlantic Coast recently to New England, south through central America and the West Indies to Venezuela, Colombia, and northern Peru. On the West Coast it is a regular visitor only to southern California; it has been increasingly recorded as a wanderer in mid-continent as far north as Alberta, and in eastern Canada to Quebec and the Atlantic provinces. The nominate race *tricolor*, described from French Guiana, is found in the Guianas, Suriname, and northeastern Brazil. A distinct race, *rufimentum*, is confined to Trinidad.

The painting is interesting since, although it portrays a blue nuptial bill color, the plumage is more like that of a non-breeding or pre-breeding adult, showing more reddish neck coloration than does a fully adult bird. But in nuptial display, the legs become dark pink. The two southern races are smaller and darker than *ruficollis*.

### *Yellow-crowned Night Heron (Night-Heron), Nyctanassa violacea (Nycticorax violaceus).*

Adult, 2. Immature, 3. A species of the Americas, with roughly the same distribution as that of Louisiana Heron. Of the six named races, the nominate *violacea* breeds in coastal states from Texas to New England,

south to Guatemala, with scattered inland colonies as far north as Michigan and Minnesota, with wanderers into the Atlantic Provinces. With some apparent overlapping, the race *bancrofti* is native to Baja California, *gravirostris* on Socorro Island, *caliginis* from Venezuela to Columbia, *cayennensis* from southern Columbia to Peru and southern Brazil, and *pauper* in the Galapagos archipelago. The fact that the colors seem truer for this species than for the preceding one would seem to indicate that except for the red tones, we are not too far from the Fuertes original, and much closer to it than the 1923 *Bird-Lore* version.

### *Black-crowned Night Heron (Night-Heron), Nycticorax nycticorax*

Adult, 4. Immature, 5. The most cosmopolitan heron, found in the Americas from southern Canada south to Tierra del Fuego and the Falkland Islands, including the Hawaiian Islands and the Galapagos. Elsewhere it is native to Europe, Asia, Africa, and the East Indies. Four races have been described, of which one, *hoactli*, is our familiar, but increasingly uncommon, breeding bird. Fuertes' painting clearly shows the less massive bill of this night heron and the paler immature plumage, although the poses presented do not make it clear that the legs of this species are noticeably shorter than those of the Yellow-crowned.

<sup>1</sup>Principal sources: A.O.U. CHECK-LIST COMMITTEE, 1982. List of species for Canada and the U.S., for 6th Edition, 1983. 24 pp. • BENT, A.C., Ed. 1926. Life histories of North American marsh birds. U.S.N.M. Bull 135. 391 pp. • HANCOCK, JAMES, and H. ELLIOT. 1978. The herons of the world. Harper & Row, New York. 304 pp. • HOWARD, RICHARD and ALICK MOORE. 1980. A complete checklist of the birds of the world. Oxford, New York. 701 pp. • ROBERSON, DON. 1980. Rare birds of the west coast. Woodcock Publ., Pacific Grove, CA. 496 pp. • TERRES, JOHN K. 1981. The Audubon encyclopedia of North American birds. Knopf, New York, 1109 pp.

<sup>2</sup>Names in parentheses will be adopted in 1983.



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