

THE 60-SECOND LIMPKIN

The Pomacea Project, Inc.

*A primer on the Limpkin when you only
have a minute*

Limpkin (*Aramus guarauna*)

- A large, long-necked, long-legged, rail-like wading bird. It weighs about 0.9-1.3 kilograms (2-2.9 pounds) and has a wing-span of about 1 meter (3.3 feet).
- The limpkin's diet is primarily Florida apple snails (*Pomacea paludosa*), but also freshwater mussels and other snails.
- The male has a distinctive, loud and "mournful" call.
- Its range is correlated with that of the apple snail. Within the United States, the limpkin occurs in southern Georgia and throughout much of Florida.

Biology and Ecology

- Lifespan not reported, although one bird in Florida was known to be at least 12 years old.
- Resides in freshwater marshes, lake and pond shores, and riparian swamp forests (particularly along slow-moving springs and rivers).
- Nests are built in a variety of wetland sites/vegetation types, including sawgrass, bulrush, accumulated



Limpkin nest in sawgrass marsh



Limpkin foraging

floating vegetation (e.g., water hyacinth and water lettuce), and shrubs or stumps covered by vines.

- Number of eggs laid per clutch varies, but average reported as 5.5 eggs.
- Uses visual and tactile foraging methods. The tip of the bird's lower bill curves to the bird's right, which allows the bill to enter the apple snail shell and sever the muscle attaching the snail's flesh to the shell.

Threats and Concerns

- There has been no thorough assessment of the size of the population in Florida.
- Historically in Florida, the limpkin was affected by habitat loss. Even today activities that affect wetland hydrology may affect apple snail populations and other prey, and, therefore, the limpkin.

References

Bryan, D.C. 2002. Limpkin (*Aramus guarauna*), The Birds of North America Online (A. Poole, Ed.). Ithaca: Cornell Lab of Ornithology; Retrieved from the Birds of North America Online: <http://bna.birds.cornell.edu/bna/species/627>.

Snyder, N. and H. Snyder. 1969. A Comparative study of mollusc predation by limpkins, Everglades kites, and boat-tailed grackles. *The Living Bird* 8:177-223.

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