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White-tailed Ptarmigan *Lagopus leucura* © Rain Saulnier Macaulay Library eBird

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Families

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eBird Observations

 **79,998,549**
Macaulay Library media

 **2,261**
Authors

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All recently updated accounts

News and Webinars

AviList: A Unified Global Checklist of the World’s Birds is Now Available

The Cornell Lab | June 11, 2025

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Double-crested Cormorant

★
Overview


ID info


Life History


Maps


Sounds

 Listen

 ID Info



Double-crested Cormorant by Brian Sullivan / Macaulay Library



Cormorants

Double-crested Cormorant

Nannopterum auritum

ORDER: Suliformes

FAMILY: Phalacrocoracidae



Habitat
**Lakes and
Ponds**



Food
Fish



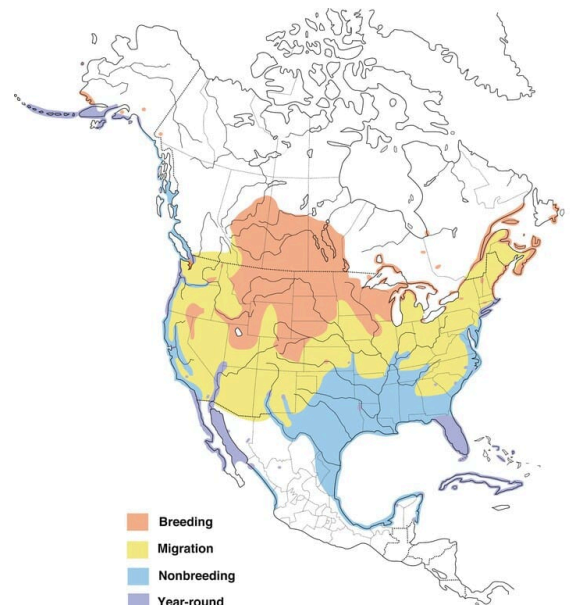
Nesting
Ground



Behavior
**Surface
Dive**



Conservation
**Low
Concern**



Basic Description

The gangly Double-crested Cormorant is a prehistoric-looking, matte-black fishing bird with yellow-orange facial skin. Though they look like a combination of a goose and a loon, they are relatives of frigatebirds and boobies and are a common sight around fresh and salt water across North America—perhaps attracting the most attention when they stand on docks, rocky islands, and channel markers, their wings spread out to dry. These solid, heavy-boned birds are experts at diving to catch small fish.

More ID Info

Cool Facts

- From a distance, Double-crested Cormorants are dark birds with snaky necks, but up-close they're quite colorful—with orange-yellow skin on their face and throat, striking aquamarine eyes that sparkle like jewels, and a mouth that is bright blue on the inside.
- The double crest of the Double-crested Cormorant is only visible on adults during breeding season. The crests are white in

Year-round
Migration

Breeding
Nonbreeding

Range map provided by [Birds of the World](#)

Explore Maps

Find This Bird

Look near lakes and coastlines for perched black waterbirds, smaller and with shorter legs than a heron, and a distinctive S-shaped crook in their neck. On the water they sit low, with the head and bill usually tilted slightly upward. You may also see them holding their wings spread-eagled and sunning themselves. Flocks of cormorants fly in irregularly shaped lines or sloppy V's. In flight, cormorants hold their head up, neck slightly bent, belly hanging low, and their wingbeats are slow and labored.

Other Names

Cormorán Orejudo (Spanish)

Cormoran à aigrettes (French)

cormorants from Alaska and black in other regions.

- Cormorants often stand in the sun with their wings spread out to dry. They have less preen oil than other birds, so their feathers can get soaked rather than shedding water like a duck's. Though this seems like a problem for a bird that spends its life in water, wet feathers probably make it easier for cormorants to hunt underwater with agility and speed.
-

- Double-crested Cormorant nests often are exposed to direct sun. Adults shade the chicks and also bring them water, pouring it from their mouths into those of the chicks.
-

- In breeding colonies where the nests are placed on the ground, young cormorants leave their nests and congregate into groups with other youngsters (creches). They return to their own nests to be fed.
-

- Accumulated fecal matter below nests can kill the nest trees. When this happens, the cormorants may move to a new area or they may simply shift to nesting on the ground.
-

- The Double-crested Cormorant makes a bulky nest of sticks and other materials. It frequently picks up junk, such as rope,

deflated balloons, fishnet, and plastic debris to incorporate into the nest. Parts of dead birds are commonly used too.

- Large pebbles are occasionally found in cormorant nests, and the cormorants treat them as eggs.
-
- The oldest known Double-crested Cormorant was at least 23 years, 8 months old. It was banded in Oregon in 1997 and spotted by a bird watcher in Washington in 2021.

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Neotropic Cormorant



Brandt's Cormorant



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Cormorants and Shags (Order: Suliformes, Family: Phalacrocoracidae)



Brandt's Cormorant



Red-faced Cormorant



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