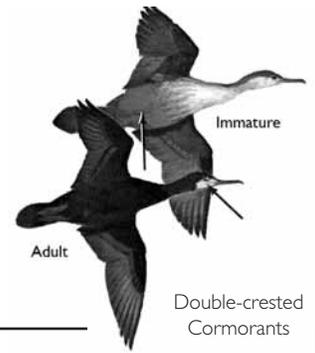




Double-crested Cormorant

Helpful hints when distinguishing the Double-crested Cormorant from its look-alike relatives



Double-crested Cormorants

The information and artwork provided in this handout is intended to aid you in the identification of two species of cormorants and the closely related Anhinga.

Texas is one of only two or three states in the U.S. that regularly hosts the following three look-alikes: Double-crested Cormorant, Neotropic (formerly *Olivaceous*) Cormorant, and Anhinga. Special attention must be made when trying to identify these dark water birds because they can look very similar. **The control of cormorants is regulated by both state and federal government and such control is only extended with a valid permit for the take of the Double-crested Cormorant.**

Cormorants migrate and overwinter in large numbers across the state of Texas. They can be found in both freshwater and marine habitats. The construction of inland reservoirs, lakes and ponds has increased the amount of open water and thus has encouraged the current population explosion in Double-crested Cormorants. Double-crested Cormorants tend to congregate in large flocks. While swimming, rafts of cormorants hold their bills above the horizontal which give them a unique posture on the water.



The Neotropic Cormorant and the Anhinga are related to the Double-crested Cormorant and share certain characteristics. Be sure to note the differences because **it is unlawful to shoot, harass, trap, harm or kill a Neotropic Cormorant or Anhinga.**



Starting sometime between late March and early April, Double-crested Cormorants start migrating in tremendous numbers north out of Texas. Only a small percentage of the overwintering population of this species stays in Texas year-round. As a result control efforts should be concentrated between October 1-April 1 to reduce the potential of incidental take of non-target species (neotropics and anhingas).

Most of the Neotropic Cormorants can be found as year-round residents along the entire Texas coast and in South Texas. Some neotropics, however, move far inland in Texas in spring and summer. Also in spring, anhingas return to Texas after spending the winter months in the tropics. This means that control measures after the first of April become very precarious so look for distinguishing features when identifying these birds.

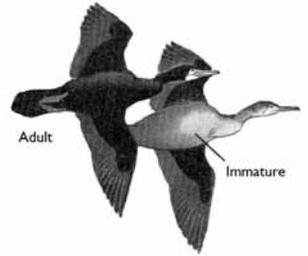
IDENTIFICATION TIPS

Double-crested cormorant

- The sexes in this species are identical and adults are uniformly dark with a slightly hooked bill.
 - Immature birds are much paler in the head, neck, and breast.
 - **Double crests (tufts of feathers) behind the eyes are only visible during the breeding season.**
 - This bird exhibits a characteristic orange or yellowish bare throat known as the gular area (pronounced "goo-lurr"). The gular area is the naked skin that surrounds the base of the bill.



Double-crested
Cormorant



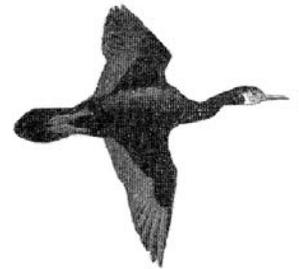
Double-crested Cormorants

Neotropic cormorant

- The neotropic is a bit smaller than the double-crested, but size is difficult to judge in the field unless the two are sitting side-by-side.
- Neotropics have slightly longer tails and shorter bills than Double-crested Cormorants.
- The sexes of the Neotropic Cormorants are identical and plumage is uniformly dark.
 - Immature birds are a shade paler than the adults.
 - Neotropics have a thin white border or "lipstick" to the base of the bill in the adults.
 - Also the orange gular area is much more reduced than in the double-crested.



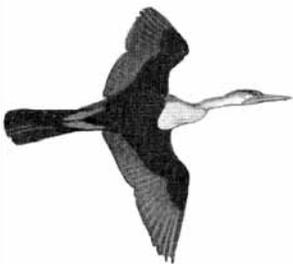
Neotropic Cormorant



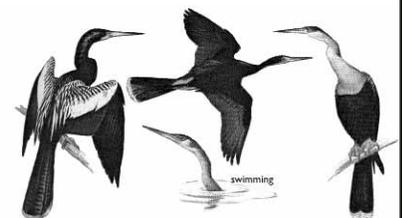
Neotropic Cormorant

Anhinga

- A.k.a.: American darter, black darter or snake bird.
- The sexes of anhingas are not identical but both have the whitish or silvery feathers in the wings.
- Males are uniformly dark while females have a dark body with a lighter head and neck.
- Anhingas have long thin necks, long pointed bills and have long fan-shaped tails.
- When in flight, this species soars and circles more than either species of cormorant.
- In migration, they can be seen using thermals in large numbers much like hawks.



Anhinga



Anhingas

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