

double-crested cormorant *Phalacrocorax auratus*

Kingdom: Animalia

Division/Phylum: Chordata

Class: Aves

Order: Suliformes

Family: Phalacrocoracidae

ILLINOIS STATUS common, native

FEATURES

An adult double-crested cormorant is 29 to 35 inches long and has black body feathers. Yellow-orange coloring is present on its throat. It has a long tail and neck. The tip of the bill is curved like a hook. Its legs and feet are black. Both sexes are similar in appearance.

BEHAVIORS

The double-crested cormorant migrates through Illinois. It is a summer and winter resident, too. The double-crested cormorant lives on lakes, rivers or swamps. This bird eats primarily amphibians, crayfish, fishes and mollusks (snails, mussels). It feeds by diving from the surface of the water to depths of five to 25 feet. It can stay under water up to 70 seconds. This bird prefers to feed in open water. Cormorants fly in a V-shaped formation like geese. They do not call during flight or fly during cloudy weather. The cormorant rests on driftwood within the water body. The bill points up when it swims. Nesting occurs in colonies over water during April through May. Nests are made of sticks and placed in dead trees. Three to five pale blue eggs are laid. The double-crested cormorant is a very aggressive bird and protects its territory around the nest. Young birds leave the nest after two to three weeks.

HABITATS

Aquatic Habitats

lakes, ponds and reservoirs; rivers and streams; Lake Michigan

Woodland Habitats

none

Prairie and Edge Habitats

none

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