

**ADDITIONAL NESTING RECORDS OF THE DOUBLE-CRESTED
CORMORANT IN THE DELTA REGION OF MISSISSIPPI**

Mary P. Stevens
Mississippi Museum of Natural Science
4128 Riverside Drive
Jackson, Mississippi 39202

Jerry L. Litton
LightScribe Photography
123 Madison
Brandon, Mississippi 39145

The only historical nesting record of Double-crested Cormorants (*Phalacrocorax auritus*) in Mississippi was documented by Ben B. Coffey, who located twelve nests with young in a tall bald cypress (*Taxodium distichum*) tree in Tunica County on May 18, 1952 (Coffey 1952). The second and third nesting colonies of Double-crested Cormorants were found in Lewis Swamp in Coahoma County and at Jones Lake in Warren County in 1998 (Reinhold et al. 1998).

We report here the fourth and fifth nesting colonies of Double-crested Cormorants in Mississippi. On 1 May 1999, in the Swan Lake heronry on Yazoo National Wildlife Refuge, Washington County, Jerry Litton found one Double-crested Cormorant standing in a nest in a bald cypress tree. On 23 May 1999, he located a cormorant nest with adults that appeared to be incubating in a bald cypress tree approximately 120 feet tall. Subsequent visits to the site were made on 30 May 1999 and 6 June 1999 by Jerry Litton and Mary Stevens which revealed a total of five nests, two of which had nestlings. Cormorant nests were built on

horizontal limbs 80 to 100 feet above the water. Nests were constructed of bald cypress limbs and twigs with green leaves, and were more round and thicker than the more flattened nests of Great Egret (*Casmerodius albus*) which were also nesting in the same trees. On 4 July 1999, we observed young cormorants with pinfeathers begging for food and being fed by adults. These individuals had unfeathered whitish throat pouches which are characteristic of young Double-crested Cormorants (Farrand 1983; Johnsgard 1993). On 1 April 2000, Jerry Litton and Mary Stevens found three pairs of Double-crested Cormorants in the Swan Lake heronry beginning to nest in the same group of bald cypress trees that were used the previous year. Adults were sitting in the nests and one was observed carrying nesting material. Two pairs had built nests in one bald cypress tree approximately 120 feet tall. The third nest was in a similar bald cypress nearby. One of the cormorants had nuptial plumage. Great Egrets and Anhinga (*Anhinga anhinga*) were the only nesting associates. On 9 April 2000, we visited the nest site and found nine adult cormorants, eight of which appeared to be paired. All three nests located on our previous visit were attended by two adults each, and at two nests, adults appeared to be incubating. A survey was conducted again on 29 April 2000, and we located five nests in three trees. On 14 May 2000, we observed seven nests in five trees. Two trees had two nests each and the remaining three trees had one nest. On 28 May 2000, we visited the site and three of the seven nests had nestlings. The chicks were covered with thick, black, furry down. Their upper beaks were black and the unfeathered throat pouch was whitish. The three nests had four, three and one young, respectively. Photographs were taken on all visits to the site and included adults standing near or sitting on nests, young

begging for food, adults feeding nestlings, and a nestling with pinfeathers exercising its wings. These photographs have been deposited in the Mississippi Ornithological Society Records Committee File at the Mississippi Museum of Natural Science.

The Swan Lake heronry is a large bald cypress-buttonbush (*Cephalanthus occidentalis*) swamp located in the northern section of the Refuge. The lake is an oxbow of the Mississippi River lying five miles from the existing river channel (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service 1969). Bald cypress trees, ranging in height from 10 to 120 feet, and buttonbushes provide nesting sites for colonial waterbirds. From 1995 to 2000, the Swan Lake heronry was censused annually and averaged 1,664 nesting pairs of eight species of wading birds (Mississippi Colonial Waterbird Census Data, Mississippi Museum of Natural Science).

The sixth nesting colony for Double-crested Cormorant in Mississippi was found on 12 June 2000 by David Linden and W.F. Stevens. The nests were located in a bald cypress-water tupelo (*Nyssa aquatica*)-buttonbush swamp adjacent to privately owned catfish ponds off White's Lane, west of Hwy 49 W, in Yazoo County. On 16 June 2000, David Linden, Jerry Litton, and Mary Stevens canoed this swamp. There were four cormorant nests, three in bald cypress trees and one in a water tupelo. The cormorants were standing near or sitting on nests. This swamp also contained a large waterbird colony which included approximately 2,500 White Ibis (*Eudocimus albus*).

On 1 July 2000, Jerry Litton and Mary Stevens canoed into Jones Lake, the site of the third Mississippi cormorant nesting colony (Reinhold et al. 1998), and found fifteen cormorant nests in bald cypress trees approximately 80 feet tall. Several of the nests had young birds which were in the

branching stage. Photographs were taken of three young showing the black upper beak and yellowish to whitish lower mandible and unfeathered throat. Jones Lake also had large numbers of nesting Anhingas, Great Blue Herons (*Ardea herodias*), and Great Egrets.

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