

**FIRST RECORD OF NEOTROPIC CORMORANT  
IN THE MISSISSIPPI DELTA**

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On 28 February 2003, while birding in the Mississippi Delta in northwest Humphreys County, we spotted an adult Neotropic Cormorant (*Phalacrocorax brasilianus*) flying with a small flock of Double-crested Cormorants (*Phalacrocorax auritus*). We were just north of Hwy. 12 and south of Cold Lake, which lies east of the Sunflower River. This area of Humphreys County, like many Delta counties, is rich in aqua farming. These catfish complexes attract hundreds if not thousands of wintering cormorants to feed off their bounty.

In flight the identification of the Neotropic Cormorant was straightforward as it was 25-30 % smaller than the Double-crested Cormorant. The smaller size and the long tail were very obvious. We also noted the smaller head and straighter neck in direct comparison to the larger-headed and more crooked-neck appearance of the larger Double-crested Cormorants.

We were en route to Leroy Percy State Park where the Mississippi Ornithological Society was holding a winter meeting during the weekend of 28 February - 2 March. Many MOS members took the opportunity over the next few days to find and view this rare cormorant perched in the cypress trees at Cold Lake. Among the lucky to find the cormorant perched amid several hundred Double-crested Cormorants were members of the Mississippi Ornithological Society Bird Records Committee. These members were Stephen Dinsmore, Marvin Davis and Terry Schiefer, present MOSBRC chair.

This represents only the third published sighting for the state and the first record away from the confines of the Mississippi

Gulf Coast. The first state record was a juvenile seen on 4 August 1979 at Bellefontaine beach in Jackson County (Toups and Hodges 1980, Purrington 1980, Toups and Jackson 1987, Turcotte and Watts 1999, Peterson 2004). The second record, also a juvenile seen at the same locale, was on 20 December 1980. (Toups and Jackson 1987, Hamilton 1981, Toups 1981, Jackson 1981, Turcotte and Watts 1999, Peterson 2004). Another possible sighting by Ned Boyajian, (pers. comm.), on 17 July 1990, included these details: "*I observed an imm bird at Waveland Lagoon, Hancock Co. - in direct comparison with Double-crested. I am satisfied it was this species. However, the I.D. was based solely on size and coloration, the bird's position precluding positive determination of its shape, or pouch configuration. By the time I returned with a 'scope, the bird was gone.*"

The Neotropic Cormorant nests in southern North America from southern New Mexico, coastal Texas, and southwestern Louisiana south through Central America and virtually all of South America to Cape Horn; it also nests locally in the West Indies. (Johnsgard 1993). Formerly known as the Olivaceous Cormorant (*Phalacrocorax olivaceus*) this species underwent a name change to its present name in 1991 (AOU 1991).

There has been a slow northeastward expansion of this species from Texas and southwest Louisiana. In Louisiana a new breeding colony exists east of Lafayette and there is a slow but steady increase of detection in Baton Rouge and New Orleans areas (Van Remsen, pers. comm.).

Since their first record in December 1995, Arkansas has had an additional nine published records through July 2002 (Arkansas Audubon Society 2004). All have been single individuals except the first and only nesting record found in southwestern Arkansas, where over half the state's records have occurred.

Further evidence of a northeastward flavor of range expansion is seen in five published records from Tennessee ranging from June 1993 to September 1998 (Greene 1997, Knight 1997, 1999). All of these records are of individual birds seen in the counties bordering the Mississippi River.

Alabama is on the edge of this expansion with a single record dating back to 23 October 1988 in Baldwin County (Jackson 1989, 1990).

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