

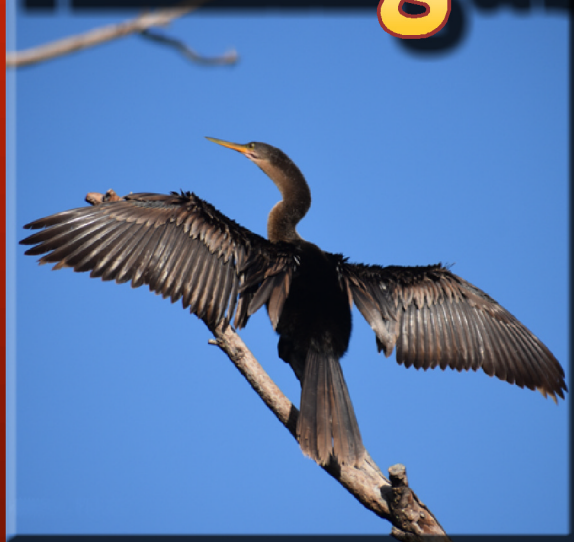
SULIFORMES

(Waterbirds)

Cormorants

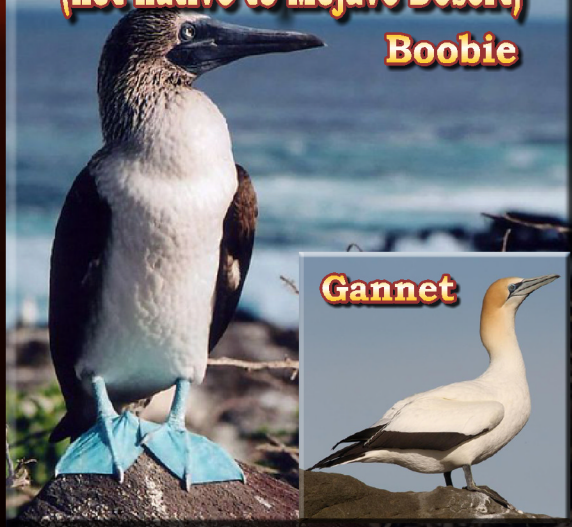


Anhingas



Boobies, Gannets

(not native to Mojave Desert)



Frigatebirds

(not native to Mojave Desert)



Family PHALACROCORACIDAE (Cormorants)

Double-Crested Cormorant (*Phalacrocorax auritus*)



Desert Pines GC; LV, NV

Measurements:

Length: 33" Wing Span: 52"

Average Weight: 4 lbs

Distinguishing field characteristics:

large size; strongly hooked gray-and-yellow bill; long neck; yellow to orange gular and loreal skin; **adult**: black plumage; **juvenile**: brown plumage with paler neck and breast; no sexual dimorphism

Notes:

very common; found in wetland areas (coasts, lakes, ponds, rivers, etc.) throughout NA below Arctic regions, extending into Mexico and the Bahamas; five recognized subspecies; named for white ear tufts (often inconspicuous) presented in breeding season; dives from surface for fish, amphibians, crustaceans, etc.; feathers not waterproof, thus spreads its wings to dry out (similar to anhingas)

Mojave presence: migration; some year-round residents



Floyd Lamb SP; LV, NV

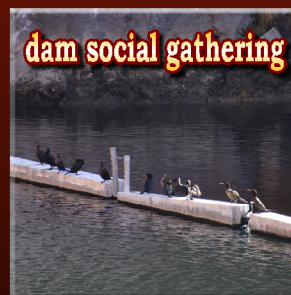


Pompano Beach, Florida



Lorenzi Park

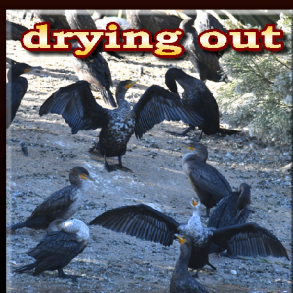
Las Vegas, Nevada



Hoover Dam



Lake Mead NRA



Floyd Lamb SP

Las Vegas, Nevada



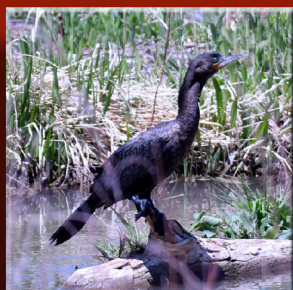
Photo: Dennis Morrison

Family PHALACROCORACIDAE (Cormorants)

Neotropic Cormorant (*Phalacrocorax brasilianus*)



Bosque del Apache NWR; NM



Bosque del Apache NWR; NM

Measurements:

Length: 25" Wing Span: 40"

Average Weight: 3.5 lbs

Distinguishing field characteristics:

medium-large size; black overall with olive sheen on wings; long neck; strongly hooked gray bill; orange gular **outlined in white**; dark lores; (**adult**) black plumage; (**juvenile**) brown plumage; no sexual dimorphism

Notes:

common; found in wetland areas throughout SA, north to parts of MEX/AZ/NM, coastal TX, and Caribbean (rare farther north); dives for fish, amphibians, insects, etc., usually from surface (occasionally when flying a couple feet above); feathers not waterproof, thus spreads its wings to dry out (similar to double-crested and anhingas)

Mojave presence: rare

Comments

This cormorant species is common in its range, but visitors to the Mojave are quite rare. In such cases, it can be distinguished from its local cousin, the **Double-Crested Cormorant**, by the white outline around the pointy, orange gular (lacking in the double crested). Specimens are occasionally noted in the Las Vegas area at the **Henderson Bird Viewing Preserve** and **Floyd Lamb State Park**.



Bosque del Apache NWR; NM



Bosque del Apache NWR; NM

Neotropic



Quick Comparison

smaller gular; outlined in white
smaller size
thin white tufts **side of head**
(on breeding adults)
longer tail
shorter, gray bill

larger gular; no outline
larger size
thick white tufts **above eyes**
(on breeding adults)
shorter tail
longer, gray and yellow bill

Double-Crested



Family ANHINGIDAE (Anhingas)

Anhinga (*Anhinga anhinga leucogaster*)

Measurements:

Length: 35" Wing Span: 44"

Average Weight: 2.5 lbs

Distinguishing field characteristics:

large size; long, yellow, spear-like bill; yellow-orange gular skin; (m) glossy black plumage; white streaking on upper wings; tail long, rounded, white tip; (f) similar to male, but browner with paler head, neck, chest; lacks white tip on tail feathers

Notes:

common; found throughout tropical areas from coastal NA to SA; vagrant to w US, and rare north as far as Great Lakes; dives primarily for fish, but also takes crustaceans, large insects, etc.; feathers not waterproof, thus stands and spreads its wings to dry out after swimming (similar to cormorants); two subspecies

Mojave presence: very rare vagrant

Comments

The Anhinga gets its "Snakebird" nickname from its swimming posture, its body completely submerged with just its snake-like long neck protruding from the water. They can be confused with cormorants, similar in both size and appearance, but their swimminig profile is distinctive, and they have straight bills rather than hooked.

These birds were all photographed in Florida where they are quite common. While anhingas have reportedly been spotted at wildlife refuges in the US southwest, I have yet to see one myself here, and suspect they were actually cormorants subject to mistaken identity. Nevertheless, the possibility is a good enough reason to include them in this digest.



Lake Okeechobee; Florida



Lake Okeechobee; Florida



Pompano Beach, Florida



Pompano Beach, Florida

