

# First Record of Neotropic Cormorant (*Phalacrocorax brasilianus*) in North Carolina

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Steve Shultz

2404 Bristers Spring Way, Apex, NC 27523

On 9 April 2020, Jelmer Poelstra located a Neotropic Cormorant (*Phalacrocorax brasilianus*) in alternate plumage while scoping the breakwater at Crosswinds Marina on Jordan Lake in Chatham County, NC. The bird was with multiple Double-crested Cormorants (*P. auritus*), which highlighted the size difference between the two species, as well as Neotropic Cormorant's longer tail, smaller bill, and shape and coloration of the feathering at the base of the bill. The bird displayed a white, V-shaped, feathery plume on each side of the head. The cormorant was observed perched, swimming, diving, and, briefly, in flight.

News of the birds' presence quickly spread throughout the birding community, and perhaps due to location near the major metropolitan area of Raleigh-Durham-Chapel Hill, scores of observers were able to view the cormorant on 9 and 10 April (Southern). This represents a first record of the species in the Carolinas, and with acceptance of photos by the NC Bird Records Committee, Neotropical Cormorant is added to the state's Definitive List of accepted species.

Neotropic Cormorant is a wide-ranging species breeding along lakes, rivers, and coastlines from the southern tip of South America through the southern United States (Texas BBA). Birds wandering from established nesting areas have been identified as far north as Whitefish Point, MI (eBird).

Along the mid-Atlantic region from New York south, multiple reports of Neotropic Cormorant exist for New York, New Jersey, Maryland, Virginia, and Florida. Delaware, Georgia, and now North Carolina, have one report each. Other eastern states also show a pattern of reports, with two from Alabama and multiple records each from Tennessee, Kentucky, Indiana, and Ohio. Pennsylvania and West Virginia join South Carolina as states without reports. (eBird)

The reason behind the lack of records in the Carolinas prior to the Jordan Lake bird is unknown. Perhaps some Neotropic Cormorants are overlooked due to similarity with Double-crested Cormorant, but the presence of records in states surrounding the Carolinas suggests the species was "overdue" in both Carolinas. And in fact Nate Swick presented a keynote speech at a Carolina Bird Club seasonal meeting in Nags Head in 2019 on "*The Next 10: Predicting First Records in NC & SC*", with Neotropic Cormorant at the top of the list (pers comm.)

## Literature Cited

eBird <https://ebird.org/map/neocor> accessed 12/28/20

Southern, J. 2019. Briefs for the Files. Chat 84:90-102

Texas BBA <https://txtbba.tamu.edu/species-accounts/neotropical-cormorant> accessed 12/28/20



*Neotropic Cormorant (center, right) with Double-crested Cormorants  
9 Apr 2020, Chatham Co. NC. Photo by David Fischer.*



*Neotropic Cormorant (center) showing white post-ocular patch and  
V-shaped gape, 9 Apr 2020, Chatham Co. NC. Photo by Stacy Barbour.*