

Neotropic Cormorant

4 May 1996

Little River R.A., Decatur Co., IA

*Stephen J. Dinsmore

IBL 66:100, 67:81; Dinsmore 1997

Record Number: 96-10

Classification: A-P

DOCUMENTATION

Stephen J. Dinsmore, 4024 Arkansas Dr., Ames 40014 [4/6/97]

REFERENCES

Field Reports: IBL 66:100

Records Committee: IBL 81

Dinsmore, S. J. 1997. First record of a Neotropic Cormorant for Iowa. IBL 67:131-132.

VOTE: 7 A-D

A-D, An expected vagrant is finally found.

A-D, The size, tail length, and white lower border to the throat patch are convincing.

A-D, Diagnostic features recorded at an acceptable distance.

REVOTE: 5 A-P, 2 A-D

A-D, The photographs are suggestive of Neotropic Cormorant but not diagnostic.

A-P, Although the picture is basically a silhouette it does show a smaller size and proportionally longer tail than the Double-crested Cormorant pictured. It certainly supports the observer written description.

A-P, The very long, relatively thin, rounded tail, thin body, differentiate from D. D, Cormorant.

A-D, Size difference and longer tail evident in photos.

A-P, The size difference and relatively long tail compared to Double-crested Cormorant could be illusions created by the bird's posture and camera distance, but I judge them to be real.

A-D, I do not think the photos are diagnostic of Neotropic Cormorant. I will wait for other comments to see if there is something that I am missing in the photo.

A-P, Photos clearly show proportions of Neotropic Cormorant; note tail length relative to body and head in birds posed similarly (most obvious in DC Cormorant at extreme top of photo which is cut off).

PHOTO E-8 4327
LIGHTHOUSE SESSIONS
ROCHESTER, NY



Neotropic Cormorant P-0505
Little River R.A., Decatur Co.
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Neotropic Cormorant P-0505
Little River R.A., Decatur Co.
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< >004 19-01 11ANN-19AU 563

After submission of this report to the Iowa Records Committee, Bangma had opportunity to directly compare Ring-billed and California gulls. Not only did this bear out the tarsus/culmen length mentioned above, but he noted that the wing projection overlapped as well. Also, in the course of feeding a mixed group of gulls, he noted that the ring-bills in that group dragged their wings on the pavement more frequently than the Californias. While this may only apply to some feeding behavior, it certainly does bring the conventional wisdom into question.

One of the most striking things about the bird was the nearly white median wing coverts. We initially thought the bird had molted these feathers, displaying the white bases of underlying feathers. Under closer examination we felt that the feathers were in fact present, but were extremely faded. Later that day, we examined photographs in Grant (1982) and found a similar appearance in photos 476 and 479. In fact, we were struck by the overall similarity of #479 to our bird, allowing for the progression of molt.

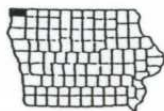
We thank the staff of the American Museum of Natural History, and in particular Helen Hays and Joe DiCostanzo, for their help in allowing access to the gull collection.

717 Anderson Ave., #8N, Cliffside Park, NJ 07010 and 532 120th Ave., Norwalk, IA 50211

CHESTNUT-COLLARED LONGSPUR IN LYON COUNTY

DENNIS HENRICKSON

Chestnut-collared Longspurs nest in southeastern South Dakota and extreme western Minnesota. They can be expected in western Iowa during migration. When an April snow brought large flocks of Lapland Longspurs to the Gruver area, I thought it time to check out northwestern Iowa for Chestnut-collared Longspurs.



Early on the morning of 11 April 1997, I set out, getting to Larchwood at 8:45 a.m. Taking highway K16 out of town, I encountered several large flocks of longspurs but could find no Chestnut-collared Longspurs among them. Turning around at the Minnesota border, I back tracked two miles and turned west on a gravel road. I had gone about three miles when it happened. A lone bird was on the side of the road about 40 feet ahead of me. I stopped and with my 7 x 40 binoculars, viewed the bird through the front windshield. Binoculars can spook birds and, after a few seconds, the bird flew away. It was a male in breeding plumage. I did get a good look at the ventral part of the bird as it was facing me. The large black ventral area was framed in white, and the throat appeared light. As it flew, the black triangle in the tail pattern was obvious. I tried for 15 to 20 minutes to relocate the bird without success. Then I wrote down my observations.

I looked for more Chestnut-collared Longspurs for the next several hours, but I could find only Lapland Longspurs and Horned Larks.

1371 450th Avenue, Estherville, IA 51334

BLACK-HEADED GULL AT BIG CREEK LAKE

STEPHEN J. DINSMORE



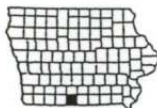
On 21 November 1994, I saw an adult Black-headed Gull at Big Creek Lake in Polk County. I watched the bird from 7:32-9:30 a.m. and again from 4:07-4:50 p.m. The bird had been reported earlier on 17 November by Ray Cummins. The bird was feeding with about 100 Bonaparte's Gulls opposite the beach area of the lake. It was clearly larger and longer-winged than the Bonaparte's. The most striking feature was the extensive dark color on the underside of the wing. Specifically, the undersides of the outer two primaries were white, with the undersides of the remaining flight feathers blackish, gradually becoming dark gray in the inner secondaries. Another feature noted was the bright red bill, which was slightly longer and thicker than that of a Bonaparte's. The legs were also bright red. The head, underparts, and tail were white except for a small black spot just behind each eye. The upperwing pattern was similar to that of a Bonaparte's, except that the gray color was much paler. This was especially evident when the bird was perched with Bonaparte's Gulls. This individual did not seem quite as large relative to Bonaparte's as other Black-headed Gulls I have seen, but it was still obviously larger. Based on the wing and head patterns, I aged the bird as an adult in basic plumage.

I observed the bird again on 23 November, but not thereafter. The number of Bonaparte's Gulls dropped dramatically after the 23rd, and the Black-headed Gull presumably departed with them. This represents the fourth record of a Black-headed Gull in Iowa. Other records were a basic adult on 2, 4 November 1989 at Saylorville Reservoir, Polk County (S. Dinsmore, *Iowa Bird Life* 63:53-54, 1993), an alternate adult on 2 August 1994 at Spirit Lake, Dickinson County (S. Dinsmore, *Iowa Bird Life* 66:27-29, 1996), and an alternate adult and a juvenile from 2-12 August 1994 at the Kettleton Waterfowl Production Area, Dickinson County (S. Dinsmore, *Iowa Bird Life* 66:27-29, 1996).

612 112 W. Magnolia, Fort Collins, CO 80521

FIRST RECORD OF A NEOTROPIC CORMORANT FOR IOWA

STEPHEN J. DINSMORE



On 4 May 1996, I arrived at the Little River Recreation Area in Decatur County. At 2:25 p.m., I noticed a flock of about 75 cormorants perched in trees roughly 500 meters distant. I quickly examined each bird, knowing there was a possibility of finding a Neotropic Cormorant. At the great distance, none of the birds really stood out, but I kept coming back to one bird that seemed a bit smaller, slimmer, and longer-tailed. At 2:45 p.m., at a distance of about 200 meters, the bird in question was easily identified as an adult Neotropic Cormorant. The bird was only slightly shorter than a Double-crested, but was proportioned much differently. The tail was about 50% longer, and the bird seemed slimmer-necked and smaller-headed. The bill was slightly shorter, thinner, and darker than that of a Double-crested. The throat patch was also smaller and duller, not bright orange like all nearby Double-crested Cormorants. The body, wings, and tail were a glossy brown/black color, similar to those of a Double-crested. The lower portion of the

throat patch was bordered by a thin white line. There was no "V" of white in the malar area as depicted in many field guides. There was also a faint white line above and behind the eye, reminiscent of an auricular patch. I also noticed that the rectrices appeared heavily worn; the tips were frayed and at least one was broken off near the tip. In flight, it was noticeably smaller than a Double-crested Cormorant and flew with more rapid wingbeats. On the water, the bird was easily picked out among the Double-crested Cormorants by the smaller body and shorter neck. Based on the incomplete border to the throat patch and worn rectrices, I concluded the bird was an adult that had nearly completed the molt to alternate plumage.



Fig. 1. Neotropic Cormorant at Little River Rec. A., Decatur County, 4 May 1996. Photo by Stephen J. Dinsmore

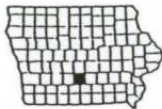
This represents the first record of a Neotropic Cormorant in Iowa. The increased number of records in states surrounding Iowa indicated this species would eventually occur in Iowa. The spring of 1996 saw an influx of Neotropic Cormorants to the Upper Midwest in April and May with records from Nebraska (*Nebraska Bird Review* 64:44, 1996), Missouri (*Field Notes* 50:286, 1996), and Illinois (*Field Notes* 50:286, 1996).

612 112 W. Magnolia, Fort Collins, CO 80521

A RECORD LATE CAPE MAY WARBLER IN IOWA

JIM SINCLAIR

On 14 November, 1997 as I sat at my desk in our kitchen area, a small warbler landed on one of our suet feeders, which hang in front of our kitchen windows. My immediate assumption was a somewhat late, but certainly not totally unexpected, Yellow-rumped Warbler. I approached the window and was able to observe the bird within three feet, for approximately two minutes, at which time the bird flew into some nearby evergreens. By this time I was not at all sure of what I had just seen. As I stood gazing out the window, mentally cataloging field marks, the bird returned for another brief feeding stint and then departed again.



This small warbler was basically gray-green above with faint streaking on the back and a dirty cream color with medium streaking on the breast and flanks. The head was the same gray-green with a white throat, a faint supercilium, and a small, slightly decurved bill. The pale hint of a neck collar was noticeable at close range. The median primary coverts were edged with white forming a narrow wing bar. The rump, the only dash of color on the whole bird, was a greenish-yellow which, because of the general dullness of the bird, probably appeared brighter than it really was. After the second opportunity to observe the bird, I was convinced that I was looking at a female Cape May Warbler, probably a first-year bird. A quick glance at the National Geographic Society field guide confirmed the identification.

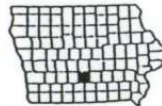
The Cape May Warbler is a long-distance migrant that winters in the West Indies. Most Cape May's have departed Iowa by the end of September with an occasional October straggler and two previous November records. This bird was present from 14 November through 18 December, the first winter record of the species in Iowa. Its frequency of occurrence at our suet feeders corresponded directly with the severity of the weather. When the weather was warm and sunny, the warbler visited us little or not at all. Twice during periods of benign weather I saw it foraging in evergreens in our neighborhood. When the weather was more inclement, the bird was a frequent visitor to the commercial suet cakes, sometimes feeding and then roosting on the top of the feeder. I last saw the warbler late in the afternoon of 17 December, and my son, Taylor, saw the bird briefly on the morning of the 18th. On the 18th a massive cold front, bringing with it record low temperatures, swept into Iowa and presumably terminated this Cape May Warbler's experiment in overwintering in Iowa.

810 North B Street, Indianola, IA 50125

HOARY REDPOLL IN WARREN COUNTY

ANN JOHNSON

The morning of 3 February 1996 was bright and sunny but bitterly cold. At approximately 7:30 a.m. I looked at my niger feeder 20 feet from the window and saw a Common Redpoll. It was soon joined by another redpoll which was much paler in comparison. The second bird was ultimately identified as a Hoary Redpoll.



I observed the bird, and two Common Redpolls, throughout the weekend and took numerous photographs. A number of other observers also saw the bird that day through 12 February.

This was a very pale bird in comparison to the browner Common Redpolls. The mantle background was light buff on the scapulars and white on the back with much gray-brown streaking extending up the neck to meet the red cap. The lower scapulars were whitish, as were the edges of the secondaries and tertiaries, contrasting with the brownish-gray cast to the mantle. The greater coverts had a fairly substantial white edge. The breast and belly were white with some flank streaking which extended perhaps two-thirds of the way to the tail. Although the streaking was not pencil thin, it was not as bold as on the Commons. The rump was white but the uppertail coverts were streaked.

The face was buffy with a very noticeable buffy-gray auricular patch. The bird had a small patch of black at the base of the lower mandible but the rest of the throat was buffy. The bill was bright yellow and small in comparison to the Commons and to goldfinches. At the base of the upper mandible was a small black spot, and the forehead was white up to the red cap on the crown. This cap was fairly small and extended back only to a point about even with the eye. A white superciliary separated the dark buffy cheek from the red cap. A black line ran through the eye.

Much of the time the bird fed on the back side of the feeder in a position where I could clearly see the underparts. The undertail coverts were immaculately white with the exception of a gray center towards the end of the two longest covert feathers. This position also helped verify the shortness of the flank streaking.

Often, all three birds were on the feeder concurrently which allowed for a number of comparisons. While the streaking on the back of this bird made it look somewhat

DOCUMENTATION FORM

Species: Neotropic Cormorant
Number: 1 adult
Location: Little River Rec. Area
Habitat: large reservoir with numerous dead snags
Date: 4 May 1996
Time: 2:25-3:50 p.m.
Observer: Stephen J. Dinsmore 4024 Arkansas Dr. Ames, IA 50014
Others who saw bird: none

Description of bird(s): I arrived at the area and saw about 75 cormorants perched in distant trees. I then examined each bird, knowing there was a possibility of finding a Neotropic Cormorant. At the great distance, none of the birds really stood out, but I kept coming back to one bird that seemed smaller, slimmer, and longer-tailed. I finally decided I should get closer to the bird and examine it more carefully. At a distance of about 200m, the bird was easily identified as an adult Neotropic Cormorant. The bird was only slightly shorter than a Double-crested, but was proportioned much differently. The tail was about 50% longer, and the bird seemed slimmer-necked and smaller-headed. The bill was slightly shorter, thinner, and darker than that of a Double-crested. The throat patch was also smaller and duller (not bright orange as on all nearby Double-crested's). The body, wings, and tail were a brown/glossy black color, also similar to those of a Double-crested. The lower portion of the throat patch was bordered by a thin white line. There was no "V" of white in the malar area as depicted in the NGS guide. There was also a faint white line above and behind the eye, reminiscent of an auricular patch. The legs and feet were dark. I also noticed that the rectrices appeared heavily worn: the tips were frayed and at least one was broken off near the tip. I saw the bird twice in flight. Both times, it was noticeably smaller than a Double-crested and flew with more rapid wingbeats. On the water, the bird was easily picked out among the Double-crested's by the smaller body and shorter neck (by about one third). Based on the incomplete border to the throat patch and worn rectrices, I tentatively concluded the bird was an adult that had nearly completed the molt to alternate plumage.

Similar species and how eliminated: My only concern was to adequately eliminate Double-crested Cormorant, many of which were available for direct comparisons. The size, tail length, and throat patch pattern all eliminate this species.

Viewing conditions and equipment: Viewing conditions were very good with overcast skies. Estimated viewing distance was >500m initially, but I later approached to within 100m. I used 10x42 binoculars and a 20-60x spotting scope.

Previous experience with species: I have seen hundreds in SW Louisiana. I am also very familiar with Double-crested Cormorant.

References consulted: NGS Field Guide to the Birds of North America

How long before field notes made: written during observation
How long before this form completed: completed 6 May 1996