



Red-breasted Nuthatches feed young at Illinois Beach State Park, Lake County, July 1992. Drawing by David Athans.

## Neotropic Cormorant at Crabtree and Palatine Marsh

The 1992 Cook County big year contest, sponsored by the Chicago Ornithological Society, provided many birders with a good excuse to explore areas they would otherwise ignore. For that reason, Chris Philip and I spent considerable time in northwestern Cook County which lead to an interesting sighting.

On 28 June 1992 we were searching for Western Meadowlarks and other grassland birds. At about 7:30 a.m., our wanderings brought us near Palatine marsh on Palatine Rd. approximately 1/2 mile east of the Crabtree Nature Center entrance in Cook County. About 15 Double-crested Cormorants (*Phalacrocorax auritus*) were sitting in the trees on the south side of the marsh. One smaller cormorant immediately caught my attention. We got a telescope to take a closer look.

The cormorants sat obligingly, spreading their wings in the bright morning sunshine, while we carefully studied the smaller bird. Its short thin bill, small head, and long tail suggested it was a Neotropic Cormorant, formerly Olivaceous Cormorant (*Phalacrocorax brasilianus*). Glare prevented us from seeing details. We moved down the road a bit where we were treated with a spectacular view of the bird, still perched in the tree. We saw that the gular pouch was small, acutely pointed to the rear, and surrounded by a thin white line. The scapular and back feathers were pointed. These features safely distinguish the Neotropic Cormorant from the Double-crested Cormorant.

After about 15 minutes, the cormorant flew toward Crabtree Lake. We and sev-

Meadowlark