

A New Double-crested Cormorant Nesting Colony in Cook County

Chicago, it is said, has two seasons - winter and road construction. This notion hit home on 19 May 1994, when extensive road work forced me to take an alternate route home through the suburb of Riverdale in Cook County. While passing the flooded abandoned gravel quarry at the intersection of 138th and Halsted Streets, I saw a huge assemblage of large, blackish birds in the water and trees along the edge of the quarry. After parking the car and viewing the quarry from a better vantage point, I counted 663 Double-crested Cormorants (*Phalacrocorax auritus*) with 55 active nests. This sighting constitutes the first documented nesting of this species at Riverdale and a new colony for Cook County and Illinois.

When I revisited the colony 28 May, the number of active nests had increased to 71. By 30 May, many of the

cormorant was added to the state's endangered species list (Bohlen 1989, *The Birds of Illinois*). Following the ban of DDT in 1972, numbers began to slowly increase. By 1993, at least five active nesting colonies were documented in the state (several with more than 100 nests) and cormorant numbers were again on the upswing (Kleen 1994).

Editor's Note: Double-crested Cormorant, which has been on the Illinois endangered species list since 1993, was delisted to threatened in 1994 by the Illinois Endangered Species Protection Board.

LITERATURE CITED

Bohlen, H.D. 1978. An Annotated Checklist of the Birds of Illinois. Popular Science Series 9:16. Illinois State Museum, Springfield, IL.

Kleen, V.M. 1994. Field Notes: 1993 Breeding Season. Meadowlark: A Journal of Illinois Birds 3:27.

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nests, which were placed in trees along the shore, contained juvenile cormorants. Unfortunately, the colony appears to have been short-lived, as has been the case with other large wetland birds, for example Great Blue Herons and Great Egrets, which have established small colonies at the Riverdale quarry in recent years. For unknown reasons, by 5 June all nests were abandoned and no signs indicated that any young had successfully fledged.

The Double-crested Cormorant provides an excellent example of the dramatic fluctuations that can occur in avian populations due to human activities. Early in the century, double-crested were widespread in Illinois, with nesting colonies at several locations. By the 1950s, numbers began to decline (Bohlen 1978) due to eggshell thinning caused by indiscriminate use of organochlorine pesticides. By 1960, only one active colony remained, consisting of seven breeding pairs at Thomson, Carroll County, Illinois, and the

Nesting Common Snipe near Goose Lake Prairie

After a hectic spring season, John McKee and I decided to make a leisurely birding trip to Goose Lake Prairie State Natural Area in northeast Grundy County hoping to list our year's Henslow's Sparrow. On 21 May 1994, under a clear blue sky, we headed east. It was to be our lucky day. Six territorial Henslow's gave us very good looks. Sedge Wrens were everywhere. We drove on to our next destination, a birding area northeast of and adjacent to Goose Lake Prairie. Stopping at the corner of Lock and Collin Roads, we listed our year's Willow Flycatcher. Hearing a Bell's Vireo, also a year bird, and hoping to get a look at it, we stepped off the roadway into the ditch on the east side of Lock Road.

Much to our surprise, a Common Snipe (*Gallinago gallinago*) burst from under our feet and began a distraction display similar to that given by a Killdeer when it has a nest nearby. We stopped in our tracks, afraid of stepping on a concealed nest. Studying the grassy area around us, we spotted two downy young snipe just inches from our feet.