

Red-tail Hawks and Cormorants -What do they have in common?

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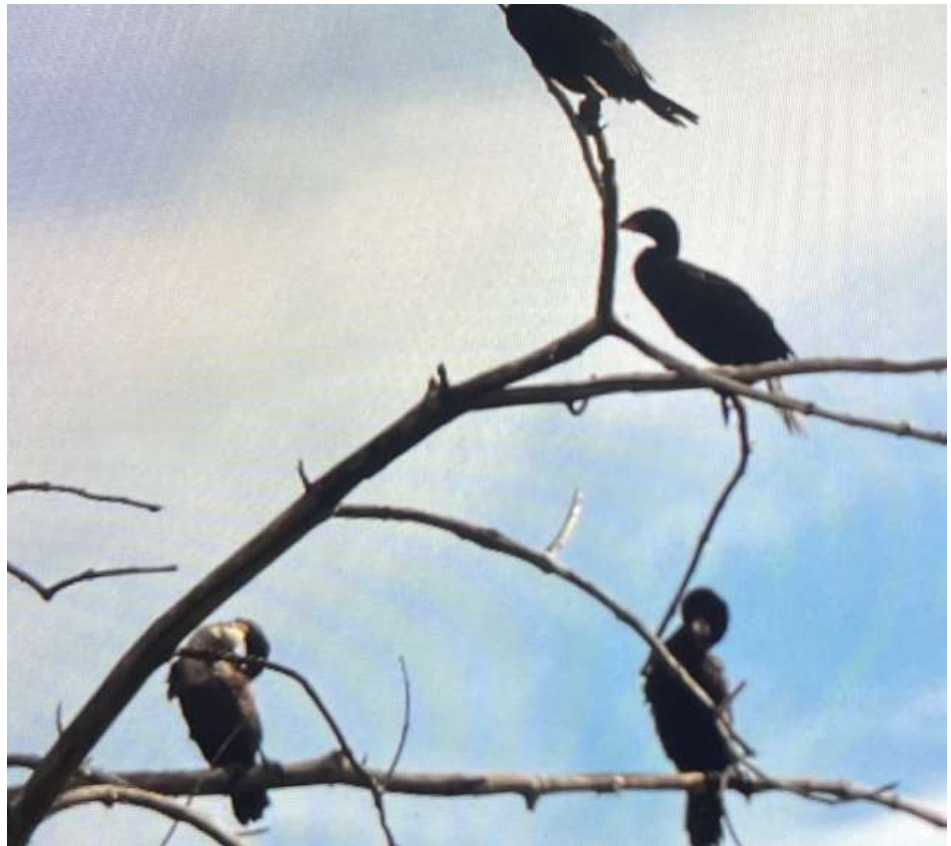
Each of these species spends time in both the Denver metro area and the Rio Grande Valley. This summer we are staying with my daughter in Thornton, a suburban area north of Denver. My daughter's house is at the entrance to a subdivision overlooking an open space. This space borders a long walking trail that follows the creek which was once a watering system for agricultural. I remember riding my bicycle along this road before it was paved when we lived nearby.

The suburbs have really expanded in recent years! Because this city has preserved numerous open space areas, trails, and parks, there is still a lot of wildlife here. Two of my favorites are the Red-tail Hawk (*Buteo jamaicensis*) and Double-crested Cormorant (*Phalacrocorax auritus*).

There is a Red-tail Hawk that hangs out on the light pole or the traffic light looking for a meal. This species is common throughout North America. They are very large hawks with broad, rounded wings and a short tail typical of the genus *Buteo*. The article I read on the internet says that Red-tails in South Texas are "darker above without the dark belly band most other Red-tails have." The article also mentions that dark-morph birds can also occur and is more common in western North America.

The Double-crested Cormorant is a large waterbird with a small head and hooked bill that weighs about 10 pounds. They are very good at diving underwater to catch fish.

I drive by a pond with a large tree beside it every day. There are between one to twelve cormorants surveying the pond every time. I have watched them catch dinner at the South Padre Island Birding and Nature Center. Perhaps I'll see one catch a fish here someday. Double-crested Cormorants are the only cormorants that live in Colorado.



Double-crested Cormorants (*Phalacrocorax auritus*)