

IDENTIFYING CORMORANTS IN COASTAL BRITISH COLUMBIA

Three species of cormorants are found in BC year-round. Predominantly black birds, they have a distinctive hooked, laterally compressed bill, noticeably stiff tail feathers and naked, coloured skin on the throat. On land, they often adopt a distinctive posture standing upright with wings outstretched to dry their feathers.

Double-crested Cormorant (DCCO)

- BC's largest cormorant
- Found in both freshwater and saltwater habitats
- Face is yellow/orange in all ages/plumages
- Adults are all black
- Juveniles have pale gray/beige breast and throat
- In flight, note thick neck and bulky build

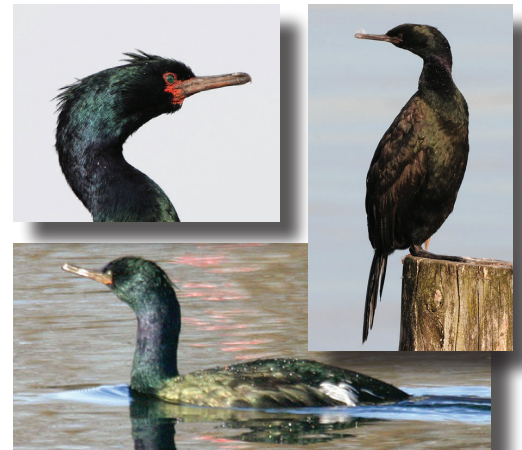
*Double-crested Cormorant adults (top)
Juvenile DCCO (bottom left) (Photos: Ralph Hocken)*



Pelagic Cormorant (PECO)

- Smallest of three BC cormorant species
- Note thin neck and beak
- Relatively long-tailed, noticeable when perched
- Adults have distinctive white patch on rear-flanks
- Adults are a glossy blackish-green overall with deep-red lores
- Juveniles are all dark brownish-black; note structure
- In late winter/spring, adults are brighter red around the face and have thin white plumes on the neck

*Pelagic Cormorant face and profile showing long tail (above by Mike Yip)
Adult swimming showing white patch (below by Ralph Hocken)*



Brandt's Cormorant (BRCO)

- Adults are greenish-black like PECO but note thicker neck/bill
- Relatively shorter-tailed than PECO
- Note beige-coloured throat-patch, present at all ages
- Juveniles have tan-coloured breast; compare bill colour to DCCO
- More gregarious than PECO
- In spring/early summer, adults have wispy white plumes on their head and blue skin at the base of the bill

*Brandt's Cormorant in flight (above left by Guy Monty)
Adult with wispy white plumes (above right by Mike Yip)
Adult in breeding plumage swimming (below by Guy Monty)*

