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## *Birds of the Rocky Mountains*—Species Accounts, pages 64-65: Pelicans & Cormorants

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## American White Pelican (*Pelecanus erythrorhynchus*)

**Identification:** The huge size, white plumage (except for black wingtips), and enormous yellow bill all make for certain identification of this species. In flight the birds appear ponderous, often gliding between wingbeats, and usually fly in line formation with the head back on the shoulders.

### LATILONG STATUS

		M	S
	M	M	S
M	M		s

M	M	s	M
M	S	M	M
s	M	M	S

M	M	M	M
		M	M
M		M	M



**Status:** Only Yellowstone Park supports a breeding colony of this species, but it is regularly seen in the Teton area as well, especially on Jackson Lake and the adjoining Snake River.

**Habitats and Ecology:** Associated with lakes and rivers having large fish populations that can be reached by surface-feeding. Gregarious, typically foraging and nesting in groups, and sometimes foraging well away from the nesting grounds, which are typically low islands. The Molly Islands on the southern part of Yellowstone Lake are small and low islands, with extremely limited nesting habitat that is often subject to high wave effects.

**Seasonality:** Montana migration records are from April 18 to May 27, and from August 15 to October 18. Wyoming records are from April 28, with a peak in May, to October 7, peaking in September. Egg records for these two states are from May 17 to July 10, with young observed as early as June 15.

**Comments:** The Molly Islands of Yellowstone Lake support an average of more than 180 nests per year (285 in 1980 maximum), and have produced an average of 155 fledglings in 16 of 18 recent years. This is one of the major western breeding areas (*American Birds* 36:250-4); Medicine Lake is another important breeding site in Montana. There are two Idaho breeding records (*Murrelet* 62:19-20). The Montana populations have been in a state of decline since the early 1960s, when over 10,000 breeding birds were present in the state.

**Suggested Reading:** Palmer, 1962; Schaller, 1964.

## Double-crested Cormorant (*Phalacrocorax auritus*)

**Identification:** The only cormorant of the region; the uniformly glossy black color of adults and orange-yellow throat-pouch are distinctive. In flight the birds resemble geese, but have longer tails, fly with a slight crook in the neck, and appear uniformly black. Immature birds are more brownish, with varying amounts of white on the underparts.

**Status:** Generally a migrant only in the mountain parks; only Yellowstone has a few breeding birds (on the Molly Islands of Yellowstone Lake).

**Habitats and Ecology:** Associated with lakes and rivers with good fish populations, often nesting on islands or on cliffs; sometimes also in trees.

**Seasonality:** Montana migration records are from April 22 to mid-May, and from mid-August to late October. Wyoming records extend from May 7 to November 23. In southern Alberta the birds are present from late April until about mid-September. Egg records for Wyoming are from early June to July 28; in Montana nests have been found as early as late May.

**Comments:** In most areas white pelicans and double-crested cormorants share their breeding areas, and although both species feed on fish they catch them by different means, with the cormorants chasing their prey in underwater pursuit like grebes, loons and mergansers. Like pelicans, cormorants are highly sensitive to disturbance during the breeding season, and colonies should not be visited. Like pelicans too, their foods are primarily non-game fish, and cormorants do little or no damage to sport fisheries.

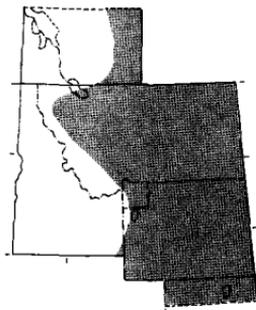
**Suggested Reading:** Palmer, 1962; Mitchell, 1967.

LATILONG STATUS

	M	M	S
	S		S
V			S

S	M	s	S
M	S	M	S
s	s	M	S

M		S	S
	M	S	S
M	V	M	S



Double-crested  
Cormorant

