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Neotropic Cormorant at Sutherland Reservoir

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On 2 May, 1998, I observed a Neotropic Cormorant (*Phalacrocorax brasilianus*) at Sutherland Reservoir in Lincoln County, Nebraska. When I arrived at the lake, I noticed a large number of gulls and cormorants resting on some dead logs near the northwest end of the lake. I scanned the cormorants several times and kept returning to one cormorant that seemed smaller than the nearby Double-crested Cormorants. The bird was sleeping, so size was the only mark I could see well. I studied the bird from 1:54-2:20 p.m. I estimated the body was at least 25% smaller than a Double-crested Cormorant. A couple of times, the bird raised its head, and I noted that the bill was darker, thinner, and shorter; and there was no bright orange throat pouch. Finally, I succeeded in getting some of the birds to take flight.

The bird in question would not fly, but it did change its position so that the tail was visible. From the back, the tail was nearly as long as the bird's body, making the bird much longer-tailed than a Double-crested Cormorant. The bird was also much browner than the other cormorants, especially on the mantle, upperwings, and tail. At times, the throat pouch appeared to have a dull yellow color, but it mostly appeared dark-colored. There was no white border to the throat pouch. The underparts were a uniform dull brown except that the foreneck
was slightly paler. The bill and feet were black. The bird eventually flew off with several Double-crested Cormorants. In flight, this bird was smaller, longer-tailed, and flew with more rapid wingbeats. I aged the bird as a first-alternate on the basis of the color of the underparts and the facial pattern.

This is the fifth record of a Neotropic Cormorant in Nebraska. The other records are 2 October, 1982, at Sutherland Reservoir, Lincoln County (specimen; Wright 1983), 4 September, 1993, at Hackberry L., Valentine National Wildlife Refuge, Cherry County (Gubanyi 1996a), 19 July, 1995, at Valentine National Wildlife Refuge, Cherry County (Gubanyi 1996c; NBR 63:71), and 20 to 30 May, 1996, at Chambers County (Brogie 1997). I thank W. Ross Silcock for providing information about other records of Neotropic Cormorants in Nebraska.

Literature Cited