



CTYBC TIPS for birding the Gulf Coast

CORMORANTS AND GREBES

Cormorants and Grebes seen in April on the Gulf Coast: Neotropic and Double-crested Cormorants, Pied-billed, Eared, and Least Grebes. Anhingas are also present, but are normally found in freshwater habitats.

Neotropic Cormorants are resident along the Texas coast. They are smaller than the Double-crested. They have a dark brown breast and in breeding season have a white V mark at the base of the bill.

Double-crested Cormorants winter along the coast. Their large bodies have a light brown breast and more orange at the base of the bill, but no white V mark.

Cormorants are found in groups perching on posts protruding above the water, or swimming with most of the body below the water line. In flight as at rest their necks are crooked, which makes it easy to identify them. Their bills are hooked at the tip.

Anhingas have long crooked necks like cormorants, but their bills are sharply pointed, not hooked. Females have light brown necks, while males have black necks; both have white upper wing coverts, and a pale band at the tip of the tail.

Pied-billed Grebes are common and resident, but are found singly or in small family groups. They have thick, pale bills with a noticeable black band across the middle of it in profile, like a big black spot. Their bodies are brownish and can look mottled.

Eared Grebes are easy to identify in full breeding plumage, with their black neck and yellow face plumes, but in April they can be in the transitional molt and can have mottled faces and necks. They always have red eyes, and the bill is much narrower and sharper than the Pied-billed.

Least Grebes are the smallest, and are mostly gray with yellow eyes and a thin black bill and no plumes.

Grebes swim in water with ducks, but they are smaller than ducks, and swim much lower in the water, with only the top of the back visible above the surface. Their bills are pointed rather than duck-shaped, and their heads are flatter.
