



The Double-crested Cormorant: Plight of a Feathered Pariah

Linda R. Wires

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The double-crested cormorant, found only in North America, is an iridescent black waterbird superbly adapted to catch fish. It belongs to a family of birds vilified since biblical times and persecuted around the world. Thus it was perhaps to be expected that the first European settlers in North America quickly deemed the double-crested cormorant a competitor for fishing stock and undertook a relentless drive to destroy the birds. This enormously important book explores the roots of human-cormorant conflicts, dispels myths about the birds, and offers the first comprehensive assessment of the policies that have been developed to manage the double-crested cormorant in the twenty-first century.

Conservation biologist Linda Wires provides a unique synthesis of the cultural, historical, scientific, and political elements of the cormorant's story. She discusses the amazing late-twentieth-century population recovery, aided by protection policies and environment conservation, but also the subsequent U.S. federal policies under which hundreds of thousands of the birds have been killed. In a critique of the science, management, and ethics underlying the double-crested cormorant's treatment today, Wires exposes "management" as a euphemism for persecution and shows that the current strategies of aggressive predator control are outdated and unsupported by science.

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