

Birds of Coastal Georgia



Created by Lindsay Bertch (2009)



Duck-like Birds

UGA Marine Education Center & Aquarium
www.marex.uga.edu/aquarium

Double-Crested Cormorant (*Phalacrocorax auritus*)



Photos courtesy of Lindsay Bertch

Size: 33" from beak to tail tip

Description: A medium-sized, darkly colored, duck-like bird with a long neck. Black bill and feet with yellow around the eyes. Immature cormorants have lightly colored necks, chests, and bellies.

Similar Species: The **common loon** has a lighter neck and belly and a darker, thicker bill.

Behavior: Sits very low in the water when swimming and dives from the surface of estuaries and ocean waters. May also be seen perched with wings extended, drying them in the sun.

Common Loon (*Gavia immer*)



Photos courtesy of Lindsay Bertch

Size: 28-36" from beak to tail tip

Description: A large duck-like bird that sits low in the water. Dark back, light belly with a white throat. Note heavy gray bill. Loons seen in Georgia are usually in their winter plumage, but may start molting into their breeding plumage in the spring. During the breeding season, loons have a black head and bill, red eyes, a checkered back, and a striped ring around their neck.

Similar Species: The **double crested cormorant** has a yellow, hooked bill and a darker colored neck and belly.

Behavior: Usually present in winter. A solitary bird seen diving from the surface of coastal waters and emerging far away from the original dive.

Hooded Merganser (*Lophodytes cucullatus*)



Male



Female



Photos courtesy of
Lindsay Bertch

Size: 16-19" from beak to tail tip

Description: A small diving duck with a thin, spear-like bill. The male has a white crest edged in black, a black head and back, brown sides, and a white breast with two black stripes on each side. The female is brown all over, including the crest. Both have white wing patches visible during flight.

Similar Species: The male **bufflehead** has white sides and the female bufflehead has a white cheek patch.

Behavior: Often seen in small groups diving from the surface of freshwater rivers or estuaries. May also be present in freshwater ponds. Usually seen in the winter.

Bufflehead (*Bucephala albeola*)

Male



Female



Photos courtesy of Lindsay Bertch

Size: 13-15" from beak to tail tip

Description: A small diving duck. The male is mostly white with a black back and head; note large white patch on head. The female is mostly brown with a small white cheek patch. Both have white wing patches visible during flight.

Similar Species: The male **hooded merganser** has brown sides and the female hooded merganser has no white on the head.

Behavior: Often seen in small groups diving from the surface of freshwater rivers or estuaries. May also be present in freshwater ponds. Usually seen in the winter.

American Coot (*Fulica americana*)



Photo courtesy of Lindsay Bertch

Size: 13-16" from beak to tail tip

Description: A dark, duck-like bird with a white, thick bill. Body is all black with a white patch under the tail. Legs are yellow and feet are lobed.

Similar Species: The adult **common moorhen** has a brown back and a red bill with a yellow tip.

Behavior: Usually occurs in groups. Can be seen pumping its head back and forth as it swims and dabbling at the surface of fresh water.

Common Moorhen (*Gallinula chloropus*)



Photos courtesy of Lindsay Bertch

Size: 13" from beak to tail tip

Description: A dark, duck-like bird with a red billed tipped with yellow. Most of the body is dark gray or black. The back is brown with a white stripe on either side. Also has a white tail patch and green legs.

Similar Species: The **American coot** has a black back and white bill.

Behavior: Can be seen pumping its head back and forth as it swims and dabbling at the surface of the fresh water. May also walk on top of vegetation at the water's edge.

References

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