

Cormorant

Latin: *Phalacrocorax carbo*

Irish: Broigheall

Fact File

Colour: Mostly black, with green, blue or bronze sheen. White patch on thighs in summer.

Length: 77-94 cm

Diet: Crabs and fish, such as wrasse and flatfish.

Habitat: Nests on cliffs, islands and near lakes and feeds on the open sea, estuaries, rivers and lakes.

Cormorants are seabirds, which live along the coast. They are also seen near estuaries, lakes and rivers, and inland in trees (where they sometimes breed). There are many species of cormorant but the one found in Ireland is *Phalacrocorax carbo*, which is sometimes known as the Great Cormorant.

The cormorant is a large bird. It has dark foliage, mostly black, with a green, blue or bronze sheen. It has a white throat with a yellow patch at the base of its beak, and a white mark on its thigh during the breeding season. It has a long neck and a hooked

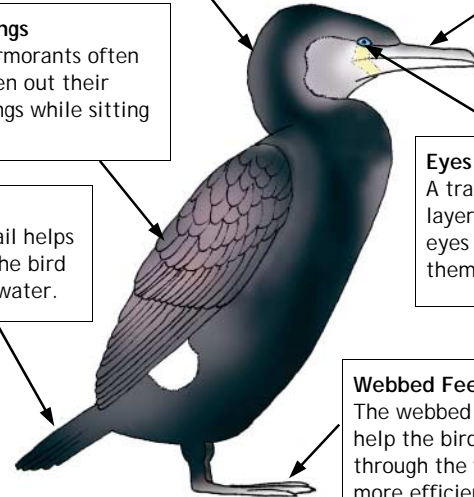
Head & Neck
The long head and thick neck aid swimming when fishing under water.

Bill
The long, hooked grey bill is used to catch fish under water and to defend itself.

Wings
Cormorants often open out their wings while sitting

Tail
Long tail helps steer the bird under water.

Eyes
A transparent layer covers the eyes to protect them when diving.



Webbed Feet
The webbed feet help the bird move through the water more efficiently.

Photo: © Audrey Murphy

grey beak that helps catch the large amount of fish that it eats. Cormorants were once considered pests because of the amount of fish they ate but they have been protected since 1976. Since then their population has greatly increased.

Cormorants live in large colonies in the south and north west coasts of Ireland. They are very strong swimmers, using their webbed feet to push themselves through the water in search of food.

Cormorants and shags are closely related, with the shag being smaller than the cormorant.



Photo courtesy of Miya - cc-by-sa-2.5

Cormorants are often seen on the rocks with their wings spread wide. Some believe that this is to dry their wings, while others think that it may aid digestion. No one is really sure.



Flightless or Galapagos Cormorant

The Galapagos Islands are a chain of volcanic islands distributed along the equator, approximately 950 kms west of Ecuador in the Pacific Ocean. The islands are filled with strange and

wonderful wildlife which have adapted to life on the islands and which are found nowhere else on earth. One such creature is the Flightless or Galapagos Cormorant. This is the only species of cormorant to have lost its ability to fly, having wings about one-third the size necessary for flight. With only 1500 individual in existence, this cormorant is one of the world's rarest birds.

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