



The Devil's Cormorant: A Natural History

Richard J. King

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Behold the cormorant: silent, still, cruciform, and brooding; flashing, soaring, quick as a snake. Evolution has crafted the only creature on Earth that can migrate the length of a continent, dive and hunt deep underwater, perch comfortably on a branch or a wire, walk on land, climb up cliff faces, feed on thousands of different species, and live beside both fresh and salt water in a vast global range of temperatures and altitudes, often in close proximity to man. Long a symbol of gluttony, greed, bad luck, and evil, the cormorant has led a troubled existence in human history, myth, and literature. The birds have been prized as a source of mineral wealth in Peru, hunted to extinction in the Arctic, trained by the Japanese to catch fish, demonized by Milton in *Paradise Lost*, and reviled, despised, and exterminated by sport and commercial fishermen from Israel to Indianapolis, Toronto to Tierra del Fuego. In *The Devil's Cormorant*, Richard King takes us back in time and around the world to show us the history, nature, ecology, and economy of the world's most misunderstood waterfowl.

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