

HOTLINE



**Hunting,
fishing and
trapping is a
big deal
(pg 11)**

Plus:

**Ministry moves ahead
with moose hunting
changes (pg 2)**

**Cormorants present
problems in Presqu'île
Park (pg 4 & 5)**

Cormorant catastrophe in Presqu'île Park

Within a couple of decades, double-crested cormorants have colonized Presqu'île Provincial Park, have quickly become overabundant, and have devastated areas where they nest and roost.

Two of the islands within the park (Gull and High Bluff) are designated nature reserves, and are managed by the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry (MNRF) whose role is to protect the natural features and diversity that exist there. '

Cormorant management in Presqu'île has been influenced over the years by public perceptions of active wildlife management techniques, like culling.

This is another example of how politics can drive wildlife management with a complete disregard for science, biodiversity and ecosystem health.

The following is a list of management issues -- and the subsequent outcomes -- that have transpired over the better part of the last 30 years.

1982-2002 Cormorant Populations Soar

- Cormorant nests on the islands explode from 1 to 12,082 in 20 years
- Almost all trees on Gull Island die from

cormorant excretion and High Bluff Island is heading in the same direction

- Provincially significant colonial waterbirds are displaced by cormorants

The Outcome

- In 2002, MNRF approved the Presqu'île Provincial Park Cormorant Management Strategy, with the goal of protecting High Bluff Island
- Culling was considered by MNRF, but was rejected at this time

2003-2006 Successful Cormorant Management

- In 2003, egg-oiling of all cormorant ground nests was included in the management strategy
- Culling measures took place between 2004-2006, based on a study that reported serious vegetation loss due to cormorants
- Nest removal was used in combination with egg-oiling and culling

The Outcome

- Cormorant tree nests were reduced by 68% on High Bluff Island
- Cormorant ground nests were reduced by 69% on both High Bluff and Gull Islands
- Cormorant populations were quickly reduced to pre-management levels



2007-2010 Park Management Plan Derailed by Animal Rights Extremists

- Despite the success in previous years, cormorant management stopped in 2007
- In 2009, the Presqu'île Islands Resource Management Implementation Plan was released to address the continuing cormorant pressures
- A few interest groups disagreed with the management techniques in the plan and requested environmental assessments be completed through the Ministry of the Environment

The Outcome

- Cormorant tree nesting activity on the islands doubled between 2007-2010
- In 2010, MNRF presented changes to the 2009 Implementation Plan
- MOE declined the presented changes and ordered Minister-prescribed conditions on the plan

2011-2014 MOE Orders Nonlethal Management of Cormorants

- Between 2007 and 2011, the cormorant

"Man-made nesting platforms, scarecrows and waving arms will not solve the cormorant problems in Presqu'île. These types of impractical and unsustainable passive wildlife management approaches continue to degrade the natural features they claim to protect."

– Chris Godwin, OFAH land use specialist



population was only monitored; no cormorant management took place

- In 2011, the Implementation Plan was re-released with a prescribed focus on nonlethal management of cormorants
- In 2014, the Presqu'île Islands Management Report was released

The Outcome

- About 4,000-5,000 cormorant nests currently exist on the islands
- Ground nesting is more prevalent
- The number of trees available year to year is not reported
- Park staff are now required to disturb roosting cormorants by yelling, arm-waving and firing blank shells while they observe the birds' reactions
- Man-made scaffolding has been constructed to create roosting and nesting areas for cormorants
- Scarecrows and temporary walking trails through nesting sites were established to deter birds
- Cormorant problems are moving to areas outside of the monitored area

THE BOTTOM LINE

The cormorant issue in Presqu'île Provincial Park is another example of how radical interest groups can derail sound management decisions. Cormorant control in Presqu'île was working until emotion trumped science, and a bureaucratic loophole resulted in MNR taking direction from MOE on resource management. The result has been a complete and utter failure to properly manage our natural resources.

LOOKING AT THE BIG PICTURE

The OFAH remains engaged in this issue because overabundant wildlife has a negative impact on our resources, and such blatant mismanagement is unacceptable. The problem is fast becoming a provincial issue as cormorants expand into inland lakes throughout Ontario. We will continue to criticize management decisions that are based on misconceptions and politics, and we will continue to advocate for evidence-based resource management.

In particular, the OFAH will:

- Request our involvement in the 5-year review of the management plan
- Support lethal management techniques for cormorants in the management area
- Hold government accountable for the data and decisions they produce
- Publicly remind governments of their commitments to existing policies and management
- Continue to ask the government to remove protection afforded to cormorants under the Fish & Wildlife Conservation Act