



PRIORITIES FOR THE NEW GOVERNMENT

Overabundance of Double-Crested Cormorants

Opportunity

Implement measures to address the overabundance of double-crested cormorants to protect sensitive habitats.

Responsible Ministry: Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry/Ministry of Environment, Conservation, and Parks

Achievability

Many hunters, landowners, and ecosystem stewards are calling for cormorant control. Multiple options are available to the government (outlined below), with varying degrees of complexity and levels of effectiveness.

Background

- Cormorants appear to be increasing in number and distribution.
- Large populations of double-crested cormorants are causing environmental damage, including in ecologically sensitive areas.
- Cormorants can negatively affect terrestrial habitats by chemical and physical means through corrosive acidic guano, and stripping/breaking tree branches.
- The cormorant's corrosive guano may damage vehicles and structures, potentially reducing the life span of roofs by 50% if accumulation occurs.
- Ontario doesn't currently have a provincial management plan for cormorant control despite ongoing damage to Crown land, especially in Provincial Parks.
- U.S. jurisdictions, particularly those with shared waters, have been critical of Ontario's lack of control efforts.
- Landowners and resource users want an efficient and effective way to reduce damage from cormorants.
- Currently the only recourse against cormorant damage is individuals removing them in defense of property, but this is very limited and there is no evidence that it is a viable long-term strategy for cormorant management at a broader scale.

Proposed Solutions

- Use existing framework and regulations to implement active management of cormorants in Provincial Parks through the culling of adults and oiling of eggs in whatever combination best reduces populations in the most efficient and cost-effective manner (MOECP jurisdiction).
- Implement a Depredation Permit system for cormorants outside of Provincial Parks, similar to what is already in place in the United States. Individuals/organizations could apply for a permit to lethally remove cormorants from a specified geography and/or for a specified time period.
- List cormorants as a game species that can be killed under the authority of a small game licence. This would allow hunters to dispatch adult cormorants in all areas where they are legally allowed to hunt, as well as providing individuals with an option to assist in the control of cormorants where environmental and/or property damages are a concern.
- Retable Bill 205 to include double-crested cormorants in the list of birds in Clause 5 (2) (a) of the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Act to remove existing protections. This would allow anyone to kill cormorants and their eggs without needing to go through a permit or tag process.

ONTARIO FEDERATION OF ANGLERS & HUNTERS



Ontario Conservation Centre

P.O. Box 2800, 4601 Guthrie Drive, Peterborough, Ontario K9J 8L5
Phone: (705) 748.6324 • Fax: (705) 748.9577 • Visit: www.ofah.org • Email: ofah@ofah.org

Benefits

Directed cormorant control programs (both lethal and non-lethal) are currently used in certain areas of high bird abundance and ecological risk (e.g. Middle Island, Toronto Waterfront). Control efforts by Parks Canada on Middle Island have proven to be effective. Implementation of any of the proposed solutions will help to control cormorants, reduce their ecological impacts and be welcomed by many people in Ontario, however, it is expected to draw significant criticism from some stakeholder groups.

Other Considerations

Overabundant cormorant populations and the environmental damages they cause will likely require multiple management tools. No single management option outlined above will completely eliminate cormorant conflicts.