



PEACEFUL
PARKS
COALITION

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McGuinty Government Blocks Information On Double-crested Cormorants Set To Authorize Massive Slaughter

Never before has an Ontario government proposed a massive slaughter of a wild species, yet the McGuinty government is set to authorize the shooting of thousands of tree nesting Double-crested Cormorants at Presqu'île Provincial Park. What birds they don't shoot, they will "oil" ground nests to prevent eggs from hatching. In addition, they are "oiling" thousands of cormorant nests on Lake Huron.

The McGuinty government claims the birds are out of control, but has blocked all release of information pertaining to cormorant population figures, citing extreme reasons for denying access. Population census conducted by the Canadian Wildlife Service from 1979 until 2001 showed the cormorant population is stabilizing throughout the Great Lakes. But since cormorant population monitoring has been shifted to the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources, the release of simple census information has been blocked.

"The McGuinty government wants to reduce the cormorant population to a mere shadow of their natural capacity, and they don't want anyone scrutinizing their data" says AnnaMaria Valastro of the Peaceful Parks Coalition. "There is simply no justification for large-scale lethal control."

Cormorants are being killed for doing what comes naturally - nesting in large colonies and eating fish to survive. Once on the brink of extinction on the Great Lakes, they are now on the government chopping block. "Killing these birds is just an extreme knee-jerk reaction to placate the sport fishing industry, who claims there are too many birds, eating too many of their fish," says Valastro

For more information
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Notes to the Editor

Through the Freedom of Information legislation, The Peaceful Parks Coalition has requested data on cormorant population trends and Ministry research. Each time we are denied access. The reasons cited are:

- Disclosure could reasonably be expected to facilitate the commission of an unlawful act;
- Records have monetary value or potential monetary value;
- Could reasonably be expected to deprive an employee of an institution of priority of publication.

Through the adjudication process, The Peaceful Parks Coalition was successful in releasing information pertaining to the Ministry's "oiling" program on Lake Huron. Preliminary results indicate an overall decline of the cormorant population.

The Double-Crested Cormorant population collapsed in the 1950s and 1960s from toxic pollution. As pollution levels declined, the cormorant population rebounded. Their situation demonstrates the "population explosion" that can be expected in any species occupying a large new habitat. Most animals that colonize new areas show a period of initial unrestricted growth, just as we have seen with cormorants over the last 10-15 years. Such growth, however, cannot be sustained. Eventually, the population outstrips its food supply, outgrows its habitat (or nesting areas) or is reduced by disease or predation. When this happens the cormorant population can be expected to drop in numbers until it stabilizes itself again. Many researchers believe the cormorant population has plateaued.

press release

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