



PEACEFUL
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE - JANUARY 20, 2005

Dalton McGuinty To Kill Double-crested Cormorants Across Ontario

Toronto, January 20, 2005: While Dalton McGuinty insists he has no plans to eradicate the migratory bird, double-crested cormorants from Ontario, his government is currently planning to kill cormorants across Ontario, area by area and in collaboration with the United States.

Plans are underway to kill nesting cormorants at Tommy Thompson Park (Leslie Spit) in Toronto, Presqu'île Provincial Park, near Belleville, on private islands in the St Lawrence River, in the North Channel and Georgian Bay region of Lake Huron, and in the Lake Erie Archipelago Islands—virtually everywhere these birds are found nesting.

At Tommy Thompson Park it is anticipated that the birds will be trapped using either leg-hold traps or cannon netting after which their necks will be broken as they are collected. At other more remote locations, the birds will likely be shot.

And if McGuinty doesn't kill the birds, The United Fish and Game Clubs of Manitoulin Island will. The United Fish and Game Clubs of Manitoulin Island have announced they plan an illegal hunt on cormorants this coming spring if the McGuinty government doesn't take action.

The Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters have targeted these birds for sport fish depletion, even though scientific evidence has proven cormorants eat fish species that are most abundant, and in the case of the Great Lakes, feed primarily on alewife, an exotic species known to eat native fish.

"The blame for the sorry state of the Great Lakes aquatic environment can be squarely placed on the shoulders of anglers and hunters who don't give a damn about anything other than their own recreational activity," says AnnaMaria Valastro of the Peaceful Parks Coalition. They pressure governments to stock and protect game species above all other species, even if these species are exotic, such as pacific salmon and alewife. "These people are bullies," says Valastro, "but sadly these are the sort of people Dalton McGuinty listens too."

The Peaceful Parks Coalition fully anticipates McGuinty will turn a blind eye to the illegal cull, and let the hunters and anglers do the government's dirty work. This is exactly what happened in June 2003, when farmers staged an illegal deer hunt. The farmers were rewarded with new policy allowing them to kill dozens of "nuisance" deer per season, and an expanded deer hunt across the province.

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press release



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Notes to the Editor:

The McGuinty government has deliberately waged a campaign of misinformation to vilify these birds, calling them invasive, and insisting these birds are an environmental disaster. But here are some “straight-shooting” facts about cormorants:

- Double-crested cormorants are a North American migratory bird native to Ontario.
- They nest on the Great Lakes in the spring and summer, and winter in the southern United States.
- They are black, colonial-nesting birds typically found in large nesting colonies ranging from several hundred to several thousand birds. The largest colony in North America is found on the Columbia River estuary in Washington State at 15,000 birds. The largest recorded colony was in Baja, Mexico at 300,000 birds in 1913.
- They prefer to nest on isolated islands, both on the ground and in trees.
- Tree nesting cormorants will eventually kill the host tree through the deposit of their guano. The process of killing trees prematurely is a naturally occurring process found throughout the natural world. Beavers kill trees by damming creeks and flooding forest areas. Natural wildfires also kill trees. These trees eventually become “snags” providing habitat for a different array of wildlife, and eventually breakdown into soil.
- Thirty years ago, these birds were on the verge of extinction on the Great Lakes. Toxic pollution almost wiped them out. As a result, toxic chemicals such as DDT and PCBs were banned.
- Double-crested cormorants are currently reoccupying their ecological role within the Great Lakes system.
- Cormorants feed exclusively on live fish and are considered to be a skilful predator.

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