



PEACEFUL
PARKS
COALITION

For Immediate Release - June 2, 2004

Current Body Count: 4592 Dead Cormorants

Ontario Parks Proudly Announces 1393 Dead Cormorants in One Day All Time RecordHigh

Toronto June 2, 2004: On Monday May 31, Ontario Parks shot and killed 1393 nesting double-crested cormorants at Presqu'île Provincial Park, near Trenton Ontario. On Tuesday May 25, they shot and killed 1098, and on Wednesday May 26, 439 were killed - for a grand total of 4592 in just eleven days of shooting. It is fully anticipated Ontario Parks will reach they goal of 6000 dead birds this week.

"The birds are helpless while they are nesting," says AnnaMaria Valastro of the Peaceful Parks Coalition. "The last two weeks in May is the height of the nesting season and cormorants are dedicated parents. They will stay by their nests at all costs."

Once sharpshooters have removed half of the colony, it becomes easier to kill the remaining birds because the colony is less dense, and ravaged and chaotic.

A full 25% of great blue herons have abandoned their nests because of the shooting - 15 out of 60 nests, according to Ontario Parks.

Independent observers watching the colony from shore believe black-crowned night herons have also abandoned their nests. Ontario Parks denies any birds have abandoned because of their activities. Instead they blame the cormorants for chasing away other water birds.

"I find it incredible that Ontario Parks thinks shooting thousands of bullets into a dense nesting colony would have absolutely no impact on non-target species. Either they need a reality check or they're lying," says Valastro.

No independent observers are allowed to assess the state of the colony, so the truth will never be known. The Canadian Wildlife Service will be conducting a census after the shooting but they are not independent. They are a federal government agency and will only count the number of nests, and not report nest abandonment - at least not to the public.

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Dalton McGuinty, Premier 416.325.1941

Notes to the Editor:

On May 5, 2004, Dalton McGuinty authorized the shooting of 6000 double-crested cormorants at High Bluff Island, located approximately 1 km. off the shore of Lake Ontario. High Bluff Island is a bird sanctuary within Presqu'île Provincial Park. Dalton McGuinty claims the birds are too numerous and are destroying habitat for our water birds also nesting on High Bluff Island.

press release

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But his statements are contrary to reports issued by Ontario Parks, and other research data, that claim cormorant avian companions thrive along side nesting cormorants. This is true at High Bluff Island, where black-crowned night herons, great blue herons, and egrets have been increasing their numbers. This is also true at the Leslie Spit in downtown Toronto. A colony of 4889 nesting cormorants coincides with the highest number of nesting black-crowned night herons ever recorded. New York State has been removing cormorant nests since 1994 on islands within their water boundary in an effort to increase nesting night herons. After tens years of nest destruction, they have failed to increase the presence of night herons in any significant way. Night herons are not a species at risk.

Dr. Chip Weseloh of the Canadian Wildlife Services supports the shooting of cormorants and references his own data when stating cormorants will eventually displace night herons, but Dr. Weseloh ignores the body of evidence produced by his colleagues and relies solely on his own observations.

Given the lack of scientific evidence supporting the complete eradication of cormorants from Presqu'île Provincial Park, the Peaceful Parks believes Dalton McGuinty has caved to pressure from the Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters who have lobbied hard to have the birds killed. They claim the birds are eating too many of their prized "pan-fry".

Photos are available to the media at <http://www.pronature.on.ca/cormorantpictures.html> compliments of The ProNature Network

(Link to Automated Cormorant Letter or use this template to write your own letter to the minister!)

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