



PEACEFUL
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COALITION

For Immediate Release - March 5, 2004

Thousands of Birds To Be Shot at Presqu'ile Provincial Park.

This week and with much fanfare, the Ontario Minister of Natural Resources, David Ramsay proudly announced his decision to permanently protect the wolves of Algonquin Park, stating predator species play a key role in the balance of nature.

But also this week, Ramsay quietly approved the shooting of thousands of Double-crested Cormorants, an impressive and skillful avian predator of the Great Lakes aquatic system. Top of the food chain predator, cormorants are often referred to as the wolves of the aquatic system, and also play a critical role in balancing natural ecosystems.

"The ecological difference between cormorants and wolves is zero," says Barry Kent MacKay of the Animal Protection Institute. "They are equivalent in their role as top predators. The only difference is that recreational anglers hate cormorants because they are viewed as competitors for sport fish."

Thousands of Double-crested Cormorants arrive each summer to Ontario from the United States to nest and rear their young before migrating south again for the winter. Presqu'ile Provincial Park is home to thousands of nesting cormorants and reflects one of the greatest migrations on the continent.

Minister Ramsay insists the congregation of thousands of birds is destroying unique vegetation and must be culled.

"The rationale for this cull is not to protect rare vegetation," says AnnaMaria Valastro of the Peaceful Parks Coalition. "Cormorants are by nature colonial birds and have nested in large colonies since the beginning of time. The impact their nesting colonies have on local vegetation is a natural process, critical in the formation of soil and the regeneration of plants and trees."

"Shooting cormorants is to placate recreational anglers," says Valastro. "This was clear when David Ramsay chose to announce his decision at the annual conference of the Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters, and before making a public announcement."

"If you understand that all creatures play a key role in the balance of nature, then you can't pick and chose which predators receive protection and which ones are shot dead," says Kent MacKay.

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