



PEACEFUL
PARKS
COALITION

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1414 Dead Birds At Presqu'ile - Exclusion Zone Illegal

Toronto, May 24 2006: Most of the 1414 nesting Double-crested Cormorants shot last week at Presqu'ile Provincial Park near Belleville, Ontario were killed on Monday May 15 in an all day shooting spree. This was made possible by the Ontario Provincial Police (OPP) who enforced a 2.2 kilometre exclusion zone around High Bluff Island - the location of the bird colony where three thousands nesting cormorants will be culled this year.

One person was arrested and two others ticketed when they refused to leave the exclusion zone during the cull.

The exclusion zone announced across marine radio and posted on the Canadian Coast Guard website was never legally authorized by the proper officials at the Canadian Coast Guard. The Ontario Provincial Police enforced the exclusion zone and arrested observers without ever reviewing the authorization papers. The OPP simply took the word of the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources that everything was in order to prohibit observers from witnessing the slaughter of hundreds of nesting birds.

It was the persistent enquires by organizers opposed to the cull to the Canadian Coast Guard that eventually confirmed the exclusion zone was illegal. The coast guard has since lifted the exclusion zone and replaced it with a cautionary note for boaters.

"It's extreme. The Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources fooled both the OPP and the coast guard simply to advance their agenda to kill a bunch of birds that are causing no harm to anyone or anything," says AnnaMaria Valastro of the Peaceful Parks Coalition.

"But the McGuinty government has always operated under a veil of deception when it comes to this issue. They can't justify the killing of thousands of native birds quietly nesting in a bird sanctuary in a provincial park."

The mass slaughter on Monday May 15 left countless of cormorants wounded and/or floating dead in the water. Dozens of birds washed onto nearby beaches and wounded birds were rescued days later. This prompted a complaint to the OPP against the Ministry of Natural Resources for causing pain and suffering to animals. While the OPP investigated the complaint, the police stated that laying charges would be difficult. It would require identifying individuals that are directly responsible for the crime.

"That's easy," say Valastro. "Ministry staff directly involved with implementing the cull and who are present during the shooting of nesting cormorants should be charged criminally for inflicting cruelty to animals."

Observers continue to collect evidence.

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press release