

CORMORANT CONTROL REQUIRES FUNDING AND SUPPORT - U. S.
Congressman Bart Stupak, Michigan 1st District



The swarms of large birds that are known for emerging on our Great Lakes and our waterways like locusts, and doing just as much damage, are no feathered friends to Michigan fishermen, outdoor enthusiasts or the tourism industry. They understand first hand that double-crested cormorants are behind the dramatically depleting fish populations. For over ten years, I have been working with local citizens and the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) through Wildlife Services to curb the devastation the cormorant continues to cause to sport and commercial fisheries and tourism in Michigan. While the cormorants are subject to the Migratory Bird Treaty Act, they are not controlled as an endangered species. Therefore, while control is challenging, it is not impossible. After working for several years to bring the cormorant problem to the attention of Congress, I was able to secure \$125,000 in 2003 for control projects in Michigan, and have been able to earmark federal money each year thereafter. The Michigan DNR has concluded from studying the Les Cheneaux Islands that cormorants are at least partly responsible for the collapse of the yellow perch fishery. A control project was launched that combined egg-oiling to reduce reproduction with the termination of approximately 15% of the adult birds. A smaller project was launched on Drummond Island that focused on “harassment measures” to ward off birds from settling and the plan successfully deterred approximately 98% of the birds from foraging in the perch spawning area. In 2004 I secured an additional \$150,000 to continue efforts in Les Cheneaux and Drummond Island and began working with local groups to expand similar programs to other threatened areas of Michigan. The 2006 USDA Appropriations bill contains \$175,000 for cormorant control in Michigan. As cormorant control programs continue to be effective, we will work to secure more federal dollars to tackle the problem in other regions. Fishing is a vital part of our Michigan culture and heritage and cormorants threaten this activity. I will continue to push to expand cormorant control funding to all affected areas. It is imperative that we all work together to protect Michigan’s fisheries so that they are there for future generations to enjoy and appreciate.

From Winter 1999-2000 PLA Newsletter

Build on Cormorant Successes

From the March 2005 issue of Michigan Out-of-Doors, a publication of Michigan United Conservation Clubs

We're still learning about cormorants, but we're starting to know how to control their numbers. There have been federal projects that have had some success in reducing numbers of the fish-eating birds. Perhaps it is time for the Department of Natural Resources to seek state oversight of cormorant control programs wherever the best science says they are needed.

Cormorants are native migratory birds whose Great Lakes population has mushroomed in size since the outlawing of the use of DDT and other persistent pesticides, just as the bald eagle has bounced back. We might never have enough eagles, but in a few areas we now have more than enough cormorants!

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