



Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals



RECOMMENDATION 4.1

CONSERVATION AND MANAGEMENT OF CORMORANTS IN THE AFRICAN-EURASIAN REGION

Adopted by the Conference of the Parties at its Fourth Meeting (Nairobi, 7-11 June 1994)

The Conference of the Parties to the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals,

Pursuant to Article VII, paragraph 5, of the Bonn Convention, which provides that the Conference of Parties at its meetings may make recommendations for improving the conservation status of migratory species,

Noting that the species Pygmy cormorant is included in the list of specially protected wild fauna species (Appendix II) and the other species of cormorants in the list of protected wild fauna species (Appendix III) in the Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats (Berne Convention),

Noting the proposals to include the Pygmy cormorant and the Socotra cormorant in Appendix II of the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals,

Noting also the draft Agreement on the Conservation of African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbirds,

Aware that the draft Agreement covers, inter alia, migratory species of cormorants,

Also aware that the Management Plan of the draft Agreement underlines the desirability of preparing species conservation plans for species of waterbirds which frequently come into conflict with human interests,

Acknowledging that, in the African-Eurasian region:

(a) The small population of the globally threatened species Pygmy cormorant (*Phalacrocorax pygmaeus*) is decreasing;

(b) The population trend of the species Socotra cormorant (*Phalacrocorax nigrogularis*) is unknown;

(c) The population trend of the Great cormorant subspecies *Phalacrocorax carbo carbo* is presumed overall to be increasing;

(d) The population trend of the Great cormorant subspecies *Phalacrocorax carbo sinensis* is increasing strongly in both numbers and range;

Acknowledging also that:

- (a) Cormorants breed in dense colonies and are specially vulnerable during the breeding season;
- (b) That different cormorant species and populations may utilize the same breeding and wintering sites;
- (c) Persecution of *Phalacrocorax carbo sinensis* and *Phalacrocorax carbo carbo* in its breeding colonies continues in some countries;
- (d) The increases in the populations of *Phalacrocorax carbo carbo* and *Phalacrocorax carbo sinensis* have brought conflicts with human interests, especially in fish-farming areas, coastal inland water and river systems;
- (e) In some countries these increases are in conflict with human activities in fish-pond areas that contribute to the management and the conservation of habitats of waterbirds,

Aware that many Range States have developed national legislative and administrative provisions to protect wild birds, including regularly occurring species of migratory birds and their habitats,

Further aware that, within the European Community, national provisions relating to the protection of wild birds are required to implement EEC Directive 79/409 on the conservation of wild birds, that, for member States of the European Community, other national provisions in the same field are required to be consistent with the principles set out in that Directive and that article 9 of the Directive permits derogations from the requirement that member States of the Community should prohibit the deliberate killing or capture of wild birds, where there is no other satisfactory solution, in order to prevent serious damage to fisheries and certain other interests,

1. *Recommends* Parties and non-Parties to the Convention that are Range States for migratory species of cormorants to take appropriate steps to:

- (a) Improve and protect the conservation status of the Pygmy cormorant;
- (b) Improve and protect the conservation status of the Socotra cormorant;
- (c) Maintain a favourable conservation status of the Great cormorant subspecies *carbo carbo* and *carbo sinensis*;
- (d) Monitor cormorant populations in breeding, moulting, staging and wintering areas;
- (e) Commission research on:
 - (i) The assessment of damage caused by cormorants to fishing interests;
 - (ii) The effectiveness of scaring techniques and the development of other techniques to protect fisheries;
 - (iii) Ornithological, ecological, limnological and fishery data to get a better understanding of the ecological network in which cormorants live;
 - (iv) Genetic analysis in order to confirm the existence of the two sub-species and the

different populations of Great cormorant and to define the current range;

(f) Increase the awareness of the public and special interest groups, including fisheries interest, to cormorant conservation issue;

(g) Secure that cormorants may only be killed under controlled conditions;

(h) Exchange information under the sponsorship of a Party Range State on the action taken under subparagraphs (e)(iv), (v), (vi) and (vii) above. A working group should be established to report to the CMS Scientific Council. After the adoption of the African-Eurasian Waterbird Agreement, a working group of that Agreement should be established under the Technical Committee;

2. *Encourages* Parties and non-Parties to the Convention that are Range States to follow the attached Guidelines for Conservation and Management of the Great cormorant;

3. *Encourages* under sponsorship of a Party Range State or other Range States to consider and co-operate in the preparation of international species conservation plans for migrating species of cormorants in accordance with the principles of the draft Agreement on the Conservation of African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbirds, taking also into consideration the guidelines attached to the present recommendation;

4. *Directs* the Secretariat to assist Parties that are Range States in these endeavours.

Appendix

GUIDELINES FOR THE CONSERVATION AND MANAGEMENT OF THE GREAT CORMORANT

1. *Background*

The general increases in population of the Great cormorant have caused a number of conflicts with human activities. Many fishermen report that this species causes damage especially in fish-farming areas, but also in other inland waters along the coast. These conflicts with human activities result in demands for joint guidelines on the handling of the conflicts.

There are two subspecies of the Great cormorant normally recognized in Europe. The nominate subspecies *carbo* has an estimated total population of at least 45,000 pairs with an increasing trend, and the subspecies *sinensis* an estimated total population of at least 150,000 pairs with a strongly increasing trend (1992 estimates). Increases are also apparent in the winter quarters.

These increases are thought to be mainly due to legal protection of the species and increased food availability due to eutrophication of water bodies.

The Great cormorant breeds in dense colonies and is widespread during the non-breeding period. These features make it especially vulnerable during the breeding season. The species needs undisturbed breeding sites and possibilities to permit site shifting.

The Great cormorant is reported to cause conflicts with fishery and forestry activities. Conflicts with other interests, including nature conservation, have also been reported.

The Great cormorant is protected in most of the Range States. In all western, central and northern European countries there is currently no hunting season, except in Sweden, Norway and Switzerland.

The legislation of most Range States, including all States members of the European Community allows the control of the species, where it causes serious damage to specified interests and where there are no other satisfactory solutions. Many different methods of control are used, and there is a need for exchange of knowledge, for coordination and elaboration of common guidelines.

2. *Principles*

The Range States will endeavour to maintain a favourable conservation status for the Great cormorant.

- (a) Where appropriate, a conservation and management plan or policy should be developed. The plan and subsequent changes in the plan should be communicated to the Secretariat for distribution to the Range States.
- (b) A number of breeding colonies adequate to maintain a favourable conservation status should be fully protected in each of the countries where the Great cormorant has or establishes breeding colonies.
- (c) The Range States should undertake regular monitoring of Great cormorant populations during the breeding and/or non-breeding season.
- (d) Control of the species may be allowed where serious damage to specified interests can be

verified, and where there are no other satisfactory solutions.

- (e) Serious damage, however, should be alleviated primarily by appropriate management of the human activities concerned, including, among others, a policy of support to fish-farming where it is favourable to fauna, flora and habitats, adaptation of fishing methods and gear, and scaring techniques.
- (f) Intervention within the breeding colonies, if it appears necessary, may only be authorized in particular cases where it can be scientifically demonstrated that it will not have a significant negative impact on the conservation status of cormorants as mentioned in the opening paragraph and in points (a) and (b) above, and only under strict supervision and in accordance with the principles laid down in point (d) above. Control methods should respect good ethical principles.
- (g) Once a year, the extent of controls and the methods used should be communicated to the Secretariat for distribution to the Range States.
- (h) Efforts should be made to increase international exchange of information concerning damage to fisheries, including both the assessment of damage and the alleviation of problems. The Range States recognize the activities of the EIFAC working group and the IWRB Cormorant Research Group. These organizations may provide platforms for mutual exchange of scientific information.