

Reducing the conflict between Cormorants and fisheries on a pan-European scale

REDCAFE

Summary & National Overviews

Edited by: D N Carss & M Marzano (2005)

4. Belgium

4.1.2 Flanders

4.1.2.1 The Conflict

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A survey, carried out in 1995 and 2001, involved questionnaires (sent to eight main fish culturists), asked about production and financial losses from Great Cormorants and whether any preventative measures were used to reduce damage. Five fisheries (62.5%) responded, claiming overall that there was a 32% yield loss from Great Cormorants costing 130,760 euros per year. When applied to all fisheries in Flanders, the cost of Cormorant damage to commercial fisheries could be high as 632,000 euros. However, fisheries may have 'exaggerated their loss' because of the possibilities of financial compensation and the fact that they are taxed on the expected yield per ha. Although these figures are of unknown accuracy, losses of fish to Cormorants in extensive aquaculture sites are considered severe and Government actions necessary. Consideration of Cormorant Management in Flanders laid emphasis on financial support and/or compensation for fish culturists rather than the reduction of the Cormorant population.

4.2.1 Conflict site descriptions

Four Cormorant conflicts were reported from Belgium: on 2 rivers (Meuse, Semois) and one lake (Grand-Leez ponds) and one aquaculture pond (Roly ponds)

4.2.2 Birds and fish

In Belgium, Cormorants reported to be involved in conflicts were *P.c. sinensis*. Reported Cormorant density on the single aquaculture pond was 1 bird ha⁻¹. Cyprinids were recorded in conflict with Cormorants in the single Belgian aquaculture pond case study reported. Based on 2 river cases, 2 fish species were reported to be involved in conflicts: Roach and Grayling.

4.2.5 Conflict issues: magnitude of conflict

As the number of cases reported from Belgium was small (n = 4), information from all was combined. Cormorant conflicts with recreational fisheries stakeholders on rivers were the most frequently reported (n = 2 cases) in Belgium. Recreational fisheries and aquaculture stakeholders reported a total of 10 conflict issues relating to fisheries, fish stocks or the environment. The most commonly cited major conflict was reduced catches (Table 4.3).