

MR LANE

As requested I met Mr Ron Heberle, President of the South Coast Licensed Fishermans Association in Albany on Wednesday June 7, 1978. He was accompanied by three professional fishermen from Wilson's Inlet - Messrs O. McIntosh and A. & C. Smith.

From a discussion on the cormorant problem at Wilsons Inlet it appears there are two main areas of concern:

1. A substantial loss of young fish, in particular immature cobbler due to the activity of a large number (2 000 - 3 000) of Little Black Cormorant and Little Pied Cormorant during the August to October period.

The figure is based on fishermens' estimates and varies each year and within each year according to the season but the average annual loss of fish to the birds is considerable.

The complaint is not that there has been a population explosion within the cormorant colonies but the continued annual drain of young cobbler is affecting their total income.

In years past fishermen were known to make occasional ventures into the breeding colonies destroying nests and young. During more recent times this has not occurred but several suggestions were made on methods of control which the fishermen consider may be necessary.

1. Renew destruction of eggs and nests at breeding.
2. Control by shooting.
3. Baiting a set net with fish injected with a potent poison.

All these methods may have obvious flaws but I did not comment on their applicability other than to say I would mention them in my report.

In the light of your work at Mandurah and by arrangement with Heberle I arranged to spend a few days observing the cormorants feeding when the young cobbler and whiting are present. This is expected to occur between August and October.

2. A loss of fish directly from nets due mainly to predation by a comparatively small number of Black Cormorants and Pied Cormorants. This loss is accentuated by the number of otherwise marketable fish which have been spoiled or damaged in the birds attempts to remove them from the nets.

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Generally, the number of birds causing this loss is less than 50 and could normally be discouraged by shooting at them. This, however, is becoming increasingly difficult as the birds become more desperate in their attempts.

The cormorants are expected to increase in number during the warmer months and continue to attack the nets.

As with the first problem I will accompany Mr Owen McIntosh at his request to observe the birds behaviour and identify the species causing the problem.

Wildlife Officer Ray Smith will also accompany me if and when he is available.

G B Pearson

G.B. PEARSON
Technical Officer
Waterbird Research

June 15, 1978.

Grant
Good, I will be interested to learn which
cormorant species are causing the ^{alleged} problems.
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Report on Field Trip - June 26-30, 1978.

A trip was made to the South Coast to perform two main functions. Firstly, a thorough wing tag survey of inlets and lakes between Broke Inlet and Kalgan River. Secondly, to observe the activity of cormorants in the Wilson's Inlet concerning their effect on net fishing in the inlet.

Tuesday 27th

A check for wing tags at Nornalup Inlet and Walpole Inlet in National Parks Authority 15' runabout. This occurred following discussions with ranger, Brad Cockman who was due to make a circuit of the inlet that morning. Brad is also willing to assist in Pelican trapping operations. R1 Yellow was the only tag sighted.

Birds Listed:

17 Pelican
Numerous Little Black and Pied Cormorants
20-30 Musk Duck
40 Coot
4 Pied Cormorants
3 Black Cormorant
1 Darter

I had discussions with C.H. Kennedy concerning Pelican wing-tag sightings at Rest Point and drove on to the Broke Inlet where I discussed the Pelican population of the inlet with a Mr Jorgensen, resident near the lake and in constant contact with local fishermen. On his information that there were fewer than 6 pelicans observed on the inlet in recent weeks I decided against a boat survey of the inlet but checked fishing boat launching ramps on my way back to Nornalup.

At Nornalup Brad Cockman had been in radio contact with park rangers to the east of Albany and reported 10-12 Pelican at Bremer that week, 10-15 at Fitzgerald River and 50 at Culham Inlet.

I continued on to Wilsons Inlet and made arrangements with O. McIntosh for a check of Cormorant activity the following morning.

Wednesday 28th

0630 Departed from Cruso beach with Owen McIntosh and headed due south to pick up a Gardie-Whiting net near the southern edge of the deep water. One gardie showed signs of bird damage

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most likely Silver Gull as the fish was meshed and floating on the surface. Proceeded back to the east end of the inlet where Miller, C. Smith and A. Smith were already trawling their own nets. McIntosh and others had about 900 yds of 2¼" to 2½" nylon net set for whiting and mullet. The bulk of the catch was whiting with an unusual bag (20) of snapper plus a few trumpeter and yellow-eyed mullet.

One fish was damaged by one of two birds which were thought to be Little Black Cormorants. The whiting had a small cut behind the head which probably would not affect its price at market.

A further nine cormorants (Little Black?) were observed in the area but there were no reports of damage to fish. McIntosh had claimed he was incurring slight ^{net} damage from a small number of cormorants of unknown species. At the conclusion of the inspection I prepared for a wing tag survey of the whole inlet. Bird counts are listed in the Wetland - Waterbird survey sheet.

The water level in the inlet was extremely high due to heavy recent rains and closure of the entrance. Efforts were to be made within two or three days to open the bar mechanically.

An inspection was made of Rabbit island which was reported to be under threat from excessive cormorant roosting. Several photos were taken of trees and bushes on both islands for future comparison.

Most of the trees on the smaller island appear to have died many years ago and two remaining paperbarks have died back to about half of their original size. The island was flooded at the time of inspection but there was still the heavy smell of cormorant droppings. The larger island showed signs of dying vegetation but on closer inspection I did not see any signs of cormorant roosting. The vegetation does not appear to be any different to that of the mainland.

At completion of the tag survey I loaded the gear and drove on to Irwin Inlet where an inspection was made for wing tags. Bird counts are listed on W.-W.S. sheets.

Thursday 29th.

At 0800 I met W.O. Ray Smith as arranged for possible cannon net trapping at Cruso Beach. However, due to continual heavy rain the trip was cancelled. I spent the morning checking known locations for pelican and wing tags.

The remainder of the day was spent working on cannon and netting gear.

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Friday 30th.

At 0700 I set the 70x30x2" cannon net at Emu Point where 23 birds were observed the previous day. A very strong gusty wind was blowing from S.W. but the east bank of the point was reasonably protected, subject to tidal surges and gusty crosswinds. Twenty birds were attracted to the area with mulies and mullet. Three wing tags, Yellow X6, T1 and R2 were in the group. X6 has often been misreported by locals as K6. Of the 20 birds, 19 were trapped and one later escaped from the net. Five birds were processed, including the 3 tagged birds and one retrap. All tags were inspected for wear and fit.

The tags were fixed using stainless steel wire and washers and all were in good condition. Some slight signs of corrosion were evident on the washers. A slight amount of wear was evident on the upper leading edges of the tags but this was minimal. R2 had faded slightly and was touched up.

H4 and H2 Yellow were fitted to the two untagged birds with 316 S/S 18gg wire and 3/16" x 1/16" x 316 S/S washers.

At completion of tagging the gear was packed and loaded and I continued around the Oyster Harbour checking for wing tags. At 1630 I departed for Perth.

Bands Used:

	170 02481-9 ³ ₄	=	14 ³
<i>herons</i>	170 02395		1
"	R2 Yellow		1
"	X6 Yellow		1
"	T1 Yellow		1
			<u>1</u>
			18

Tags Applied:

H2 Yellow	170 02395
H4 Yellow	170 02493



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